Staying Within the Boundaries: Contextualization of Adventism for India

Gordon Christo
Spicer College

Introduction

The Task. It has been said that contextualization must be "true to the complete authority and unadulterated message of the Bible on the one hand, and it must be related to the cultural, linguistic, and religious background of the respondents on the other."[1] For Asia, the task has been described as "the insertion of 'the Christian religion minus European culture' into an 'Asian culture minus non-Christian religion.'"[2] But this has been seen as an impossible task. Some have asked whether any Christian experience is culturally pure—uncontaminated by any culture—or whether the "essence of the Christian gospel" can be distilled from any cultural form such as Western Christianity, then embodied in a different culture.[3]

What makes this task of distilling the essence of Christianity from a given culture difficult is the wide boundaries of culture. The line that divides what is secular and religious in culture is hazy and includes a large gray area. What some consider secular may have religious significance behind it. For example, the simple greeting of folding the hands in *namaste* indicates obeisance to "the god within you."

Opinions vary regarding the extent to which contextualization is necessary. It has been argued that just as Christ assumed the human condition with "all its

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[1] David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), xi.

[2] Aloysius Pieris, "Western Models of Inculturation: How Far Are They Applicable in Non-Semitic Asia," *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 22 (1985): 117. Aloysius says this of the concept of "inculturation."

[3] George M. Soares-Prabhu, "From Alienation to Inculturation: Some Reflections on Doing Theology in India," *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*: *The Collected Writings of George Soares-Prabhu* (JDV Theological Series, 1999), 1:92.

characteristics except sin," so Christianity must also incorporate all elements of local culture except those that clash with Christian teachings.[4] This represents the upper limit of contextualization.

It has even been suggested that not only secular aspects of non-Christian cultures, but also non-Christian religious ideas and philosophies can be utilized to serve the Christian religion.[5] Can adequate common elements be found that could suggest that accommodation within Hinduism is possible? How much can a Hindu remain in Hinduism and be a Christian at the same time?

Pluralism. It is easy to share Christ with Hindus. Anyone who tries to witness to one will quickly find them very open. This is the nature of Hinduism. The religion possesses the quality to absorb and incorporate other philosophies. Hindus will usually accept an invitation to enroll in a Bible correspondence course with enthusiasm. They are eager to learn of Christ and Christianity. When the Bible course is over, they may frame their certificate of completion and hang it on the wall. Several Hindu homes have pictures of Christ hanging on the wall, along with pictures of numerous other Hindu deities. Christ may be worshiped just as other gods are. At times the picture of Christ is adorned with a garland. Adding Christ to their already large pantheon of gods to be honored is easy.

Is this type of "conversion" sufficient? Is this type of Christianity adequate for the salvation of a Hindu? If it is, then spreading the gospel will be virtually painless in India, and this approach should be seriously examined. But if it is not, then it will be necessary for a convert to put away all that is incompatible with Christianity. Herein lies the difficulty, for Hindus will normally refuse to renounce Hindu gods and goddesses and follow Christ exclusively.[6]

If the doctrinal beliefs of Hindus and Christians are proved comparable, it could be argued that it might be possible to allow a Hindu to remain a Hindu and merely add the values and unique teachings of Christianity to his understanding. Thus it is important to examine the philosophy of Hindus and see how far they are compatible with the teachings of Christianity.

Contextualization of Theology: Comparing Major Doctrines

While similarities and points of contact in minor areas can certainly be demonstrated, it will be seen that in the basic concepts of God, man, sin, and

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[4] Joseph Osei-Bonsu, "Biblically/Theologically Based Inculturation," *African Ecclesial Review,* 32 (1990): 348.

[5] Pieris, 117, quotes the allegorical interpretation of Deut 21:10 by Clement of Alexandria. A beautiful woman captured from the enemy could be married so long as she would be of service. The enemy is the local foreign religion, the conquest of the enemy is the conquest of another religion, the beautiful woman represents beautiful philosophy, and the appropriating of the woman as spouse is the use of the philosophy for the service of one's own religion.

[6] For an example, see Atul Aghamkar, *Insights into Openness* (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 2000).

salvation can be seen diametrically opposite philosophies, to the extent that in my opinion, it would be wiser to ask a convert to make a complete break with his former religious philosophy in order to embrace the new.

God. In contrast to the Christian view of God—righteous, holy, and united in purpose, thought, and action—the Hindu concept varies. Hindu philosophy asserts a belief in only one God—all pervading, self-luminous, eternal spirit, the final cause, and the power behind all things.[7] However, folk Hindus serve a plethora of deities. According to Vedic texts, the number of deities was limited to thirty-three. In fact there exist as many as thirty-three score deities worshiped by various Hindus.[8] Practically, there is a severe contrast between monotheism and polytheism. Another area that can be contrasted with similar results is the character of God.

Man. In contrast to the Biblical view of man as mortal, Hindus believe that man is not the being we perceive, not the body, nor the senses, nor the mind, but he is Atman, i.e., Brahma himself. The goal is to break the cycle of rebirth to merge again with Brahma.[9] The immortality of the soul and its transmigration are considered to be the "most significant," original, and influential aspects of the Indian conception of the universe. These occupy the foremost position in Indian thought.[10] What we have is another stark contrast as to the nature of man.

Sin. For Christians, sin is the transgression of the law. Not having a code like the ten commandments, Hindus are traditionally weak on the concept of sin. It is usually defined as ignorance, error, or illusion. They believe that proper attitude is more important than a regular code. However, a variety of ideas are expressed. Sin has also been defined as disease, debt, breach of caste rules, defiance of god, absence of harmony with the spiritual environment, lack of spiritual power, etc. The emphasis in Hinduism is more on ideas such as non-violence, sacrifice, renunciation, and purity of mind.[11] Hindus do not see a need to be saved from sin. They are not trying to free themselves from sin, and the fact that Jesus saves people from sin is a new concept for them.[12]

Salvation. For Hindus, the goal of life is to break away from the cycle of birth-death, to merge again into Brahma, and the way to break the cycle is through good works—*Karma*.[13] In contrast to the Christian concept of salvation,

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[7] V. Krishnamurthy, *Essentials of Hinduism* (New Delhi: Narosa, 1989), 7–8. All the other names and forms only help to express that single reality.

[8] Jitendra Nath Banerjee, "The Hindu Concept of God," in *The Religion of the Hindus,* ed. Kenneth Morgan (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 51. The thirty-three were divided into three sets of eleven, the three sets being determined by heaven, earth, and the water/atmosphere.

[9] Arun Shourie, *Hinduism: Essence and Consequence* (Sahibabad: Vikas, 1979), 18, 23, 158.

[10] P. Deussen, *Fundamental Philosophy of Upanishads,* trans. A. S. Geden (Delhi: Kranti, 1989). He compares the idea to the death of a plant that lives again through its seed.

[11] Sivaprasad Bhattacharya, "Religious Practices of the Hindus," in *The Religion of the Hindus*, 151-153.

[12] Atul Aghamkar, 117.

[13] See Arun Shourie, 158, 165.

in which God takes the initiative in saving humanity, Dhandekar asserts that Hinduism believes that "man himself, and not any extraneous power, is responsible for his own emancipation." Dhandekar goes on to say that "This view is the very antithesis of God's grace."[14]

Doctrinal Bridges[15]

The above contrasts are not to deny that certain elements of Hinduism can be used as bridges to Hindus. Among these are the following:

Bhakti. Whole-hearted loving devotion to God is one of several paths to salvation that might be selected. The emphasis of this path is on love. It is open to all.[16]

Incarnation. Examples of incarnation are numerous, and some can be related to the concept of a holy God. This could include reference to Jesus.

Eschatology. Hindus believe in the imminent end of the world. The tenth incarnation of Vishnu, Kalki, is expected to put an end to sin and sinners.

Conclusion

Points of contact in minor areas may serve useful purposes, but these are limited.[17] Thus, it is my opinion that in general, one should not try to use Hindu religious philosophy as a vehicle for Christian beliefs. I will therefore limit this paper to areas of contextualization related to cultural practices without religious implications.

Contextualization in Secular Areas

In India, the indigenization of Christianity is urged primarily by the Catholics. As a result of Vatican II, the Catholics held a seminar in Bangalore, India, in 1969. They used terms like "adaptation," "acculturation," "involvement," "integration," "transculturation," and "indigenization," though the most popular term appeared to be "Indianization."[18] Since the 1990s, their term of preference

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[14] R. N. Dhandekar, "The Role of Man in Hindusim," in *The Religion of the Hindus,* 126.

[15] See N. Sharath Babu, "Bhakti, A Bridge to Philosphical Hindus," D.Min. Dissertation, Andrews University, Spicer College Campus, 2000.

[16] The other methods are *karma* actions and *jnana* knowledge. These form chapters 3 and 4 in the Gita. *Bhakti* yoga is described in chapters 12 and 18. See also E. Ahmad Shah, *Theology: Christian and Hindu* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publ., 1966), 134.

[17] See, for example, some of the M.A. Research Projects at Spicer Memorial College in Pune, India: Franklin David, "A Comparative Study of the Role of Blood in Christianity and Hinduism in Restoring a Right Relationship Between God and Man," 1983; Daniel Devadhas, "A Study of the Concept of Bhakti in Relation to the Christian Doctrine of Righteousness by Faith," 1985; Jala Israel, "A Comparative Study of the Christian Concept of Incarnation and the Hindu Concept of Avatara," 1991; Victor Sam, "A Comparative Study of the Concept of Soul in Vedanta of Hinduism and Seventh-day Adventism," 1992; Rajaram Bharati, "Concept of Mediation in Catholicism and Hinduism," 1995.

[18] See Thomas Paul, "Inculturation in the Context of India for the Next Century," *The Living Word* (Jan-Feb 1996): 74.

has been "inculturation."[19] The goal is that the worshiping community should retain and incorporate important elements of local culture "while at the same time critically shaping these elements so that they may bear witness to the gospel of Christ, who transforms all cultures."[20]

Reasons for the Discussion

The first questions that may come to mind are, "Why are we talking about this?" "What is wrong with the status quo?" Christianity donned a western garb early in the Christian era and has now become synonymous with western culture. It is through this accepted form of Christianity that thousands have found Christ and salvation. We ourselves were found by and reared through this system. Why then should we rebel against it and try to change the system, starting again from square one? People seem happy to westernize. The church should focus on other more important jobs.[21]

However, everything is not as ideal as could be hoped for. As Christians increase in numbers and make their presence felt, they are facing a growing hostility in many lands. The church is perceived as belonging to a foreign culture. The commitment and loyalty of Christians to the nation is questioned.[22] Soon after I graduated from college, I was invited to intern with a senior pastor in a large city in India. While the senior pastor was away from the city, his house was ransacked and searched by the police on the suspicion that he was an agent for the CIA.

It is not difficult to determine the reasons for these suspicions. Adventists in India, for example, tend to wear western-style clothes, speak in English, sing English songs, adopt a western-lifestyle, and more importantly, shy away from participating in the life of the community, as "this world is not their home."

Our educational institutions are seen as major culprits in the westernization of Indian Christians.[23] Our main Adventist college perpetuates western culture. The nomenclature for administrators, the system of education, and the curriculum are all clearly patterned after the American model. The academic and social

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[19] The word "inculturation" appears to be of Catholic origin. For a study into the origin and meaning of the word "inculturation," see Francis Clark, "Making the Gospel at Home in the Asian Cultures," *Teaching All Nations*, 13 (1976): 131-149.

[20] S. Anita Stauffer, "Worship and Culture: An International Lutheran Study," *International Review of Mission,* 85 (1996): 181.

[21] See D. S. Amalorpavadass, "Gospel and Culture: II. The Basis of an Authentic Inculturation," *Word and Worship,* 11 (1978): 152. He proposes that both the tradition of the local culture and the tradition of the Church should be incorporated.

[22] Antony Pulickamandapam, "The Scope for Cultural Adaptations in the North Indian Culture," *Ephrems Theological Journal*, 4 (2000): 176, 177.

[23] Patrick Moroney believes that Christian seminaries make seminarians strangers to their own culture. See "Some Dangers of Inculturation," *Verbum,* 31 (1990): 328. Yet, he does not totally blame seminaries, as he sees all formal educational institutions in some way westernizing and alienating people from their traditional culture.

activities have more in common with America than with the local culture. In a number of countries our colleges are labeled "American." In fact, the American system of education is often associated and confused with the "Adventist" system. A student who enrolls at Spicer coming from a very different system of education must register for a course called "Orientation for College." The course carries one hour of credit and is designed to acquaint new students with concepts new to them, such as the semester, the GPA, electives, majors, minors, selection of courses, and other things that Americans take for granted. Even with this course, most students have a difficult time adjusting. Also, by the time a ministerial student graduates, he must have a suit for graduation, and he has no desire to return to his village and work there. It is said that even if he does, he will require a translator.

Spicer does attempt to encourage a person to remain in the language and culture of origin. Fourteen language prayer groups meet on alternate Fridays after vespers. Students attain proficiency in witnessing and worshiping in their own language. Every year the college celebrates a Cultural Emphasis Day. Students depict scenes in a booth, participate in folk dances, and share ethnic food from their home area with others.[24]

History of Christian Missions and Contextualization

According to tradition, the apostle Thomas brought Christianity to India. Though Syriac was used in the liturgy, the Thomas Christians did not abandon their culture. Until today they share many social and religious customs with their Hindu neighbors.[25]

Western Christianity came to India through Portuguese colonizers who imposed their culture and theology on the Indian Christians.[26] Their legacy may be seen in the state of Goa, where the culture is more Hispanic than Indian. The East India Company for years resisted the urge to Christianize India, but eventually they allowed it.

In the 17th century an Italian, Robert de Nobili, noticed the "aversion of the Indians to the culture of their colonial masters." He adopted the life style of a *sanyasi* and promoted the concept that Indian Christians should be allowed to remain in their culture and social traditions. He contributed greatly to the Indianization of Christianity by writing large theological treatises in Tamil.[27]

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[24] The Cultural Emphasis Day has not been without question. Students have been guilty of heavy ornamentation in the name of culture, and separation of culture and religion has not always been achieved.

[25] IBC Research Wing, *Christianity and Conversion in India* (Rishi, 1999), 6. See also R. H. S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1989), 7, 11.

[26] S. Arokiasamy, "Towards Contextual Theology: Reflections on the Development in the Indian Church," in *Contextual Theological Education*, ed. James Massesy (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1993), 50.

[27] Ibid., 51

Seventh-day Adventists came to India at the end of the 19th century. By then they had already developed a system of evangelization that was geared to English-speaking Christians.[28] Many of the first converts were already Christians. One early convert was even an American missionary for another denomination.[29] When the first Hindu was converted, it was a traumatic experience for all involved—the convert, the family, and the missionaries.[30]

In the 1970s, the mainline Protestant churches united into a "Church of North India" and a "Church of South India." However, the liturgy and evangelistic methods remained largely unchanged. Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian traditions continue.

Around 1985, Dr. Brian deAlwis, a Sri Lankan, returned from the Seminary at Andrews to teach at Spicer College. One of his burdens was to free the Indian church and its theology from western influence. He started a series of publications under the banner, "Bullock Cart Theology." After his early demise, Bullock Cart publications continued from the pen of Dr. D. K. Sankeethamony till he retired in 2000. Since then no effort has been made in that direction.

Sensing the need for a new approach to missions in India, the Southern Asia Division began a doctoral program in missions with the help of Andrews University professors trained in missions and cross-cultural ministry. Almost all of the twenty students have completed the program successfully, and their impact on the field is beginning to show.

The Biblical Foundations for Contextualization

One will notice over and over again as Bible passages are studied that when decisions regarding contextualization had to be made, in some aspects there was compromise and in others there was not.

The Incarnation. Roman Catholic authors refer to the incarnation of Christ as the guiding principle for inculturation. They point to Paul, who tells us that Christ emptied (*ekénōsen*) Himself, taking the form of a servant (Phil 2:7). He laid aside all His glorious form. Then Christ became flesh and dwelt among humanity (John 1:14). The Greek verb for "dwelt" is *eskénōsen*. Literally it means, "to pitch a tent." Christ as the Son of God assumed a human context that included history, culture, traditions, and religion. He took upon himself Jewish language and practices, ate Jewish food, and wore Jewish clothes. He immersed

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[28] Owen McIntyre, "Seventh-day Adventist Approaches to Contextualization of Theology," *International Association for Mission Studies,* 16 (1999): 128. McIntyre points out that early Adventist evangelistic strategy was developed through missions to English speaking countries such as Australia, England, and New Zealand.

[29] Gordon Christo, "How it All Began," *Adventist Review* (April 12, 2000), 12. Fredrick Brown had been a missionary in India for another church.

[30] Gordon Christo, "Anywhere With Jesus," *Adventist Review* (Jan 10, 2002), 23. Nanibala, the first Hindu convert, went through a traumatic separation from her family.

Himself in the culture of His day.[31] Where Christ drew the line was sin: "he was without sin." Thus, Catholics assert that just as Christ accepted some aspects of human nature but did not accept sin, so also only that which is incompatible with Christianity needs to be avoided.

The Stoning of Stephen. At first, primitive Christianity closely followed many of the tenets of Judaism. For that reason it was allowed to exist for a while within Judaism, rather than as a separate religion. Christ was understood to be the Messiah prophesied in the Scriptures, and Pentecost was interpreted as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Christians worshiped the God of Moses, and the Jewish scriptures were authoritative for the followers of Christ, too. Most of their beliefs and practices were compatible with Judaism. The leader of the Christians was James, the brother of Jesus.

However, the Jewish Christians who were from outside of Palestine and were in many ways foreigners with strange customs and languages soon observed that their widows were not receiving as much food from the reserves held by the community of believers as were the native Judean widows (Acts 6:2). When they complained, seven deacons were appointed to see that no widows were neglected. All seven deacons had Greek names, suggesting that though Jewish, they were outsiders more influenced by Greek culture than many Judeans. Stephen was one of them. Accused of blasphemy against Moses and the law, he was stoned by the Jewish leaders (Acts 6:12-14). It is quite likely that he was seen as a liberal, advocating the abandonment of certain aspects of Hebrew culture in the name of the gospel of Christ. Apparently being physically circumcised meant little to him, as he accused his detractors of being uncircumcised in heart (Acts 7:51). This was a substantial threat to Jewish dogma, as physical circumcision was required by God's own law.

The Jerusalem Council. When the gospel reached non-Jews in Antioch and other cities, the church faced its first big theological decision. Jewish Christians were in most respects observing the Law of Moses. Certain Pharisaic Christians were insisting that the gentile converts to Christianity should also be required to keep the rites and rituals of the law of Moses, like the Jewish Christians (Acts 15:5). After all, these laws had been given to Moses by God!

Peter testified to what he had been shown, and Paul and Barnabas spoke of their experiences. The council of leaders in Jerusalem finally made a distinction between what was only cultural and what was essential for Christians. The gentiles were required to abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from meat that had blood in it (due to its being killed by strangulation), and from sexual immorality. But they were exempted from other areas of the Mosaic law, including circumcision.[32] (It is possible, of course, that these forbidden things

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[31] Amalorpavadass, 149; Osei-Bonsu, 348.

[32] Despite its being a clear command of God (Gen 17:9–14), the Christian leaders seem to have considered it part of the culture of Jewish Christians, not applicable to the gentiles (Acts 15:1-29).

were chosen from a list of disputed issues, while some things, such as the ten commandments, were not mentioned because there was no question regarding their continuing validity.)

Again, it should be noted that in some areas there was accommodation, and in others there was not. Still, it was gradually discovered that one could be a completely submitted Christian while not being at all culturally Jewish.

Paul in Jerusalem, AD 57. The Jewish Christians tolerated the gentile Christians' new attitude to the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:25), but apparently they were angry that even Jewish Christians were allowed to abandon the Law of Moses. In other words, Jewish Christianity was changing even for Jews. Paul is accused of instructing the Jewish Christians (1) to turn away from Moses, (2) not to circumcise their children, and (3) not to live according to Jewish customs (Acts 21:21).

Christianity Moves to the West. Romans and Greeks are the only Europeans mentioned as present at Pentecost—and these Romans were soldiers and these Greeks were Jews. Nevertheless, all roads lead to Rome, and it was inevitable that Christianity would find its way there. Two Christians—Aquila and Priscilla—came to Corinth from Rome around A.D. 50, so the gospel had evidently reached the West before then.

The Church changed the culture in many ways—at least the culture of the believers. For example, people of all classes and cultures became brothers and sisters and were urged to love each other and worship with each other. Men were urged to bring their wives to the worship service—a novel idea to Greeks. Men were required to be faithful to their wives, rather than turning to prostitutes and boys for entertainment.

But the culture also changed the Church. Greek philosophy and pagan religions influenced the developing Christian theology as the centuries passed, and this led to many schisms. The hierarchical structure of Roman religions was introduced into Christianity (such as the position of *pontifex maximus*). Anti-Semitism led to ever greater rejection of Jewish elements in Christianity.

The apostles showed a lot of flexibility in dealing with culture as Christianity spread. The church should show similar flexibility when meeting new cultures. As the cultures influenced the Church, the Church changed in many ways, but at heart it remained Christian, more or less, or at least offered believers the road to salvation (though not always clearly marked).

Some Possible Areas For Cultural Contextualization

Language. Language is not only the vehicle of expression but the vehicle of culture as a whole. Subtle insights into culture and traditions are best expressed in the mother tongue. A religion communicated in another language remains a foreign language.[33] India's problem is that it is multilingual. The government

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[33] See Paul, 86.

recognizes this difficulty, so English has been retained as one of the national languages. The formula followed is three languages: Hindi, English, and the local language.

Worship services and evangelism are conducted largely in local languages, but education for the ministry is carried out in English. We do not have the resources to establish a ministerial training center in every language area. The church should consider the benefits of establishing seminaries in the major language areas, such as Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu. Another difficulty is the availability of textbooks. However, Bibles exist in all major languages, and English can be used as a second language.

As mentioned before, at Spicer College, prayer groups in the major languages meet on alternate Friday nights. Ministerial students receive practice in conducting worship services in their own languages. The Sabbath School lesson classes are conducted in most of the languages.

Lifestyle. Perhaps the greatest difference between a Hindu holy man and an Adventist pastor is in lifestyle. The Hindu holy man is marked by simplicity, whereas the pastor tends to acquire as many western conveniences as possible. However, westernization is not only found among Christians, but among all who aspire to modern urban society. Hindus would certainly respect a pastor who renounced modern conveniences and would accept him more readily as a spiritual leader.[34]

The life of a *Sanyasi*, who has renounced everything, is marked by hours of meditation and prayer and simple living. Adventists also renounce much of the world's attractions in terms of entertainment, dress, adornment, tobacco, and alcohol, and they actually follow a rather simple lifestyle. Yet, the pastors have a long way to go in achieving the lifestyle of Hindu *sanyasis*.[35]

Clothing. A pastor in an Indian village was waiting one Sabbath morning for the candidates for baptism. As a woman arrived, the pastor noticed the glass bangles on her wrists and remonstrated with her, saying, "Sister, I told you to take off your bangles before you can be baptized." The husband promptly retorted, "Pastor, you are worried about my wife's bangles. Why, your wife is wearing pants!" In the setting of an Indian village, the wearing of bangles meant next to nothing. Taking them off would mean much to society, but would have little religious significance. On the other hand, for a woman to wear pants was really showing off. In Indian society a woman revealing her midriff is nothing, but showing off legs and thighs is indecent. It is important for pastors and their families to not draw negative attention by their clothing. Also, a careful study of the Indian context should be considered regarding what constitutes undesirable jewelry, and what, if any, ornamentation is required for decency.

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[34] Paul, 86; Pulickamandapam, 179, 180.

[35] See Christopher Prabhudas, "A Comparative Study of the Concept of Self-denial in Adventism and Hinduism," M.A. Research Project, Spicer Memorial College, 1991.

Diet. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is one of the great principles of Indian culture. Buddhists, Jains, and high caste Hindus give great importance to life, especially animal life, resulting in vegetarianism. Yet Christians are marked by their non-vegetarianism. Astonishingly, only a minuscule number of Seventh-day Adventists in India are vegetarians.

This is an area of great potential for Adventists. Most Christians are looked down upon for their habits of eating, drinking, and meat-eating. The Adventist temperance and health message, if practiced more strictly, would gain the respect of Hindus.

Some Possible Areas For Liturgical Contextualization

Worship. There is great merit in a common liturgy for the Adventist Church worldwide, in that it promotes a sense of unity for the worldwide organization. However, it must be recognized that the liturgy itself is culturated in favor of the West and bears little resemblance to the service of the apostolic church. There should therefore be enough flexibility for the worship to be meaningful. Postures, gestures, prayers, and hymns can take inspiration from the artistic and cultural heritage of India.

Music. Most Adventists in India have little understanding of why our worship begins with the Gloria Patri.[36] Foreign visitors to our churches often remark on how we sing the same songs they sing. Early missionaries condemned the use of local instruments, especially percussion instruments. As a result, vernacular compositions were almost non-existent. For many years the only vernacular religious songs were those that used tunes from Indian movies. Congregations should use more *bhajans*—liturgical songs. The fine arts in the local language must be encouraged, especially poetry, prayers, hymns, and instrumental music. Indian instruments are to be preferred to western instruments.[37]

Reverence in Church. Indians naturally remove their shoes before entering a sacred place. Women cover their heads. Christians would do well to follow these practices. The Hindu sense of the sacred also contributes to the artistry and beauty of their temples. It might be well for Adventists to consider an architecture that is inspiring. Hindu temples usually face east or face the center of the community.[38] Adventists would do well to consider the advantages of constructing churches following these principles (and the possible problems, too).

Pilgrimages. Hindus are devout in their preparations for and participation in pilgrimages. Fasting and gift giving mark these occasions. These activities serve to intensify their faith. Thomas Christians who go on pilgrimage to Mylapore, where Thomas was martyred, are honored much like a Muslim who goes

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[36] Chanchal Gayen, "Inculturation in the Worship of the SDA Church," M.A. Research Project, Spicer Memorial College, 1994.

[37] See S. Vasanthraj Albert, "Unhealthy Tensions and Dynamics," *India Church Growth Quarterly*, 8 (2001): 163.

[38] Stella Kamrisch, *The Hindu Temple* 1:165, quoted in Pulickamandapam, 182.

to Mecca or Medina.[39] While there is no holy place for Indian Adventists to visit, perhaps substitutes might be found, such as going to campmeetings. Occasions for church members to leave home for worship are practically non-existent in India. Members may gain much spiritually from such events.

Festivals. These are occasions for Hindus to come together and celebrate the god who helped them. Festivals serve to unite Hindus and are an opportunity for renewal. There is practically no substitute for Adventists. It has been suggested that Christmas and Easter be used for such celebrations.[40]

Other Possible Areas For Contextualization

Education. Most Adventist schools are English medium and follow the ISC Board rather than the local State Board. This is of necessity, as only the ISC Board follows a five-day week. Our high schools are popular, and Christian education is much sought after. Spicer College, however, follows the American system of liberal education. Very few non-Adventists enroll at Spicer largely because the degrees are not recognized and not geared for jobs in the marketplace. The Adventist church needs to take a serious look at making college education relevant for India.

Finance. In order to be recognized as mature, the Adventist church in India must become financially self-sufficient. The church will then feel less dependent on the West materially and culturally.

The Dangers of Contextualization

Over-emphasis. There is the danger that Christianity may distance itself too far from the West and be swallowed up by the East. In order to convince Hindus that Christians are very like Hindus, people may become more like Hindus than like Christians. Not much is accomplished in being just imitative. There is no reason for Christians to conform to Hindu standards of spirituality. Hindus do not regard Christian clergy as spiritual in that sense, anyway.[41]

Syncretism. Syncretism makes compromises with Christianity. When appealing portions of one religion are combined with selected portions of another religion, rejecting significant elements to make a new whole, the result is syncretism. Ultimately, syncretism is another form of Christ-rejection.[42]

Annoyance to Hindus. Adoption of certain customs and symbols indiscriminately may annoy followers of the religion from which the borrowing is

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[39] Pulickamandapam, 183, notes that even the non-pilgrims share in this by helping the pilgrims.

[40] See Chanchal Gayen, "Festivals for the Adventist Church in India," D.Min. Dissertation, Andrews University, Spicer College Campus, 1999.

[41] Soares-Prabhu, 100, 102, writes of the dangers of *ashram spirituality*.

[42] Mar Abraham Mattam, "Christianity and Inculturation," *Ephrems Theological Journal,* 1 (1997): 66. See also David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Allahbad, 1981), 113.

done. This may indicate an irreverent disregard to their sensitivities and may alienate them further.[43] Also, Christianity cloaking itself on the surface with Hindu garb will not fool them, but rather seem like a wolf in sheep's clothing. Similarly, Christians would not appreciate neo-eastern religions trying to appear like forms of Christianity to attract westerners.

Culture Freezing. Culture is dynamic and is constantly changing. For example, the chili was unknown in India before the Portuguese introduced it, but today it is an inseparable part of its culture. Arguably, culture is never the same at any two given moments.[44] Going back to a certain environment after a gap of a decade or more can illustrate that well. Just as computers advance so rapidly that as soon as one is purchased it is outdated, by the time an anthropologist has researched and published a work on a given culture, many years may have gone by, and the culture may have changed. The description may not be accurate anymore.

Most indigenous ministers feel guilty that they do not know their culture as well as they should. This is probably because they do not know it as well as it was described by an anthropologist many years ago. They probably know their culture well enough by functioning on the same wavelength, understanding the people, and being able to communicate with them.[45]

Cultural Prescriptivism. When a culture is encountered, it frequently does not match with the description given by the anthropologists. Sometimes colonialism is blamed for the change, and an attempt is made to purify the culture of foreign influence. In the process, clergy might start prescribing how the people should act and react—how one should greet another, how to behave at a funeral, or how to bury a corpse. Anthropology is a useful tool for a person who wants to understand a culture that is not his own. But it is a tool and should not become the master. Not only missionaries, but also local workers are sometimes the arbitrators of which customs should be preserved and emulated. Some prescribe customs from the "good old days," motivated by nostalgia.[46]

Distinguishing Between Gospel and Culture. Some so-called Christian values may not be so much Christian as they are western. Down through time, Christianity has assimilated many western values, and western values have been influenced by principles of Christianity. This was inevitable during the time of confusion between church and state. Thus a distinction needs to be made between what is really the gospel and what is culture. It should be noted that Jesus'

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[43] Pieris, 118, refers to Buddhists in Thailand who "reacted with bitter indignation against the church for allegedly usurping their sacred symbols for Christian use."

[44] Moroney, 329, quotes Heraclitus, "You can't step twice into the same river, because the water is constantly flowing."

[45] Moroney, 329, 330.

[46] Ibid.

own contemporaries, who belonged to the same culture as He did, did not cherish His values. They found them unacceptable and unlivable for the most part.[47]

Distinguishing Between "American" and "Adventist." Adventism, having started in America, has many Americanisms attached. For example, the American system of education has become accepted as the Adventist system. In many countries the Adventist Church stands by itself, unaffiliated with any university, unrecognized by any accrediting body other than AAA, issuing degrees that nobody outside the church accepts. Attempts to change the system attract charges of not following the "blueprint."

Conclusion

Evangelists soon realize that cultural barriers impede the spread of the gospel. Many of these barriers may be unnecessary. The church in India must undertake serious study to remove unnecessary cultural obstacles. Conversion to Adventism must involve as little trauma as possible. Apostolic Christianity probably had a lot more in common with Indian culture than does today's Adventism. The sooner this is examined, the better.

At the same time, one should be aware that there is serious danger in using Hindu philosophy as a vehicle for conveying Christian theology. It is bound to confuse rather than clarify, to antagonize rather than attract, and to weaken the gospel rather than strengthen it.

Gordon Christo *is Academic Vice-President at Spicer Memorial College. He holds a Ph.D. in Old Testament Studies from the S.D.A. Theological Seminary, Andrews University. rosechristo77@yahoo.com*

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[47] Ibid, 336.

Israel and the Church
Gerhard Pfandl
Biblical Research Institute

Jesus' words to the chief priests and elders of the people in Matthew 21:43, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God[1] will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it,"[2] and similar NT texts[3] have led millions of Christians over the past two millennia to despise and even hate Jews.[4] While anti-Semitism[5] and racism in any form have no place in Christianity, the fear of anti-Semitism must not guide the interpreter in his exegesis of the NT. The text must be allowed to speak on its own terms without predetermined restrictions.

The purpose of this paper is to find answers to the following questions: What did Jesus mean by the kingdom of God? What will be taken from whom and given to whom? What nation will bear the fruits of the kingdom?

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[1] The "kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" are synonyms, as can be seen from the parallels in the Synoptics, e.g., Matt 4:17/Mark 1:15; Matt 13:11/Mark 4:11; Matt 13:31/Mark 4:30, 31; etc. Writing for a Jewish audience, Matthew may have been reluctant to constantly use the divine name and so employed the substitute "heaven" for "God."

[2] The Greek text reads: διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀρθήσεται ἀφ᾽ ὑμῶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ δοθήσεται ἔθνει ποιοῦντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς.

[3] For example, Matthew 27:25, "His blood be on us, and on our children." This text, however, was fulfilled in AD 70 when, according to the Jewish historian Josephus (*The Wars of the Jews*, 9. 9. 3), 1.1 million Jews perished during the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. It should not be applied to Jews today.

[4] During much of church history, Jews were called "Christ killers." Popes, bishops, and Protestant ministers taught that "the Jews, because they had killed Christ and rejected his gospel, were reprobate people, incapable of a spiritual life and thus not fully human. It ought not to surprise us that the ultimate result of this kind of thinking was the 'final solution' of the Nazi gas chambers" (Douglas R. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1993), 250.

[5] This is a misnomer, since Arabs and others are also Semites. The term anti-Semitism was first coined in 1879 by Wilhelm Marr, the founder of the Antisemitic League, who, ironically, was said to be the baptized son of a Jewish actor. (Nathan Ausubel, *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* [New York: Crown, 1964], 6).

The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers

The setting for Jesus' words in Matthew 21:43 is the parable of the wicked vinedressers (Matt 21:33–44). Like the preceding parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32) and the parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) that follows, this parable is a parable of judgement. It stands at the center of Jesus' response to the religious leaders who questioned his authority (Matt 21:23–27).

The parable of the wicked vinedressers, echoing the parable of God's vineyard in Isaiah 5,[6] is generally understood to depict God as the landowner, Israel as the vineyard, and the vinedressers as Israel's religious leaders who failed in their duty to God. The fruit stands for that which is owed to God; the servants who are sent and rejected are the prophets; the son is Jesus Christ, and the new tenants symbolize the new people of God who do produce fruit.[7] The parable has been called "an allegory,"[8] "a parable of judgment,"[9] as well as "an outline of salvation-history,"[10] and its interpretation has produced a variety of opinions ranging from a polemic against Zealots[11] to the offer of the gospel to the poor.[12]

The story Jesus tells would have been a familiar one to his hearers. Absentee landlords who let out their estate and who were interested only in collecting the rent at the right time were a familiar institution in Palestine at that time. Much of Galilee belonged to foreign landlords who had Galilean peasants working the land for them.[13] The actions of the vinedressers, therefore, were not unheard of. Barclay writes, "The country was seething with economic unrest;

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[6] It is important to remember that in Isaiah 5 the vineyard of God is destroyed (5:5, 6) because it has not been producing fruit. The picture is one of total destruction; the once fruitful hill becomes a worthless plot of ground, a place where nothing could grow. There is no indication as to the fulfilment of this parable. Was it the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, or the end of the southern kingdom in 586 BC? Since there was a restoration after the 70 years of exile, Isaiah 5:5, 6 could also apply to AD 70, when the Jewish state was completely eradicated.

[7] See, for example, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 176; David Hill, *Matthew*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 298. Douglas Hare disputes the identification of the vineyard with Israel and points out that in verse 41 the vineyard is interpreted as the kingdom of God and not as Israel. He says, "It is not suggested that God will remove Israel's present leadership and provide it with more faithful leaders. Rather, 'the kingdom of God' will be taken 'from you' and given to *a nation* that will produce the fruits of the kingdom." He sees the "you" as a corporate identity which includes the Jewish leaders as well as the Jewish people, and "the nation" or church "is neither Jewish nor Gentile but a 'third race' that transcends the old distinction" (Hare, 248, 249).

[8] Hill, 298

[9] Hare, 248.

[10] Davies and Allison, 178. See also Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen and the Secret of Jesus' Divine Sonship in Matthew: Some Literary-Critical Observations," *JBL* 105/4 (1986): 645.

[11] J. E. Newell and R. R. Newell, "The Parable of the Wicked Tenants," *Nov T* 14 (1972): 226–237.

[12] Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 76.

[13] Ibid., 74, 75.

the working people were discontented and rebellious; and the action of the cultivators in seeking to eliminate the son was not by any means impossible."[14]

As the story unfolds, the tenants rebel against the absentee landowner.[15] They beat some of the servants he sends to collect what is his due, and others they kill.[16] When he finally sends his own son, they throw him out of the vineyard[17] and kill him too,[18] hoping thereby to somehow be able to take possession of the vineyard.[19] Jesus then asks his hearers what they think the landlord will do to the tenants when he returns. His listeners correctly conclude that he will put the wicked men to death.[20] With this answer the chief priests and elders condemn themselves, as Jesus' response shows.[21]

The fact that in Mark 12:9 and Luke 20:16 Jesus himself gives the answer is one of the many small differences in the Synoptics. Generally, Jesus does not answer the questions to which his parables often lead.[22] In this case, most likely, Jesus repeats the answer of the priests and elders to emphasize the gravity of their response. Matthew records what actually happened by giving us the answer

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[14] William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 2:262. See also Jeremias, 74.

[15] An example where farmers refused to give produce to the agent of an ancient landowner in Galilee is given in M. Hengel, "Das Gleichnis von den Weingärntern Mc 12,1–12 im Lichte der Zenonpapyri und der rabbinischen Gleichnisse," *ZNW* 59 (1968): 13–16.

[16] Most of the Old Testament prophets were persecuted by the Jews in one way or another, cf. Matt 5:12; 23:34–36; Acts 7:52.

[17] Perhaps a reference to the fact that Jesus was killed outside the city walls (John 19:20; Heb 13:12). I. H. Marshall believes that "there would be objection to leaving the body in the vineyard to contaminate the place and make it unfit (ritually) for crops. Luke and Matthew may have this thought in mind" (I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, NIGC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 731).

[18] That this refers to the death of Jesus is acknowledged by most commentators. See D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, EBC, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 453; Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 201; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* WBC (Dallas: Word, 1995), 621; R. T. France, *Matthew*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 309; Jeremias, 76; Davies and Allison, 176; Barclay, 264, etc.

[19] Jeremias believes that under specific circumstances an inheritance could be regarded as ownerless property, which could then be claimed by anyone, with the proviso that the prior right belongs to the claimant who comes first. He also suggests that the vinedressers assumed that the owner was dead and that the son came to claim his inheritance (*Parables*, 75, 76). J. D. M. Derrett argues that the owner's failure to obtain rent for four years would forfeit his title to the property. The son's coming in the parable would have been in the fourth year (J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* [London: Darton, Longman &Todd, 1970], 300–306).

[20] Many commentators assume that this found its fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. See Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament* (Bowling Green, KY: Western Kentucky U, 1978), 3:147; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 302; Davies and Allison, 184; C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 99.

[21] This is similar to David's incrimination of himself in his response to Nathan in 2 Sam 12:1–7.

[22] C. H. Dodd writes, "Matthew (xxi. 41) has restored the form more usual in the conclusion of parables, by making the audience answer the question" (*Parables*, 99).

of the priests and elders, whereas Mark and Luke report Jesus' repetition of it. This is important to keep in mind when we come to verse 43.

In verse 42 Jesus turns from the rejected son to the rejected stone.[23] "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."[24] Psalm 118:22, the text Jesus quotes, may originally have referred to David, who was overlooked (rejected) even by his own father, but chosen by God to become the king of Israel, and a type of the Messiah.[25]

By quoting this text from Psalm 118, Jesus is not only predicting his own rejection, but also "his subsequent vindication when God raised him from the dead and set him at his right hand"[26] (Eph 1:20). Though rejected by many of his own people, he would become the chief cornerstone of a new temple in which God would be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).[27]

Verse 43, the text under investigation, is the punch line of the whole parable. In response to the question of Jesus in verse 40, "What will the owner do to the wicked vinedressers?" the chief priests and elders of the people have responded, "He will destroy them." In response, Jesus reveals the real plot. He identifies the priests and elders as the wicked vinedressers and says to them, "Therefore I say to you [you who are the wicked vinedressers], the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."[28]

Before we proceed further, we need to define the term "kingdom of God." What did Jesus mean by this expression?

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[23] In Hebrew there is a word play involving son (*ben*) and stone (*ʿeben*).

[24] לְרֹאשׁ פִּנָּה or κεφαλὴν γωνίας is literally "the head of the corner." Cornerstones of ancient buildings were often of enormous size and therefore costly. At the southeast corner of the temple area in Jerusalem can be seen a cornerstone nearly 24 x 5 x 3 feet. The cornerstone, which was laid first, was the most important stone in the foundation of a building (Isa 28:16). In the pseudepigraphal book *The Testament of Solomon* (22:7), the cornerstone is placed "at the head of the corner to complete the Temple of God." J. Jeremias, therefore, identifies the cornerstone with the keystone or capstone of an arch (cited in NIDNTT, 3:389). Whatever the case, the cornerstone was the stone on which the structure depended.

[25] Most commentators identify the rejected cornerstone with the nation of Israel. It was the nation that was despised and rejected. The Israelites had been servants of many nations, "but none the less the nation which all men despised was the chosen people of God" (Barclay, 264). See also Davies and Allison, 309; Carson, 453; France, 309.

[26] France, 309.

[27] The "rejected cornerstone" symbolism was important in the early church, since it provided a perfect analogy to the rejection and exaltation of Jesus (see Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6).

[28] This verse is omitted in Mark and Luke. Many scholars therefore see it as a redactional interpolation. See Davies and Allison, 186; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 265.

The Kingdom of God

The expression "kingdom of God" (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) appears frequently in the synoptic gospels[29] and is seen as central to the teaching of Jesus.[30] The background to this expression is found in the OT. While the expression "kingdom of God" (מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים) is not found in the OT, the term "kingdom of YHWH" (מַלְכוּת יְהוָה) does appear twice in the Hebrew Bible (1 Chron 28:5; 2 Chron 13:8). In both cases the "kingdom of YHWH" refers to the earthly kingdom given to David and his descendants. This is also true of the expression "My kingdom" in 1 Chronicles 17:14. In the book of Psalms, however, the "Lord's kingdom" is no longer restricted to the nation of Israel but is his universal rule over all mankind (Psalm 22:28; 103:19; 145:11–13). One characteristic of this kingdom is especially stressed in Psalm 145:13: "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." In that respect it is very different from all earthly kingdoms. In the Aramaic portion of the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar emphasizes the same point: "I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion" (4:34). No doubt Nebuchadnezzar remembered what Daniel had told him earlier.[31] Other texts such as 1 Chronicles 29:11 and Obadiah 21 indicate that the kingdom-of-God concept is fairly widespread in the Hebrew Scriptures. John Bright, in his book *The Kingdom of God*, writes:

> While it underwent, as we shall see, a radical mutation on the lips of Jesus, it had a long history and is, in one form or another, ubiquitous in both Old Testament and New. It involves the whole notion of the rule of God over his people, and particularly the vindication of that rule and people in glory at the end of history. That was the kingdom the Jews awaited.[32]

The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the Lord to judge the nations and deliver his people: "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance [for his enemies], with the recompense of God; He will come and save you [God's people]" (Isa 35:4).[33] Isaiah focused on the day when men will live together in peace. God shall then "judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (2:4). Not only the problems of society shall be solved, but individuals shall be made whole. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

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[29] "Of the 139 New Testament references to a divine kingdom, 104 or 75 percent are in the Synoptics. Or, if 25 parallel passages are excluded, 70 out of 114 or 69 percent are" (James A. Brooks, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament," *SwJT* 40/2 [Spring 1998]: 25).

[30] Dennis C. Duling, "Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven," *ABD*, 4:49.

[31] See Daniel 2:44.

[32] John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 18.

[33] See also Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Zechariah 14.

and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (35:5, 6). Also, the evils of man's physical environment shall be no more: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (11:6).

This vision of a peaceful kingdom is connected with the coming of a new David, a David *redivivus*, the Messiah, who will rule over a new and redeemed Israel (Isa 9:1–7; 11:1–5; cf. Micah 5:2–4). At that time it will be said, "the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, The Lord is our King" (Isa 33:22). In that kingdom justice will reign (11:3–5), and peace will be unbroken (2:2–4). There Israel shall at last become a blessing to the entire world.

In the intertestamental period the "kingdom of God" is mentioned a number of times in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The exact term appears only in Wisdom of Solomon 10:10,"She [wisdom] showed him [a righteous man] the kingdom of God,"[34] but related terms are "kingdom of our God" (Ps of Sol 17:3), "the kingdom of heaven" (3 Bar 11:2, Greek), "kingdom of the Lord" (Test Benj 9:1).[35]

James A. Brooks, after studying the kingdom references in the intertestamental literature, concluded that apart from a few references to a nationalistic kingdom involving the triumph of Israel over her enemies, the kingdom of God is conceived of in ethical terms, and "it is described as an apocalyptic, eschatological kingdom which encompasses the entire universe, and not just Israel. In some passages God himself will reign; in others he will reign through the Messiah he sends."[36]

In the NT, the phrase "kingdom of God" is found 4 times[37] in Matthew,[38] 14 times in Mark,[39] and 32 times in Luke.[40] The synonymous term "kingdom of heaven" is found 32 times in Matthew only.[41] In making the kingdom of God/heaven the theme of his preaching, Jesus, through his parables, explained to the people the nature of his kingdom, since they had some misguided ideas about what the kingship of God meant.

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[34] *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford UP, 1977).

[35] James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85).

[36] Brooks, 22.

[37] These figures are based on *The Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece* (Berlin:Walter de Gruyter, 1987).

[38] Matthew 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43.

[39] Mark 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43.

[40] Luke 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28, 29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20 (twice), 21; 18:16, 17, 24, 25, 29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 18; 23:51.

[41] Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19 (twice), 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1.

In Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 John the Baptist and Jesus preach the same message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In prophetic eschatological terms, this meant for John that God was about to send the Messiah who would be the agent of the eschatological judgment to "gather His wheat into the barn" and to "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt 3:12). Although with the coming of Jesus the new eschatological order had begun, it was not the "golden age" the Jews had been looking for, but the reign of God "redemptively at work among men."[42] It was God's eschatological activity as ruler made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. It involved both a fulfillment as well as a "radical reinterpretation of the OT hope."[43] The kingdom he proclaimed was a present reality (Matt 12:28) as well as a future blessing (1 Cor 15:50). People could enter it 2000 years ago (Matt 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter in the future (Matt 8:11).[44] In short, "The kingdom in its dynamic aspect is the reign of God in the lives of His people."[45] It is the result of the proclamation of the Gospel.

With the incarnation of Christ, the rule of Satan in this world (John 12:31; 14:30) is being brought to an end, and his captives are being set free. The deeds of Jesus, therefore, can be seen as a sign of the presence of the kingdom of God here on earth. This kingdom is characterized by grace, as the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16) indicates. Some authors, therefore, speak of the kingdom of grace,[46] in contrast to the kingdom of glory, which is still future.

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[42] George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 108.

[43] Idem, "Kingdom of God," *ISBE*, 3:26.

[44] This tension between the "now" and the "not yet" in Scripture has led to different interpretations of the nature of the kingdom of God. Some, like Adolf von Harnack, reduced the kingdom of God to "the rule of the holy God in the hearts of the individuals" and denied that there was any historical dimension to its existence (Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?* [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903], 60–61). Proponents of consistent eschatology at the end of the nineteenth century viewed the kingdom of God only as an eschatological entity that Jesus expected to come during his lifetime (Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* [New York: Macmillan, 1964], 359). In reaction against this view, C. H. Dodd in 1935 proposed the concept of realized eschatology (Dodd, viii), by which he meant that the kingdom of God had "come upon men there and then" in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Ibid., 159). Since then, most scholars have viewed the kingdom of God as both present and future. Oscar Cullmann, for example, advocates an "inaugurated eschatology" in which the Christ event is "D-Day" and the *parousia* is "V-Day" (Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time,* trans. F. V. Filson [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964], 3.)

[45] Brooks, 36.

[46] "The 'kingdom of heaven' was established at the first advent of Christ. Jesus Himself is King, and those who believe in Him become its subjects. The territory of the kingdom are the hearts and lives of the subjects. Obviously, the message Jesus bore referred to the kingdom of divine grace. But, as Jesus Himself made clear, this kingdom of grace was preparatory to the kingdom of glory (see DA 234; GC 346, 347). Concerning the latter, the disciples inquired on the day of the ascension, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' (see Acts 1:6, 7). The kingdom of grace was near in Christ's day (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7), but the kingdom of glory was future (ch. 24:33). Only when the Son of man should 'come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him'

The teachings of Christ can also be understood as a sign of the presence of God's kingdom. "By proclaiming the kingship of God Jesus made it possible for men to turn from their sins, own His kingship and receive the blessings of His rule."[47] Thus, the message of the kingdom of God is the message of salvation.

In summary, we can say the kingdom of God is the rule of God and the message of this rule in the lives of those who submit to his authority. While this kingdom at the present time is still a spiritual kingdom, it will become a physical reality at the Second Advent.

Taking and Giving

The kingdom of God, Jesus said, would be taken from his listeners and given to a nation that would produce its fruit—that is, the fruits of the kingdom.[48] Before we proceed any further, we need to return to the question of the identity of the vineyard. In the Old Testament, "vine" and "vineyard" are often used as symbols of Israel (Ps 80:8; Isa 5:1–7; 27:2; Jer 2:21; 12:10). Is this also the meaning in the three parables where Jesus refers to a vineyard (Matt 20:1–16; 21:28–32; 21:33–46)? In the first two parables, the parable of the workers in the vineyard and the parable of the two sons, the vineyard is not identified because it only provides the setting for the points Jesus is making.[49]

Although in the third parable the vineyard echoes many of the details in Isa 5:2, where the vineyard symbolizes Israel, the parallelism between verses 41 and 43 clearly identifies the vineyard with the kingdom of God, and not with Israel:

> v. 41 "[he will] lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their season."
> v. 43 "the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."

Earlier, we identified the kingdom of God as the kingdom of grace, the rule of God, and the message of this rule in the lives of those who submit to his authority. D. Hare interprets the kingdom as a symbol for "God's sovereignty, that is, divine election, including the privileges and responsibilities of being God's elect people."[50]

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would 'he sit upon the throne of his glory' (ch. 25:31)." (Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1978], 5:318). See also R. A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985], 260. David P. Scaer, "Jurgen Moltmann And His Theology Of Hope," *JETS* 13:2 (Spring 1970): 76; John Theodore Mueller, "Luther's Doctrine of the Application of Salvation," *BSac* 113/451 (July 1956): 235.

[47] I. H. Marshall, "Kingdom of God, of Heaven," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. M.C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 3:806

[48] The feminine pronoun $\alpha \dot{v} \tau \hat{\eta} \varsigma$ in Matt 21:43 refers to the kingdom ($\beta \alpha \sigma \iota \lambda \varepsilon \acute{\iota} \alpha$, v. 43), not to the vineyard ($\dot{\alpha} \mu \pi \varepsilon \lambda \hat{\omega} \nu \alpha$, v. 41), which is masculine.

[49] The point in the first parable (Matt 20:1–16) is God's generosity, and in the second parable (21:28–32) the point is that deeds count more than mere words.

[50] Hare, 249.

In other words, Jesus says, "Yes, this vineyard, the kingdom of God, the sovereignty of God in your lives, your elect status, will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing its fruit." The fact that Jesus says it will be given to "a nation" rather than to new leaders can only mean that Israel, as a nation,[51] is being decommissioned and its position as "light to the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6) taken over by another people.[52]

The words for taking (ἀρθήσεται)[53] and giving (δοθήσεται) are the same words Matthew uses in 13:12: "For whoever has, to him more will be given [δοθήσεται], and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away [ἀρθήσεται] from him"; and in 25:29: "For to every one who has will more be given [δοθήσεται], and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away [ἀρθήσεται]."[54]

After the parable of the sower, Jesus responds in Matthew 13:12 to the question "Why do you speak to them [the multitude] in parables?" (v. 11). His argument is that the one who has (ἔχει) is the person who desires truth (the good ground), the person who has responded to the message of the kingdom, and has become Jesus' disciple. This person will be given more understanding, "and that understanding will abound [περισσευθήσεται] in fruitfulness."[55] On the other hand, the one who does not have (οὐκ ἔχει), he is the person who has not responded to the proclamation of Jesus (the stony place); therefore "even what he has will be taken away from him." What does that mean? D. A. Hagner believes, "even what such a person is inclined to fall back on—say, trust in Jewishness and Judaism—that too will be taken away."[56] Since all people have some measure of spiritual capacity, this epigram may refer to the fact that unless a person is willing to listen to and accept the message of the kingdom, his spiritual capacity will waste away; i.e., his heart will harden as God warned Isaiah would happen (Isa 6:10). Jesus quotes Isaiah in Matt 13:14, 15.

In the parable of the talents (Matt 25:29), the taking away and the giving refers to the talents entrusted to the servants. Faithful use of the talents entrusted leads to greater responsibility (v. 21); the talents not put to use will be removed

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[51] "The fact that the kingdom is taken away from the Jewish people and given to an ethnos that will bear its fruit can be taken to imply that the Jews are in some sense an ethnos – the ethnos that refused to bear the fruits of the kingdom. It is difficult to avoid this comparison implicit in 21:43 " (John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?" *CBQ* 39 [1977]: 98).

[52] This is also anticipated in Jesus' words in Matthew 23:38: "See! Your house is left to you desolate." Although it is not clear whether Jesus is referring to the temple or the city of Jerusalem, the message is the same. The presence and sovereignty of God will be withdrawn from the symbols of the Jewish nation. Hill believes the people in their entirety are symbolized by the temple (316).

[53] The future passive words imply God as the active agent; see Davies and Allison, 3:411.

[54] The same word pair is used in Mark 4:25 and in Luke 8:18 and 19:26. This saying was a common maxim similar to the modern words, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

[55] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 373.

[56] Ibid. So also Albright and Mann, 167.

(v. 28). We note that in each case the removal is complete. There is no indication that the person continues to function at a reduced level—"what he has will be taken away [completely]" (v. 29).

A Nation Bearing Fruits

The kingdom of God, says Jesus, will be taken away and given to a nation that will bring forth its fruits. The word "nation" ($\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu o\sigma$, pl. $\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu\eta$) is used 162 times in the New Testament, of which 15 uses occur in the book of Matthew.[57] Seven of these texts refer only to the Gentiles.[58] Of the other eight, 24:14, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations [$\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu$], and then the end will come," is clearly an explicitly universalistic use of the word. To all nations, Jews and Gentile alike, the Gospel is to be preached. Similarly, in 25:31, 32, "when the Son of Man comes in His glory . . . all nations [$\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \check{\epsilon}\theta\nu\eta$] will be gathered before Him." The last judgment will not only be for Gentiles, but also for Jews.

The great commission in 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations [$\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \check{\epsilon}\theta\nu\eta$]," again includes the Jewish people.[59] In fact, from the NT, as well as from history, we know that the "nation"—i.e., the church Jesus built (16:18)—consisted in the beginning almost exclusively of Jews.

This use of $\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu o\sigma$ in Matthew invalidates any attempt to see in the "nation" in 21:43 only Gentiles.[60] This "nation" which will produce fruit consists of the people who have accepted Jesus and his kingdom, both Jews and Gentiles. The first letter of Peter is addressed to "the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1:1). These five areas cover what is called Asia Minor. The majority of the believers in these churches were Gentiles.[61] Yet Peter writes, "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation [$\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu o\sigma$]." Here he applies the singular $\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu o\sigma$ to the Christian church. The context of this text also refers to the stone the builders rejected (vs. 7 and 8).

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[57] 4:15; 6:32; 10:5, 18; 12:18, 21; 20:19, 25; 21:43; 24:7 (twice), 9, 14; 25:32; 28:19.

[58] Matt 4:15; 6:32; 10:5, 18; 12:18, 21; 20:19. See Meier, 95.

[59] The other uses of $\check{\epsilon}\theta\nu o\sigma$ in 20:25, 24:7 (twice), and 24:9 can refer either to Gentiles alone or to Jews and Gentiles. See Meier, 96–99.

[60] While some commentators identify the "nation" with the Gentile church, this does not exclude Jews who have accepted Jesus. The Gentile church is the New Testament church, in contrast to the Old Testament Israelite/Jewish theocracy. See Jeremias, 70; Alexander B. Bruce, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980 reprint), 1:268; Mounce, 201; Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1981), 431.

[61] J. R. Michaels says the evidence of the epistle "strongly favors an audience predominantly made up of Gentile Christians, 'redeemed from the empty way of life that was your heritage' (1:18; cf. 4:3–4)." J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 6. See also Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 38; Edwin A. Blum, *1 Peter,* EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 212.

Thus, we have in Matthew 21 Jesus speaking of the stone (himself) the builders (Jews) rejected (v. 42). This is followed by his statement that the kingdom of God will be given to a nation (ἔθνοσ) that will produce its fruit (v. 43). In 1 Peter 2, the apostle also refers to the stone (Jesus) that the builders (Jews) rejected (v. 7). This stone, he says, has become "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." For whom has it become a rock of offence? Peter continues, "They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed" (v. 8). This can only refer to the Jews, since "to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2). Then in the very next verse Peter, addressing the Christian churches in Asia Minor, says, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation [ἔθνοσ]" (1 Peter 2:9).

The parallels between Matthew 21:42–43 and 1 Peter 2:7–9 seems to indicate that Peter at least understood the ἔθνοσ Jesus had in mind as the Christian Church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews belong to it not because they are Jews, but because they became disciples of Christ, and the Gentiles belong to it because they joined themselves to the Jewish Messiah, despite the fact that they were Gentiles. "Nothing is clearer from the whole of Matt's gospel than that the church of Jesus is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. It is this Jewish-Gentile church that Matt calls ἔθνοσ."[62]

D. J. Harrington believes the point of the parable is that the Jewish leadership is replaced with "the leaders of the Jewish Christian community."[63] He rejects any identification of the "nation" in verse 43 with the Gentile Church or with "the Church understood as a 'third race' besides Jews and Gentiles."[64] For him the parable teaches that the vineyard, Israel, is taken from the priests and elders and given to the leaders of the Jewish Christian community.

The idea that only the Jewish leadership was involved and that the rest of the Jewish nation was unaffected and remained God's special people is not in harmony with the ancient Near Eastern concept of corporate personality.[65] It was common in the ancient world for a king or leader to represent corporately the whole nation. "In Hittite literature, for instance, an offence committed by the king could bring punishment on all people."[66] As a result of the king's action the people suffered.

We find the same notion in Israel. For example, in Joshua 7 all of Israel suffered a defeat at Ai because of Achan's sin. Furthermore, the whole household of Achan was punished, although only he is described as committing the theft.

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[62] Meier, 97. See also France, 310; Hagner, 623.

[63] Harrington, 304.

[64] Ibid.

[65] By corporate personality we mean "the treatment of the family, the clan, or the nation, as a unit in place of the individual" (Wheeler Robinson, *The People and the Book*, 376, quoted in J. R. Porter, "The Legal Aspects of Corporate Personality in the Old Testament," *VT* 15 [1965]: 361–68).

[66] John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 2000), 354.

Israel, and particularly Achan's household, was obviously considered to be a corporate personality.[67] Therefore the whole group received the punishment, even though only Achan had committed the crime. Another example of corporate responsibility is David's punishment for holding a census (2 Sam 24:1–7). Although it was David who erred, 70,000 of his men from Dan to Beersheba (v. 15) died as a result of it.

> According to the anthropological dominant in the Old Testament a man only exists as a member of a community, there is no isolated man, there are only *bene ʿadam* [sons of Adam], that is, participators in the great collective personality which is constituted by humanity and, more especially, Israel.[68]

This notion of corporate personality and responsibility also has positive effects. The family of Rahab was spared in Jericho because of her well-doing (Joshua 6:17). This is not to deny that the Old Testament does not also recognize the concept of personal responsibility. Particularly from the time of Ezekiel on, personal responsibility is stressed (Ezek 18:20), but this is primarily in regard to salvation, whereas the election of Israel was for service, not for salvation.[69]

In the NT the corporate personality concept seems to be present in the words of Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:35: "That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar." The scribes and Pharisees had nothing to do with the murders of the righteous people from Abel to Zechariah, the first and last martyrs of the Old Testament canon (2 Chron 24:20). Zechariah died about 800 B.C., but he died at the hand of king Joash, who represented the people of Israel in his day as the scribes and Pharisees represented Israel in the days of Jesus.[70]

Considering the notion of corporate personality in Israel, it seems very unlikely that in the parable of the vinedresser only the leaders of Israel are affected

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[67] It was H. Wheeler Robinson in his book *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh, 1911) who introduced the concept of "corporate personality" into biblical interpretation (J. W. Rogerson, "Corporate Personality," *ABD,* 1:1156). See also J. W. Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," *JTS* 21 (1980): 1–16. Porter argues against the concept of corporate personality in the legal sphere of the OT. He believes it may have greater validity in non-legal contexts (379 n. 5).

[68] Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 41. Other examples can be found in the episode of the Gibeonites and the descendants of Saul in 2 Sam 21, and in the law of the responsibility of a whole city for the undetected murder within its area (Deut 21:1–9).

[69] See H. H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (London: Lutterworth, 1953), 95.

[70] Davies and Allison (3:318) comment, "Perhaps the notion of communal solidarity is implicit: by their own deeds the scribes and Pharisees assent to and so join in their ancestors' crimes."

and not the nation as a whole.[71] The actions of the leaders affected all Israel.[72] Therefore, the nation as a whole was relieved of its responsibility to proclaim the message of salvation, and the task was given to the Christians[73] who, it must be emphasized again, came at first almost exclusively out of Judaism. Eventually, however, Gentile Christians outnumbered Jewish Christians in the Roman Empire.

We fully agree with D. A. Hagner, who wrote:

> This setting aside of the privilege of Israel as the unique people of God in favor of another people, namely, the church (*pace* Snodgrass, *Parable*), is of course nothing short of revolutionary. The singular ἔθνοσ, which means "people" or "nation," inevitably alludes to the eventual mission to the Gentiles, the ἔθνοι, plural of the same word (cf. 12:21; 24:14; 28:19) . . . To be sure, as several have pointed out (e.g., Harrington), it is not *necessary* to interpret the ἔθνοσ as meaning the church. But given the total context of the Gospel, this is the most natural interpretation of the passage.[74]

In recent years many Messianic Jews have developed a theology according to which God has two peoples as witnesses in this world: Christians and Jews. "Of each group there exists a remnant of believers, a Jewish remnant and a Gentile remnant. The Jewish remnant is the Israel of God, the Gentile remnant is the Gentile people of God. Together Jews and Gentiles make up the people of God, the *ekklesia*."[75] In other words, there is no change in the New Testament

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[71] Francis Beare writes, "In the parable, all the tenants are involved in the same guilt, not merely their overseers. It is really 'the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah' that are guilty of all these offences, culminating in the murder of the Son" (*Matthew*, 431).

[72] Ellen White, too, recognized that although it was primarily the priests and teachers who bore the responsibility for the rejection of Jesus, the nation as a whole suffered the consequences: "In the parable of the vineyard it was the husbandmen whom Christ pronounced guilty. It was they who had refused to return to their lord the fruit of his ground. In the Jewish nation it was the priests and teachers who, by misleading the people, had robbed God of the service which He claimed. It was they *who turned the nation away from Christ* . . . For the rejection of Christ, with the results that followed, they [the priests and elders] were responsible. *A nation's sin and a nation's ruin* were due to the religious leaders. (*Christ's Object Lesson* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941], 304–305, emphasis supplied). She also writes, "Withdrawing the veil from the future, He showed how, by failure to fulfill His purpose, *the whole nation* was forfeiting His blessing, and bringing ruin upon itself" (Ibid., 284). "All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world. . . . But *Israel did not fulfill God's purpose*" (Ibid., 294–295).

[73] "*As a people the Jews had failed* of fulfilling God's purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others" (Ibid., 296). The work she mentions can only refer to the mission of bringing the message of salvation to the world.

[74] Hagner, 623.

[75] Michael Schiffman, *Return of the Remnant* (Baltimore, MD: Lederer Messianic Publishers, 1996), 82.

from the Jewish nation as God's elect people to the Christian Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, as God's special people.

While we agree that there is a Jewish remnant—the early church was made up primarily of Jewish believers in Christ—we find no evidence in Scripture or history for the idea of two peoples of God, side by side, witnessing to God's truth. Paul speaks only of "one body" (Eph 4:4; 1 Cor 12:5), not two. One body—the Christian Church—made up of Jews and Gentiles. In Ephesians 3:6 Paul calls Gentiles "fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel." If Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews "of the same body" (σύσσωμα), the church, why would God have another body of Jews besides that one body consisting of Jews and Gentiles?

Jesus concludes the parable with a further reference to the stone the builders rejected. "Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to pieces" (21:44).[76] At the time of his ministry here on earth Jesus was a stumbling block to many in Israel;[77] when he returns in glory at the end of time to judge the world he will crush all opposition.[78]

At the end of Jesus' speech the priests and elders perceived the drift of the two parables, "the two sons" and "the vinedressers," and they wanted to apprehend him, but they were afraid of the multitude who saw him as a prophet (21:45, 46). A few days later, however, the multitude was ready to shout, "Let him be crucified!" (27:22).

Conclusion

The kingdom of God Jesus mentions in Matthew 21:43 is the rule of God in the lives of his people, the spiritual kingdom, or the kingdom of grace which he established with his first advent. It is this kingdom that was taken from the Jewish nation and given to the Christian Church, which consisted at first primarily of Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but to whom were soon added converted Gentiles.[79] Together they were given the task to go and make disciples of

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[76] Many modern interpreters regard this verse as an early interpolation in Matthew, though most do not doubt its authenticity, since the same thought appears also in Luke 20:18. See Albright and Mann, 265, 266.

[77] This seems to be an allusion to "the rock of offense" in Isaiah 8:14, 15.

[78] This is a clear reference to the stone kingdom in Daniel 2:44, which, at the end of time, will break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world.

[79] Some readers will be interested in Ellen White's thoughts on this issue. They are most cogently expressed in her chapter on the Parable of the Lord's Vineyard in *Christ's Object Lessons*. Ellen White taught that the whole Jewish nation forfeited the special status as God's people because of the rejection of Christ through its leadership. Nowhere does she support the idea that the Jewish people are still his witnesses parallel to the Christian Church. (Emphasis has been supplied in the quotes that follow.)

"Withdrawing the veil from the future, He showed how, by failure to fulfill His purpose, *the whole nation* was forfeiting His blessing, and bringing ruin upon itself" (284).

"The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God's

all nations and baptize them "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Gerhard Pfandl is an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute. He holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Old Testament from Andrews University. A native of Austria, he has worked as a pastor in Austria and in the Southern California Conference. From 1977–1989 he was Professor of Religion at Bogenhofen Seminary in Austria. Prior to joining the Biblical Research Institute in 1999, he served for seven years as Field Secretary of the South Pacific Division in Sydney. He has published many articles for scholarly and popular journals in German and English and is the author of vol. 1 of the Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*. 104474.2373@compuserve.com

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purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world. . . . But *Israel did not fulfill God's purpose*" (290).

"In the parable of the vineyard, after Christ had portrayed before the priests their crowning act of wickedness, He put to them the question, 'When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?' The priests had been following the narrative with deep interest, and without considering the relation of the subject to themselves they joined with the people in answering, 'He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons.' Unwittingly they had pronounced their own doom. Jesus looked upon them, and under His searching gaze they knew that He read the secrets of their hearts. His divinity flashed out before them with unmistakable power. They saw in the husbandmen a picture of themselves, and they involuntarily exclaimed, 'God forbid!'" (294–5).

"Christ would have averted *the doom of the Jewish nation* if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and thenceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. *The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation*" (295).

"*As a people the Jews had failed* of fulfilling God's purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others" (296).

"The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the *Jewish nation*. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns" (296).

"The Lord says, 'Shall I not visit for these things?' Jer 5:9. Because they failed of fulfilling God's purpose, *the children of Israel were set aside*, and God's call was extended to other peoples. If these too prove unfaithful, will they not in like manner be rejected?" (304).

The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11

Ekkehardt Müller
Biblical Research Institute

Revelation 11:1–13 contains two scenes, the first one focusing on an act of measuring and the second one dealing with two witnesses. The latter scene, one of the most difficult passages in Revelation, has been explained in a number of ways. The two witnesses have been understood as representing Enoch and Elijah, Moses and Elijah, Elijah and Jeremiah, eschatological prophets not directly identified with OT prophets, Peter and Paul, Stephen and James the Just, James and John, John the Baptist and Jesus, James the Just and James the son of Zebedee, the high priests Ananias and Joshua, the OT and the NT, the Law and the Prophets, the prophetic witness of the church, "the true spiritual value of the Israelite religion preserved intact in Christianity," and the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ.[1]

It is obvious that the passage Rev 11:3–13 is highly symbolical, as is true for the entire apocalyptic part of Revelation (chapters 4–22a). This leaves us with two main options. Either the two witnesses point to the church or the church and the synagogue, or the two witnesses represent the OT and the NT. Although many expositors identify the two witnesses with two historical persons, mainly from the OT, nevertheless they oftentimes regard them as representatives of the church. Much can be said about the passage under review, but we will mainly focus on whether the two witnesses represent the church or Scriptures.

I. Context

1. The Trumpet Vision. Revelation 11:1–13 is part of one of the septenaries of Revelation, namely the trumpet septet. In this vision an introductory temple scene (8:2–6) is followed by the sounding of six trumpets (8:7–9:21). Before the last trumpet is blown, a kind of interlude is found, comprising Rev

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[1] For more details, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 52 B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 598–603. Cf. also, Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 143.

10:1–11:14. It ends with the description of the activity of the two witnesses. We would prefer to call this section an expansion of the sixth trumpet—also referred to as the second woe—and indeed 11:14 contains a summary statement pointing to the end of the second woe and the beginning of the third woe, the seventh trumpet. Whereas the seventh trumpet depicts the coming of the kingdom of God and refers to the final judgment, Rev 10–11a focuses on the time prior to the final events of world history.

2. Rev 9–11. Revelation 10 and 11 are connected in a number of ways, especially through the concept of prophecy.[2] In Rev 10, John receives the command to prophesy. In Rev 11a, the two witnesses function as prophets.[3] Their ministry and fate are described, as are the effects on humankind.

Not only are Rev 10 and Rev 11 connected, but also Rev 9 and Rev 10–11a. The phrase ἐκ τῶν στομάτων αὐτῶν ἐκπορεύεται πῦρ ("fire came out of their mouths") in 9:17 is also found in 11:5, though in an inverted order and with στόμα ("mouth") in the singular. It is not found elsewhere. The two witnesses have at least one of the same abilities that the strange horses have. Negative and positive powers are contrasted.

The sixth trumpet is negative. The survivors do not even repent of their works. Yet, Rev 10–11a adds a positive note. There is John the prophet. There are the two witnesses or prophets. Though killed, they are raised and taken to heaven. And interestingly enough, there are finally people who glorify God.[4] Not everything is pitch-black. As with the two prophets, so also with John: his

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[2] For a discussion on the interrelatedness of the different parts of the trumpet vision, see Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4–11*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, Volume 21 (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1996), 377–382.

[3] The word group προφητεῖαπροφητεύωπροφήτης is found twice in Rev 10 and three times in Rev 11a. On prophecy, see, for example, Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 212; S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus, 1968), 96; Pierre Prigent, *L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean*, 2d rev. ed., Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, 2d series, vol. 14 (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981), 149–150. Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 122, maintains: "A key for the entire thematic focus of this section is found in the observation that allusions to prophets and prophetic speech run through it like a scarlet thread (10:7, 11; 11:3, 11; cf. also 11:18)." Similarly, Kenneth A. Strand, in "The 'Spotlight-On-Last-Events' Sections in the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27 (1989): 208–209, views the interlude as twofold. He declares: "The theme of prophetic proclamation which is so basic and central to chapter 10 continues, under different imagery, in chapter 11: namely, the imagery of a temple setting. Here we find . . . a temple-measuring scene . . . followed by the pericope concerning two prophetic witnesses (vv. 3–13) who are introduced in terms of the temple imagery of two olive trees that are also two lampstands (vv. 3–4)" (208).

[4] U. B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1984), 215–216, has a point when he states that the structure of Rev 11:13 corresponds with that of Rev 9:14–21: (1) description of a plague (9:14–17 and 11:13ab), (2) number of killed persons (9:18 and 11:13c), and (3) reaction of the rest (9:20–21 and 11:13d).

ministry will not be in vain and not without a positive effect. Some people will repent.

3. Rev 11a. The main figures of Rev 11:1–14 are John, the two witnesses, a beast, the earth dwellers, and a voice from heaven. The lack of a vision/audition element at the beginning of Rev 11 might point to the fact that Rev 11 should not be separated from Rev 10.[5] Vision, audition, and action are going on, even when new scenes emerge.[6]

Revelation 10 ends with the command to prophesy, which is directed to John. Revelation 11 starts with John. It is the second symbolic action that he has to perform after having eaten the scroll. He receives a measuring rod and—in direct speech—the task to measure the temple.[7]

A shift takes place with Rev 11:3. Though the direct speech continues, it is no longer John who receives orders. Instead, one finds a report on two witnesses. The two sections are linked by the same time element, the forty-two months and the 1260 days,[8] the verb "to give,"[9] and the concept of a city.[10] Thus, the entire expansion of the sixth trumpet must be seen as a larger unit. Nevertheless, we are justified in looking at an individual scene only—such as the one dealing with the two witnesses—so long as we do not neglect the connections to the preceding material.

II. Observations on Rev 11:3–13

The two witnesses have the function of prophesying (11:3, 6) and are called the two olive trees, the two lampstands (11:4), and the two prophets (11:10). With this prophecy an important concept of Rev 11 has emerged.

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[5] The term ἤκουσαν ("they heard") in Rev 11:12 refers to the two witnesses and does not have a structuring function.

[6] See Richard C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 326.

[7] Krodel, 217–218, states that Rev 11 is a continuation of Rev 10. "The symbolic action of eating the little scroll, A (10:8–10), is followed by the commission, B (10:11), and by the new prophetic action of measuring the temple, A' (11:1–2)."

[8] Both expressions denote the same period, for forty-two months of thirty days each are 1260 days.

[9] In the beginning and toward the end of the first paragraph, ἐδόθη is used. See also James Moffat, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 5:414, who argues for the unity of Rev 11:1–2 and Rev 11:3–13 and—in support of his view—mentions (1) the same time span, (2) the "strange δίδωμι-construction . . . and (3) the inversion of object and verb" that is common to both sections (11:2, 5, 6, 9, 10). The prophetic mission finds its counterpart in the punishment. In Rev 11:3, the future tense of the same verb is employed. J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 184, mentions that the phrases "I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy 1260 days" and "it was given to the nations, and they shall trample the holy city forty-two months" (11:2) is an intentional parallelism describing what God allows and what he commissions, "two sides of one coin."

[10] In v. 2 the holy city is mentioned. In v. 8, a great city appears. A city is again found in 11:13, referring back to the great city.

Revelation 11:3–13 seems to be structured by time elements. The ministry of the two witnesses is introduced, and the 1260 days of their activity are portrayed. A shift occurs in Rev 11:7, for it describes the time toward the end of or after they have finished their ministry. Yet another time element is introduced in Rev 11:9, the three and a half days of their death. A shift occurs again: καὶ μετὰ τὰς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ ἥμισυ, ("after the three and a half days,"11:11), and the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses are reported (Rev 11:11–12). The description of their resurrection and ascension also includes a report on the effects of these events and the reaction of their enemies. The phrase καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ ("and at that hour") in Rev 11:13 connects this verse with the preceding verse, describing the ascension of the two witnesses.

Now we can outline Rev 11:1–13:

> *The Two Witnesses (3–13)*
> (1) The activity of the two witnesses (3–6)
>   (a) Prophesying for 1260 days (3)
>   (b) Standing before the Lord as olive trees and lampstands (4)
>   (c) Their authority and power (5–6)
> (2) The end of their witness (7–10)
>   (a) The beast—3 statements (7)
>   (b) The dead bodies—3 1/2 days (8–9)
>   (c) Those who dwell on earth—3 statements (10)
> (3) After the 3 1/2 days (11–13)
>   (a) Resurrection and effect on those seeing it (11)
>   (b) Ascension, seen by enemies (12)
>   (c) Earthquake destroying the city, killing people, and causing others to glorify God (13)

III. Characteristics of the Two Witnesses

Although some characteristics of the two witnesses have already been mentioned, it is necessary to elaborate on them in order to gain a clearer picture of what the passage is all about.

1. They Are Called Two Witnesses. The word family μαρτ- is important in Revelation. It comes in two nouns, namely the "witness" as a person (μάρτυς) and the "witness" or "testimony" as the message proclaimed by a witness (μαρτυρία), and one verb, namely "to witness" (μαρτυρέω). The two nouns are used with the two witnesses (11:3), who finish their witness (11:7).

The noun μάρτυς is found five times in Revelation. Jesus (1:5; 3:14) and his followers (2:13; 17:6) as well as the two entities mentioned in our passage (11:3) are witnesses.

Those who bear witness (μαρτυρέω) are John (1:2), the angel sent by Jesus (22:16), and Jesus himself (22:18, 20). What is their witness all about? John, having received the Revelation of Jesus Christ through an angel, "*gives witness* to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ by reporting what he saw" (1:2). The same idea is found at the end of Revelation. "I, Jesus, sent my

angel *to give* you this *testimony/witness* for the churches" (22:16), referring to the NT book of Revelation. Jesus himself also calls attention to Scripture as embodied in the Book of Revelation. "I *give witness* to everyone who hears the prophetic words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words in this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city described in this book. The one who *gives this testimony/witness* says, Yes, I am coming soon." (22:18–20).

Most often the term $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ is used.[11] Once it is employed to designate the heavenly sanctuary, "the tent of testimony." In 12:11 the people of God conquered Satan "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." Here we already encounter two elements. Another set of two is found in 12:17 when we hear about the commandments of Jesus and the testimony/witness of Jesus, which in 19:10 is identified as the Spirit of prophecy. However, most common is the combination "the word of God and the testimony/witness (of Jesus)" (1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4).[12] In 11:7 the two witnesses finish their testimony/witness.

We notice that in Revelation the most important term of the word family $\mu\alpha\rho\tau$- is the term $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$. Again and again it appears in connection with another expression, predominantly the "word of God." The $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ is not so much what believers proclaim but what they have. $M\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ has to do with prophecy. And indeed, the parallel text to 19:10 replaces the phrase "testimony of Jesus" with the "prophets" (22:9). The verb ($\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$) is used to point to Scripture, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, the latter being reflected in the Book of Revelation. Thus, the word family $\mu\alpha\rho\tau$- in Revelation has a strong affinity to Scripture.

Why two witnesses? The number two is important because according to OT law two or three witnesses were required to build a case in court (Deut 19:15).[13] This principle is also used in the NT. Jesus applied it to himself repeatedly.[14]

2. They Are Two Olive Trees. Whereas the word family $\mu\alpha\rho\tau$- occurs quite often, the phrase "the two olive trees" is found only once in Revelation. However, its OT background is clearly Zech 4:1–10. There we find a lampstand and next to it two olive trees which furnish oil for the lampstand. Kenneth Strand has shown that the common interpretation of the passage is flawed.

> Perhaps the most common interpretation of the Zechariah passage, as represented in the commentaries, is that the two olive trees represent two leaders among the returned Hebrew exiles after the Babylonian

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[11] It is found ten times in nine verses.

[12] In 6:9 the direct reference to Jesus is missing. The souls had been killed because of the word of God and "the testimony/witness that they had." In 20:4 the word of God and the testimony of Jesus come in reversed order.

[13] Cf., Beale, 581; Morris, 143.

[14] See, for instance, John 8:17–18. Cf., Beale, 575.

captivity—usually considered to be Joshua and Zerubbabel. What is generally overlooked in this interpretation of the symbolism of chap. 4 is that *contextually* that chapter deals with *only the one* leader, Zerubbabel, just as chap. 3 deals with *only the other* leader, Joshua.[15]

However, the text clearly connects the two olive trees with the work of the Holy Spirit.[16] The lampstand represents Zerubbabel. Whereas the number of the lampstands in Revelation has been increased from one to two, there are two olive trees both in Zechariah and in Revelation. Strand has argued that because of this continuity of the olive trees, their meaning should remain constant in both biblical books, "referring to the Spirit's work," that is, "the Holy Spirit's role in providing the word of God, in both the OT and NT aspects."[17]

3. They Are Two Lampstands. Lampstands are mentioned seven times in Revelation. Six of these occurrences are found in the letter frame of Revelation, in this case in Rev 1 and 2.[18] They depict the seven golden lampstands and are identified with seven churches (1:20). The only other place where lampstands occur is 11:4. Scholars have argued that the two witnesses of Rev 11 must refer to the church, since the seven lampstands are clearly identified as churches. A consistent usage of terms in Revelation has been suggested and called for. Some have proposed that the two flawless churches of Rev 2–3, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are the two witnesses of Rev 11.[19]

Although words are normally used with the same meaning throughout the Book of Revelation, there are exceptions. The seven angels of the seven churches (Rev 1–3) are different from the four angels in Rev 7 and also from the seven angels blowing the seven trumpets in Rev 8–11. Sometimes in Revelation they represent human beings, in other instances heavenly creatures. A term related to the lampstands ($\lambda \upsilon \chi \nu \acute{\iota} \alpha \iota$) is the word "lamp" ($\lambda \acute{\upsilon} \chi \nu o \varsigma$). Whereas in 22:5 we hear about the light of the lamp and the light of the sun, in 21:23 Jesus the Lamb is the lamp. A change of meaning may occur also with the lampstands. In Rev 11 they are identified with the two olive trees, the two witnesses, and the two prophets. There is also a difference with regard to location. Whereas Jesus Christ walks among the seven lampstands on earth (2:1), the two lampstands of Rev 11 are standing before the Lord of the earth, possibly being connected to his heavenly sanctuary.[20]

John uses expressions and OT allusions creatively. He also blends different scenes and texts. This phenomenon must be taken into account when interpreting the Apocalypse. "The one lampstand [of Zech 4] becomes two, and these in

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[15] Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Olive Trees of Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20 (1982): 257.

[16] Cf., Beale, 577–578; Morris, 144.

[17] Strand, "The Two Olive Trees," 260.

[18] The texts are 1:12, 13, 20 (twice); 2:1, 5.

[19] Cf., Beale, 577.

[20] Aune, 613.

turn are said to be synonymous with the two olive trees."[21] It must also be kept in mind that the motif of the lampstands is not the predominant one in Rev 11. More important are the motifs of witness and prophecy. Again the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized. Indeed, God's word is called a lamp in Ps 119:105.

4. They Are Two Prophets and Prophesy. The two witnesses prophesy (11:3), they are two prophets (11:10), and prophecy is ascribed to them (11:6). The word family $\pi\rho o\varphi\eta\tau$- is very prominent in Revelation, especially in chapter 11. It consists of the verb "to prophesy" ($\pi\rho o\varphi\eta\tau\varepsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$), the noun "prophecy" ($\pi\rho o\varphi\eta\tau\varepsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$), the noun "prophet" ($\pi\rho o\varphi\acute{\eta}\tau\eta\varsigma$), the noun "prophetess" ($\pi\rho o\varphi\tilde{\eta}\tau\iota\varsigma$), and the noun "false prophet" ($\psi\varepsilon\upsilon\delta o\pi\rho o\varphi\acute{\eta}\tau\eta\varsigma$). The last two are not relevant for our investigation.[22]

"To prophesy" is used only in 10:11 and 11:3, which is the same larger context. John the apostle must prophesy, as must the two witnesses.

The term "prophet" in Revelation describes only genuine prophets and the two witnesses.[23] The prophets are called servants of God (10:7; 11:18) and are distinguished from other believers called saints (16:6) and apostles (18:10). It seems that this term describes only persons who have the specific gift of prophecy, as distinct from other believers. The term is not used loosely in the sense of what we today call the "prophetic ministry of a pastor or the church."

The word "prophecy" is found seven times in Revelation. In 19:10 we hear about the Spirit of prophecy. The two witnesses are active during "the days of their prophecy." All the other texts refer to the book of Revelation. A beatitude is pronounced for those who read and hear "the words of the prophecy and keep what is written in it" (1:3). This is repeated in 22:7: "Blessed is the one who keeps *the words of the prophecy of this book.*" The very same formulation is found in 22:10, 18 and in a reversed order in 22:19, "the words of the book of the prophecy."

Thus the word family $\pi\rho o\varphi\eta\tau$- focuses on genuine prophecy in the narrow sense and on the product of this prophecy as found in the Book of Revelation and thereby in Scripture. It is remarkable that in the context of the two witnesses all three crucial terms of the word family $\pi\rho o\varphi\eta\tau$- are used. Actually, the two witnesses are the only entity that is described with all three major words of this word family. It follows that prophecy is the most prominent characteristic of the two witnesses. The close connection of this word family to the genuine gift of prophecy and to Scripture points toward a specific understanding of the two witnesses.

5. They Are Related to the Lord. The two witnesses are in close relationship to the Lord. They stand before the Lord of the earth (11:4). They belong to the Lord, serve him, and are protected and empowered by the Lord. The phrase

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[21] Mounce, 218.

[22] A false prophetess is found in 2:20. Jezebel calls herself a prophetess. A false prophet occurs in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10.

[23] Rev 10:7; 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:10, 24; 22:6, 9.

may point to their "heavenly origin."[24] "To stand before" is used four times in Revelation. In 7:9 the great multitude "stood before the throne and before the Lamb." In 8:2 seven angels with seven trumpets "stood before God." In 11:4 the two lampstands are "standing before the Lord of the earth." In all these cases a group that is close to and in harmony with God is portrayed. It enjoys a special relationship with and nearness to God. However, in 20:12, after the Millennium, the unsaved dead stand before the throne and are judged. This group is clearly negative. Whereas those who belong to God are blessed in the presence of God, his enemies cannot stand his presence. Beale states:

> The legal nature of the testimony is intensified by the position of the witnesses as they bear their testimony in an unseen courtroom, 'standing before the Lord of the earth.' The Lord is the earth's omniscient judge because 'his eyes . . . range to and fro throughout the earth' (cf. Zech. 4:10, 14; Rev 5:7). This proximity to the Lord also emphasizes the witnesses' direct divine inspiration and commission. Though they live in a world of danger, they are never far from their Lord's sovereign presence. Nothing can separate them from their secure relationship with him.[25]

Obviously the two witnesses share the fate of their Lord. In 11:8 we find their corpses. They participate in the death of their Lord, who had been crucified.[26] But after three and a half days they also share in his resurrection and ascension.

6. They Have to Encounter Difficulties and Must Face Enemies and Temporary Defeat. The two witnesses prophesy 1260 days wearing sackcloth. Occasionally, sackcloth was the attire of prophets (Zech 13:4). It also pointed to mourning (Jer 4:8) and penitence (Matt 11:21).[27] Whereas the prophetic ministry is not always easy and may cause hostility and rejection by those who do not repent, the garment of sackcloth may be a pointer to the nature of the message that the witnesses promulgate. The proclamation of the gospel also contains an element of judgment.

The two witnesses have to face a number of evil powers: "men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations" (11:9), those who dwell on earth (11:10), and especially the beast from the abyss (11:7). The expression "inhabitants of the earth" is a negative term throughout Revelation, designating the enemies of God and his people on earth. They have experienced psychological torment due to their consciences being aroused by the message of the two witnesses, but they have not decided to repent. After the death of the two witnesses they rejoice, only to feel great terror when the two witnesses come to life again.

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[24] Aune, 613.
[25] Beale, 576.
[26] Cf., Aune, 587.
[27] Cf., Aune, 611; Mounce, 217.

The beast from the abyss seems to be Satan working through a secular power. The term "abyss" is found seven times in Revelation. The star fallen from heaven (9:1–2), who has the key to the abyss and actually opens the abyss, is Satan. He brings disaster on humanity. The king of the locusts in 9:11, also called the angel of the abyss, Apollyon, and Abaddon, the destroyer, seems to be the fallen star, Satan. His demonic army floods the earth. However, in 20:1–3 a reversal occurs. Satan's power is taken from him. He is bound in the abyss for 1000 years. This may be alluded to in 17:8, where a beast carries a harlot. This beast has been, is not, comes again out of the abyss, and goes to destruction. The beast in our text (11:7) makes war against, conquers, and kills the two witnesses. The being associated in Revelation with the abyss seems to be Satan, oftentimes working through political powers.[28]

The phrase "to make war against" is found several times in Revelation. A similar phrase is employed in 12:17 and 13:7. In these two texts it is identical, the only exception being that the group against which the war is waged is once called the remnant and once the saints.[29] Another similar phrase is found in 19:19. However, in this case the war is not directed against entities on earth, but against Jesus, the rider on the white horse, and against his army.[30] The word order differs slightly in 11:7. The verb is not used as an infinitive, and the group affected, namely the two witnesses, is just called "them."[31] Obviously the same concept is used in order to point to a war between Satan and groups that belong to God. However, the difference in wording may indicate that the two witnesses cannot be identified with the remnant or the saints. Indeed, in 11:13 a remnant is found that reacts to the experience of the two witnesses.

After the two witnesses are killed, they are denied burial. "Their corpses lie in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified." "From the Eastern point of view, to be deprived of burial was an act of great indignity."[32]

The term "great city" is found eight times in Revelation.[33] Because in all the other texts it is clearly referring to Babylon, 11:8 also seems to describe Babylon. Some expositors understand 11:8 to be alluding to ancient Jerusalem.[34]

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[28] The other beasts come out of the sea or the earth.

[29] The phrase is *ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν* in 12:17 and *ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων* in 13:7. See, Ekkehardt Mueller, "The 144,000 and the Great Multitude" (unpublished manuscript). The OT background is Dan 7:21. Cf., Beale, 588.

[30] *ποιῆσαι τὸν πόλεμον μετὰ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου* (19:19).

[31] The phrase in 11:7 is *ποιήσει μετ᾽ αὐτῶν πόλεμον*.

[32] Mounce, 220.

[33] Rev 11:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21.

[34] Cf., Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 137–138. However, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 127–128, disagrees, stressing that Jesus was crucified outside of Jerusalem and not in the main street. Therefore, Jerusalem is not referred to. Cf. also, Morris, 146.

However, it must be kept in mind that Revelation knows by name only the New Jerusalem. If this latter interpretation is chosen, the verse might express that by crucifying Jesus the Jerusalem of old has become Babylon.[35] Another possibility would be that the first century Babylon, Rome, was responsible for Jesus' death. Likewise, the later Babylon would be responsible for the death of the two witnesses. "The inclusion of a reference to the crucifixion is not to identify a geographical location but to illustrate the response of paganism to righteousness . . . Sodom refers to the depths of moral degradation (cf. Gen 19:4–11), and Egypt is a symbol of oppression and slavery."[36] The city of 11:13, whose tenth part collapsed, seems to refer back to 11:8 and also stand for Babylon. A contrast is given with 11:2, where the holy city is mentioned. This holy city, the people of God and the predecessor of the holy city, the New Jerusalem of Rev 21, will be trampled for 42 months. During the same time span the two witnesses prophesy until they are killed. The great city is the place where the murder takes place. The holy city is trodden under foot.[37]

7. They Have Power. The two witnesses are powerful. Fire comes out of their mouth and devours the enemies. They are able to kill (11:5). Many scholars suggest Elijah as the OT background.[38] In 9:17–18 fire proceeds out of the mouths of the strange horses, a demonic army. Rev 11 provides the victorious counterpart. The two witnesses are also able to let fire come out of their mouth (singular in the Greek) and kill their enemies.

Furthermore, the two witnesses have the power to close the sky so that it does not rain and have the power to turn water into blood and bring about different kinds of plagues. This may remind us of Elijah in 1 Kings 17 and of Moses bringing the third plague on Egypt (Exod 7:17–19). The plagues in 9:18, 20 have a counterpart in 11:6. Thus, the two witnesses are very active during the 1260 days. The period must be understood according to the year-day principle.

The power of the two witnesses is not only evident prior to their deaths, but also in the context of their resurrection. The effects of their ascension are tremendous, ranging from fear to death.

IV. Church or Scriptures?

At first glance it seems that this highly symbolic passage on the two witnesses can be understood in both ways, as representing the church or as depicting Holy Scriptures. As mentioned above, the majority of scholars would prefer the church. Yet, when taking a closer look, a number of features seem to militate against that view.

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[35] Cf., Beale, 591.

[36] Mounce, 221.

[37] Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 127, writes: "The holy city trampled by the Gentiles is wherever the witnesses lie dead in the street of the great city (11:8)."

[38] Cf., for instance, Mounce, 218–219. He suggests 2 Kings 1 as OT background.

Kenneth Strand has argued in favor of the OT message and the NT witness. "These two witnesses are, namely, 'the word of God' and 'the testimony of Jesus Christ,' or what we today would call the OT prophetic message and the NT apostolic witness."[39] He arrived at that conclusion by noticing (1) that the two witnesses "do not function as two individual entities, but only as *one entity*–always in unity and in absolute union";[40] (2) that "the two witnesses constitute a symbolism drawn from *several prophetic backgrounds* beyond the obvious allusions to Moses and Elijah, just as in 11:8 'the great city' also embraces a *blend* of symbolic references . . .";[41] and (3) that Revelation contains an extensive two-witness theology.[42]

We now turn to some arguments favoring the identification of the two witnesses with Scripture.

1. The Unity of the Two Witnesses. Strand's observation that the two witnesses function as one entity is correct. Whatever they do and whatever happens to them, they are inseparable. But in addition to their common action and destiny, the text furnishes another interesting and important detail. Nouns that are employed in connection with the two witnesses oftentimes come in the singular instead of the plural. This change from plural to singular emphasizes that the two witnesses always go together.

(1) Whereas in 9:18, 20 fire comes out of the mouths—plural—of the strange horses, in 11:5 fire comes out of the mouth—singular—of the two witnesses. Although there are two witnesses, they have only one mouth.

(2) Although they are two, they have one prophecy (11:6) and one testimony/witness (11:7).

(3) The word "corpse/body" is found three times in 11:3–13. Their body—singular—lies in the street of the great city (11:8).[43] People see their body—singular—three and a half days (11:9), and their bodies—plural—are not buried (11:9).

(4) A tomb—singular—is not accessible to them (11:9).

It seems that the change to the singular was done intentionally in order to stress the unity of the two witnesses. The usage of both singular and plural within the very same verse may point to the unity in duality. This feature fits best the interpretation of the two witnesses as Scriptures.

2. Fire Coming Out of Their Mouth. Although fire reminds us of Elijah, the idea of fire coming out of a mouth is not found in connection with him. This fact is recognized by David Aune. "The motif of fire emanating from a person's

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[39] Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3–12," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19 (1981): 134.

[40] Ibid., 130.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Cf., ibid., 131–134; and idem, "The Two Olive Trees," 259–260.

[43] Morris, 145, observes: "*Bodies* is actually singular, 'body', which may point to a close unity between the two."

mouth was used as a metaphor for speaking forth the word of God, usually in situations of rebuke and condemnation . . . "[44] In 2 Sam 22:9 fire comes from the mouth of Yahweh. Jeremiah 5:14 may be the major background for 11:5. God`s word becomes a fire in Jeremiah's mouth: "Behold, I am making my words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them." The emphasis is on the Word of God which comes to Jeremiah and is proclaimed by him. This word is reliable and is different from the word of the false prophets. "The power of the word of God is expressed in a variety of ways also, such as the rain that causes seed to germinate (Isa 55:11) and other metaphors (Isa 9:8; 11:4)."[45] The two witnesses are linked with Scripture.

3. Prophecy. We have already investigated prophecy in Revelation and seen its important role not only in the Apocalypse as a whole but especially in the trumpet vision. Charles H. Giblin states:

> In the wider context of the three woes, Rev.11.1–13 must be judged to form an integral part of the second woe . . . it provides solid insight concerning a theme central to Rev. as a whole: prophetic ministry as essentially concerned with the message of judgment, salvation, and need for repentance.[46]

Obviously, prophecy in Revelation is not used in a wider sense. Prophets are real prophets. Prophecy is also linked to Scripture.[47] Therefore, it is better to understand the two witnesses, who are called the two prophets, as Scripture rather than as the church. They follow the fate of Jesus and the OT prophets and symbolically die in the city where their Lord was crucified, namely in a Jerusalem that has become Babylon, "for it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).

4. The Witness. What has been said about prophecy is also true for the witness/testimony. "The noun 'witness' is used here as an equivalent to the verb 'to prophesy' in v. 3 and the noun 'prophecy' in v. 6." [48] The word family $\mu\alpha\rho\tau$- is linked to Scripture. Most frequently the noun "testimony/witness" comes in a form that Strand would call the two-witness theology. He holds that the two

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[44] Aune, 61

[45] Aune, 614. Might the rain mentioned in 11:6 also be an allusion to the word of God? Isa 55:10–11 uses this metaphor and in addition speaks about God's mouth: "For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth. It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it." The difference between Isaiah and Rev 11 is that Isaiah is positive, although calling people to return to the Lord (Isa 55:7), whereas in Rev 11 we find a judgment context with the intention to bring about repentance (Rev 9:21; 11:13).

[46] Charles Homer Giblin, "Revelation 11.1–13: Its Form, Function, and Contextual Integration," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 454.

[47] See the discussion above.

[48] Aune, 616.

witnesses correspond to the so-called two-witness theology, for instance, "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:2, 9; 20:4).[49] This theology is found also outside Revelation.[50] Strand summarizes his findings:

> . . . the book of Revelation places a pervasive emphasis on 'two witnesses' that constitute a unity in their divine activity—namely, 'the word of God' and 'the testimony of Jesus Christ.' . . . Moreover, in the very 'interlude' in Revelation that contains the two-witnesses presentation, there is set forth (in Rev 10:7) the same concept of united witness by the OT prophets and the NT message."[51]

5. The Concept of the City. Babylon the great city is found in 11:8. Babylon is portrayed as a woman, as a harlot, and as a city.[52] She has a counterpart in history, the woman of Rev 12 that gives birth to the Messiah and represents God's true church. She also has an eschatological counterpart portrayed as a woman and a city, namely, the New Jerusalem, the holy and beloved city, the bride of the lamb.[53]

Whereas Babylon seems to be depicted in Rev 11:8 and 13, Rev 11:2 mentions the holy city. She is trampled for 42 months. This is the same time span when the woman of Rev 12 is in the desert. In other words, the holy city of 11:2 and the woman of Rev 12 seem to be the same entity, the true church through the centuries, going through difficult times. The church is the holy city. So is the

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[49] For a discussion of the term "testimony of Jesus" see Gerhard Pfandl, "The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, Volume 7, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 295–333. On pages 321–322 he summarizes important results:

(1) In the New Testament the term $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\nu\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (testimony) is mainly used by John.

(2) Outside of the Book of Revelation $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\nu\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ used in a genitive construction is always a genitivus subjectivus.

(3) In the Apocalypse all references to $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\nu\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ 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 gives, 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 to 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.

[50] Strand, "The Two Witnesses," 132, refers, e.g., to 1 Pet 1:10–12, Luke 24:27, and John 5:46.

[51] Ibid., 134.

[52] See Rev 17 and 18.

[53] See Rev 21 and 22, especially 20:9 and 21:9–10.

New Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven and has a predecessor and an opponent in the present time. The predecessor is the holy city in 11:2 and in Rev 12. The opponent is the harlot Babylon.

Obviously, these two cities found in 11:1–13 are contrasted. But if the holy city indeed represents the church, then it is not very likely that the two witnesses point to her again. It is better to understand the two witnesses as the Holy Scriptures.

6. The Time Span. The 1260 days/years occur in Revelation in different forms, namely as 1260 days, 42 months, and as three and a half times. This time span is found twice in Daniel and five times in Revelation. Normally it refers to the time of distress through which God's church has to go. Although the same period is used with regard to the two witnesses, the emphasis seems to be slightly different. Whereas Dan 7:25; 12:7 as well as Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5 seem to focus on the time period as a whole, Rev 11:3–13 apparently is concerned with the end of the time span. Whereas the church is liberated at the end of the 1260 years, the two witnesses are killed. Therefore, the two witnesses need not represent the church.

7. The Lampstands. The seven lampstands of Rev 1–2 and the two lampstands of Rev 11:4 may not be identical. They are found in different locations. Although both groups stand in a certain relationship to the Lord, the fact that the two lampstands stand before the Lord of the earth singles them out and gives them special attention. Whereas five of the seven lampstands of Rev 2–3 are rebuked, and two of them do not receive any praise, no negative statements are made about the two lampstands in Rev 11. One might argue that the two positive lampstands of Rev 2–3 are found in the two lampstands of Rev 11. However, the lampstands of Smyrna and Philadelphia are locally restricted, but the two lampstands of Rev 11 are obviously not. Smyrna and Philadelphia are also restricted in time, if one takes them as time periods of church history, whereas the lampstands of Rev 12 cover the full range of the 1260 years and more. Thus, we are not forced to understand the lampstands of Rev 11 as the church or as similar entities.

8. The Judgment Motif. Beale claims: "The two prophets preached not only that salvation is in Christ but also that rejection of Christ amounts to idolatry and will be punished by judgment . . ."[54] This may be indicated by the garments of sackcloth.[55] Judgment seems to play a crucial part of the ministry of the two witnesses. Fire from the mouth of the witnesses that devours and kills enemies, lack of rain, turning the waters into blood, and bringing about all kinds of plagues is strong language. Although this is a symbolic description, the idea of judgment is quite clearly employed. Judgment continues even after the resurrection of the witnesses. The inhabitants of the earth are horrified and probably

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[54] Beale, 596.
[55] Cf. Amos 8:10.

again tormented. An earthquake destroys a tenth of the city and kills 7000 persons. This is not the eschatological earthquake described in 6:14 and 16:18–20, but it is judgment anyway. Yet repentance is still possible.

Rev 13:3–13 fits the overall context of the trumpets as judgments intended to lead humanity to repentance. Again Beale:

> The nature of the plagues and torment is likely the same as that experienced by the ungodly from the first six trumpets, especially the first two woes . . . This is pointed to by the following lexical and conceptual parallels: (1) Both are referred to as 'plagues' (. . . 8:12; 9:20; 11:6) (2) directed against 'earth-dwellers' (. . . 8:13; 11:10) (3) by beings whose mouths have been 'authorized' to judge (. . . 9:3, 10, 19; 11:6). (4) The plagues include famine conditions (cf. 8:8–9; locusts in 9:7–10; 11:6a), (5) 'killing' (. . . 9:15; 18, 20; 11:5), and (6) 'harming' (. . . 9:10, 19; 11:5) (7) 'fire proceeding out of the mouth' of executioners (. . . 9:17–18; 11:5; cf. 16:8–9), (8) water becoming 'blood' (. . . 8:8; 11:6), and (9) effects in and from 'heaven' (8:10; 9:1; 11:6; cf. 8:12). (10) The plagues also have the effect of 'tormenting' the minds of unbelievers by reminding them of their hopeless spiritual plight, which results in forms of depression (. . . 9:5–6; 11:10). (11) The narratives of the first six trumpets and of the witnesses both conclude with a specific percentage of unbelievers being killed . . .[56]

Remnant/survivors are found in 9:20 and 11:13. Whereas the trumpets proper involve evil powers, the judgment through the two witnesses points to another side and may emphasize more clearly God's direct involvement.

Coming back to our question of whether the two witnesses present the church or Scripture, we notice that the language—though symbolic—points to active involvement in judgment on the part of the two witnesses. According to Scripture, the church proclaims the Gospel message but does not execute judgment. But according to Heb 4:12, Scripture has such a function: "Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart." Therefore, it may be better to take the two witnesses as the Scripture of the OT and the NT.

9. Structural Deliberations. The Book of Revelation contains three major interludes or expansions, Rev 7, Rev 10–11a, and Rev 14a. Rev 7 deals with an aspect of the church, the 144,000, and the great multitude. Rev 14a emphasizes the 144,000, but also the message that must be proclaimed. In Rev 10 John as a representative of the church goes through a sweet and bitter experience by eating a scroll, part of the Word of God. Thus, Rev 10 contains both the church and Scripture. In Rev 11 the same pattern may be present. The church is the holy city. The two witnesses represent Scripture.

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[56] Beale, 585–586.

Conclusion

Our investigation has pointed us in the direction of understanding the two witnesses as the Scriptures of the OT and the NT. Ellen G. White in commenting on this passage made the statement: "The two witnesses represent the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament."[57] We have found a number of references to the Scriptures, especially the terms prophecy, witness, fire, the use of the singular for both witnesses, dual statements referring to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and others. They confirm our suggestion that the two witnesses form Scripture as it comes to us in the OT and NT. Further research on this difficult passage may be beneficial.

Ekkehardt Mueller is an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. 104474.1476@compuserve.com

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[57] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, [1911] 1950), 267.

Between Law and Grace: Ritual and Ritual Studies in Recent Evangelical Thought

Gerald A. Klingbeil
River Plate Adventist University

1. Introduction

In 1991 Mark A. Noll published an insightful study focusing upon the relationship between evangelicals and secular scholarship. He suggested that evangelical scholars (and I take this term here to have a broad meaning, including all those who have a high concept of Scripture) have never been as active in their respective professional academic contexts as they are today.[1] Interestingly, Noll implies that while NT evangelical scholars seem to be more integrated in their professional peer group, this is not the case for OT scholars.[2] I think that over the past ten years, the involvement of OT scholars in their respective professional community has increased—one has only to look at the SBL annual congress OT sections and chairs as well as the regional SBL meetings.[3] However, as pointed out by Noll, evangelical scholarship needs to become "meta-critical," i.e., scholars need to look at the larger picture, incorporating the fruits of specific biblical research in a larger multi-disciplinary context, and thus become trend setters, rather than mere apologists or disconnected island-scholars.[4]

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[1] *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 186.

[2] Ibid., 188.

[3] However, this seems to be the case more in the USA than in Europe. Often, European mainstream critical scholarship simply ignores technical or professional research done by evangelical scholars. Ibid., 202.

[4] I have argued elsewhere for the increased necessity for conservative biblical scholars to look again at the larger picture, utilizing insights and questions from other disciplines. Compare G. A. Klingbeil and M. G. Klingbeil, "La lectura de la Biblia desde una perspectiva hermenéutica multidisciplinaria (I) - Consideraciones teóricas preliminarias," in *Entender la Palabra: Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo*, ed. M. Alomía, G. A. Klingbeil, M. G. Klingbeil, et al. (Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 147-173.

In this study I will look at the prevalence of ritual studies and connected themes in conservative evangelical scholarship between 1990–1999. This is of course a descriptive and historical task. However, based upon my historical findings, I will try to delve into the "collective psyche" (whatever that may be) of evangelical scholarship, seeking to understand the underlying patterns and, finally, indicating possible future directions for evangelical scholarship on ritual.

2. Ritual Studies in Evangelical Scholarship—Definitions and Overview

The phrase "ritual studies" as used in this paper will indicate any research, be it in OT, NT, biblical, systematic, or pastoral theology, which involves a discussion of some aspect of ritual and uses the term "ritual." This is a broad definition seeking to be inclusive rather than exclusive. The following evangelical/conservative journals have been included in the historical review: *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (*AUSS*—1990–1999), *Bibliotheca Sacra* (*BSac*—1990–1999), *Emmaus Journal* (*EJ*—1991–1999), *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (*JETS*—1990–1999), *Trinity Journal* (*TJ*—1990–1998), and the *Westminster Theological Journal* (*WTJ*—1990–1999). Other keywords, such as "rite(s)" or "cult," could also have been included, but in view of space limitations and time constraints, I have restricted myself to only one keyword. The following table provides a synoptic view of the study of ritual in these journals and will utilize special *siglas* to indicate the importance of ritual for the perspective of the article:

> □=ritual receives only cursory mention and does not represent a major argument
> ◪=the study of ritual is important to the argument of the article/study but not the main focus
> ■=ritual is the main focus of the article/study, sometimes including theoretical/methodological reflections

For the sake of a more graphical division, four distinct areas have been designated. The first two—OT and NT research—are self-explicatory. With systematic theology I have included the scarce reference to historical theology as well. In the case of practical theology, the more recent concern with missiology has been included. Furthermore, it should be noted that only journals published in English and originating in the USA were reviewed. There are a number of academic journals in Spanish, Portuguese, or French whose editorial policies subscribe to a theologically conservative perspective. Furthermore, British and European journals were also not taken into consideration. Neither book reviews nor dissertation abstracts were included in the study. In this digital age, full text searches are able to pinpoint the single use of a specific term, although subsequent reading confirmed that the use of the term might not always be technical. Unfortunately, *AUSS* is not yet available in digitally searchable format (as is the

case with the *Theological Journal Library*, produced by Galaxie Software),[5] and thus it is possible that some uses of the term escaped my attention, although I went to great pains to fast-read all relevant articles.

Journal	OT	NT	Syst./Hist. Theology	Practical Theology/Miss.
AUSS (1990–99) 📖 = 117 6.83%	29/3 (1991): 195–203 □[6] 34/2 (1996): 269–286 ◲ 35/2 (1997): 189–209 □ 36/2 (1998): 231–244 ■	29/2 (1991): 127–137 □ 32/3 (1994): 217–226 □	36/2 (1998): 183–206 □	31/2 (1993): 119–126 □
BSac (1990–99) 📖 = 260 8.84%	147/586 (1990): 188–197 □ 147/587 (1990): 270–285 □ 149/596 (1992): 411–427 □ 149/496 (1992): 438–453 □ 152/607 (1995): 279–289 ◲ 153/611 (1996): 259–269 □ 154/613 (1997): 23–46 □ 156/621 (1999): 42–60 □	148/590 (1991): 184–200 ◲ 150/599 (1993): 341–358 □ 151/603 (1994): 309–324 □ 152/605 (1995): 42–59 □ 153/611 (1996): 281–307 □ 155/617 (1998): 39–61 □ 155/618 (1998): 139–163 □	152/605 (1995): 60–71 □ 153/612 (1996): 449–467 □ 156/623 (1999): 308–324 □	148/590 (1991): 131–150 ◲ 152/606 (1995): 182–200 □ 153/609 (1996): 75–86 □[7] 154/615 (1997): 285–296 □[7] 154/616 (1997): 396–409 □
EJ (1991–99) 📖 = 88 7.95%		3/1 (1994): 49–59 □	7/2 (1998): 157–199 □	2/1 (1993): 65–77 □ 2/2 (1993): 111–153 □ 4/1 (1995): 47–60 □ 6/1 (1997): 3–42 □ 6/1 (1997): 43–96 ◲
JETS (1990–99) 📖 = 321 8.72%	34/2 (1991): 157–177 □ 34/2 (1991): 179–193 □ 35/2 (1992): 145–157 □ 35/3 (1992): 299–314 ◲ 37/4 (1994): 481–496 □ 37/4 (1994): 497–510 ◲ 39/2 (1996): 177–189 ◲ 39/3 (1996): 421–432 ■ 41/4 (1998): 539–550 ■ 41/4 (1998): 551–560 ◲	33/1 (1990): 13–34 □ 33/2 (1990): 171–178 □ 36/2 (1993): 179–187 □ 37/2 (1994): 217–233 □ 37/3 (1994): 333–350 □ 39/2 (1996): 223–240 □ 39/4 (1996): 571–586 □ 40/2 (1997): 189–197 ◲ 42/2 (1999): 211–229 □ 42/3 (1999): 443–460 □	33/3 (1990): 289–302 □ 35/2 (1992): 199–216 □ 35/4 (1992): 515–530 □ 36/1 (1993): 15–23 □ 38/1 (1995): 77–92 ◲ 37/3 (1994): 365–379 □	34/1 (1991): 3–19 □ 38/4 (1995): 565–580 □
TJ (1990–98) 📖 = 78 6.41%		12/2 (1991): 151–183 □ 12/2 (1991): 185–208 ◲ 17/1 (1996): 19–65 □	19/1 (1998): 51–80 □	19/2 (1998): 179–205 □
WTJ (1990–99) 📖 = 179 7.26%	57/2 (1995): 277–297 □ 60/1 (1998): 1–21 □	53/1 (1991): 29–45 □ 53/1 (1991): 47–72 □ 54/2 (1992): 255–271 □	53/1 (1991): 93–108 □ 57/2 (1995): 383–402 □ 58/2 (1996): 183–207 □ 59/2 (1997): 159–176 ■ 61/2 (1999): 175–207 □	56/2 (1994): 345–377 ◲ 58/1 (1996): 17–27 □ 60/1 (1998): 131–152 □
Total 📖 = 1043 **Total Ritual=84** 8.05%	**Total OT** 📖 = 24 (2.30 %)	**Total NT** 📖 = 26 (2.49%)	**Total Syst./Hist. Theology** 📖 = 17 (1.62%)	**Total Pract. Theology/Miss.** 📖 = 17 (1.62%)

3. Description of Evidence

All in all, out of 1043 articles reviewed, 84 (8.05%) contained in one form or another a reference to "ritual." On first sight this does not seem to be such a bad ratio, especially in view of the fact that ritual texts/ritual studies represent only

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[5] Galaxie Software, Theological Journal Library Version 4, 2000.

[6] Although B. Dabrowski, "Ceramic Stand From Tell El-'Umeiri," *AUSS* 29/3 (1991): 195-203, technically deals with an object encountered in archaeological research, its time frame and context is the OT, and thus it is included in this rubric.

[7] I have opted to include E. M. Curtis, "Ancient Psalms and Modern Worship," *BSac* 154/615 (1997): 285-296 in the practical theology section, since it focuses mostly on lessons to be learned from the ancient text and does not represent an exegetical study.

one aspect of biblical genres or theological topics.[8] However, when looking more closely at the content and use of the references and qualifying the usage one immediately notes a different scenario. The following table illustrates the situation in terms of quality in relation to quantity.

Ritual in Evangelical Academic Publications: 1990–1999

Main Focus	4 (0.38%)
Important Mention	13 (1.24%)
Cursory Mention	67 (6.42%)
No Mention	959 (91.94%)

Out of the 1043 reviewed articles, 959 (91.94%) do not contain any reference to "ritual." Sixty-seven articles (6.42%) mention the term, but do so in a non-technical way, often assuming concepts without introducing them. Most examples found in this group mention the term "ritual" only in a cursory way[9]—and interestingly enough—many of these also belong to the field of NT

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[8] Others include legal texts, prophetic texts, historiographical narratives, apocalyptic literature, genealogical texts, etc.

[9] They include the following articles (in chronological order beginning in 1990 and grouped according to journal): ***Andrews University Seminary Studies***: K. G. C. Newport, "The Pharisees Prior to A.D. 70," *AUSS* 29/2 (1991): 127-137; R. P. Martin, "New Testament Worship: Some Puzzling Practices," *AUSS* 31/2 (1993): 119-126; R. Helm, "Azazel in Early Jewish Tradition," *AUSS* 32/3 (1994): 217-226; E. Wendland, "Recursion and Variation in the 'Prophecy' of Jonah: On the Rhetorical Impact of Stylistic Technique in Hebrew Narrative Discourse, with Special Reference to Irony and Enigma," *AUSS* 35/2 (1997): 189-209; F. L. Canale, "Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary," *AUSS* 36/2 (1998): 183-206. ***Bibliotheca Sacra***: R. B. Chisholm, Jr., "'For Three Sins . . . Even For Four': the Numerical Sayings in Amos," *BSac* 147 (1990): 188-197; J. D. Fawver and R. L. Overstreet, "Moses and Preventive Medicine," *BSac* 147/587 (1990): 270-285; M. F. Rooker, "Part 2: Genesis 1:1–3: Creation or Re-Creation?" *BSac* 149/596 (1992): 411-427; H. W. Bateman IV, "Psalm 110:1 and the New Testament," *BSac* 149/496 (1992): 438-453; W. B. Russell, "Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, Part 1," *BSac* 150/599 (1993): 341-358; D. E. Hiebert, "Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1–2," *BSac* 151/603 (1994): 309-324; D. J. MacLeod, "The Cleansing of the True Tabernacle," *BSac* 152/605 (1995): 60-71; J. E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity," *BSac* 152/606 (1995): 182-200; D. G. Moore and R. A. Pyne, "Neil Anderson's Approach to the Spiritual Life," *BSac* 153/609 (1996): 75-86; R. B. Allen, "The 'Bloody Bridegroom' in Exodus 4:24–26," *BSac* 153/611 (1996): 259-269; M. R. Saucy, "Miracles and Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God," *BSac* 153/611 (1996): 281-307; G. J. Gatis, "The Political Theory of John Calvin," *BSac* 153/612 (1996): 449-467; J. P. Tanner, "The History of Interpretation of the Song of Songs," *BSac* 154/613 (1997): 23-46; E. M. Curtis, "Ancient Psalms and Modern Worship," *BSac* 154/615 (1997): 285-296; R. H. Bowers, Jr., "Defending God before Buddhist Emptiness," *BSac* 154/616 (1997): 396-409; H. W. Bateman IV, "Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?," *BSac* 155/617 (1998): 39-61; E. Woodcock, "The Seal of the Holy Spirit," *BSac* 155/618 (1998): 139-163; S. J. Bramer, "The Literary Genre of the Book of Amos," *BSac* 156/621 (1999): 42-60; G. H. Harris, "Satan's Deceptive Miracles in the Tribulation," *BSac* 156/623 (1999): 308-324. ***Emmaus Journal***: K. C. Fleming, "Missionary Service in the Life of Paul, Part 3," *EJ* 2/1 (1993): 65-77; J. H. Fish III, "Brethren Tra-

studies, where the dichotomy between salvation by "ritual" and salvation by faith is assumed, with most of the standard references discussing Paul's theology

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dition or New Testament Church Truth," *EJ* 2/2 (1993): 111-153; S. L. Johnson, Jr., "The Promise of the Paraclete. An Exposition of John 14:12-21," *EJ* 3/1 (1994): 49-59; J. H. Fish III, "The Vision of the Lord: An Exposition of Isaiah 6:1-13," *EJ* 4/1 (1995): 47-60; J. H. Fish III, "The Life of the Local Church. The Structure, Ministry, and Functions of the Church," *EJ* 6/1 (1997): 3-42; D. J. MacLeod, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Myth, Hoax, or History?" *EJ* 7/2 (1998): 157-199. ***Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society***: J. F. Macarthur, Jr., "Faith According to the Apostle James," *JETS* 31/1 (1990): 13-34; J. D. Charles, "The Angels, Sonship and Birthright in the Letter to the Hebrews," *JETS* 31/2 (1990): 171-178; W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "God's Promise Plan and His Gracious Law," *JETS* 31/3 (1990): 289-302; R. L. Thomas, "Improving Evangelical Ethics: An Analysis of the Problem and a Proposed Solution," *JETS* 34/1 (1991): 3-19; J. B. de Young, "The Contributions of the Septuagint to Biblical Sanctions Against Homosexuality," *JETS* 34/2 (1991): 157-177; M. G. Kline, "The Structure of the Book of Zechariah," *JETS* 34/2 (1991): 179-193; J. A. Hartle, "The Literary Unity of Zechariah," *JETS* 35/2 (1992): 145-157; M. Bauman, "Jesus, Anarchy, and Marx: The Theological and Political Contours of Ellulism," *JETS* 35/2 (1992): 199-216; W. Corduan, "The Gospel According to Margaret," *JETS* 35/4 (1992): 515-530; J. V. Dahms, "Dying with Christ," *JETS* 36/1 (1993): 15-23; W. B. Russell, III, "Does The Christian Have "Flesh" In Gal 5:13-26?," *JETS* 36/2 (1993): 179-187; J. R. Edwards, "The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark," *JETS* 37/2 (1994): 217-233; D. Doriani, "The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," *JETS* 37/3 (1994): 333-350; D. B. Clendenin, "Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of Theosis," *JETS* 37/3 (1994): 365-379; J. P. Lewis, "The Offering of Abel (Gen 4:4): A History of Interpretation," *JETS* 37/4 (1994): 481-498; B. Talbert-Wettler, "Secular Feminist Religious Metaphor and Christianity," *JETS* 38/1 (1995): 77-92; B. Fong, "Addressing the Issue of Racial Reconciliation According to the Principles of Eph 2:11-22," *JETS* 38/4 (1995): 565-580; J. T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal," *JETS* 39/2 (1996): 223-240; B. B. Colijn, "'Let Us Approach': Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JETS* 39/4 (1996): 571-586; W. E. Glenny, "Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion," *JETS* 40/4 (1997): 627-638; G. Forbes, "Repentance and Conflict in the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11–32)," *JETS* 42/2 (1999): 211-229; S. M. Baugh, "Cult Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal," *JETS* 42/3 (1999): 443-460. ***Trinity Journal***: D. B. Garlington, "Burden Bearing and the Recovery of Offending Christians (Galatians 6:1-5)," *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 151-183; E. R. Wendland, "Finding Some Lost Aspects of Meaning in Christ's Parables of the Lost and Found (Luke 15)," *TJ* 17/1 (1996): 19-65; J. Christians, "Erasmus and the New Testament: Humanist Scholarship or Theological Convictions?" *TJ* 19/1 (1998): 51-80; C. Mosser and P. Owen, "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?," *TJ* 19/2 (1998): 179-205. ***Westminster Theological Journal***: B. D. Smith, "The Chronology of the Last Supper," *WTJ* 53/1 (1991): 29-45; D. B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works," *WTJ* 53/1 (1991): 47-72; R. White, "An Early Reformed Document on the Mission to the Jews," *WTJ* 53/1 (1991): 93-108; B. D. Smith, "Objections to the Authenticity of Mark 11:17 Reconsidered," *WTJ* 54/2 (1992): 255-271; M. J. Boda, "Words and Meanings: ידה in Hebrew Research," *WTJ* 57/2 (1995): 277-297; D. B. Clendenin, "Orthodoxy on Scripture and Tradition: A Comparison With Reformed and Catholic Perspectives," *WTJ* 57/2 (1995): 383-402; A. C. Troxel, "Charles Hodge on Church Boards: A Case Study in Ecclesiology," *WTJ* 58/2 (1996): 183-207; M. D. Futato, "Because it Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1–2:3," *WTJ* 60/1 (1998): 1-21; T. L. Johnson, "Liturgical Studies: The Pastor's Public Ministry: Part One," *WTJ* 60/1 (1998): 131-152; S. J. Casselli, "The Threefold Division of the Law in the Thought of Aquinas," *WTJ* 61/2 (1999): 175-207.

or his controversy with the so-called "Judaizers."[10] Very seldom is this dichotomy described in an adequate way. It is assumed and has developed a life of its own, having become some type of common supposition of NT scholars.[11] Some examples should suffice here: Walter Russell[12] discusses the Galatian conflict in terms of resistance to the acceptance of Jewish ritual and ethical norms—or in the final instance the Christian struggle for identity in connection with the Jewish background of the newly founded church. Herbert Bateman[13] puzzles about possible rituals used by the Judaizers in Philippi, suggesting that their true nature is not clear. Robert Thomas[14] hypothesizes that the judaizing heresy in Galatia had to do with ritual circumcision. More examples could be added here.[15]

I have classified thirteen articles (1.24%) as containing important references to ritual, but not focusing in their totality on ritual—either in its application or underlying theory.[16] Three of these thirteen are in the practical theology/Missiology category. Wayne House[17] discusses the function of ritual in Hinduism and Shintoism in the context of the theological question of the resurrection and reincarnation. The study focuses on how other religions (including

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[10] For all NT references, see table above.

[11] See here, for example, W. S. Campbell, "Judaizers," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 512-516. It seems that the biblical text is not clear enough to determine whether the opposition should be considered a local characteristic or if it comprised a more universal semi-organized group.

[12] "Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, Part 1," *BSac* 150/599 (1993): 350.

[13] "Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?" *BSac* 155/617 (1998): 44, 49, 54.

[14] "Improving Evangelical Ethics: An Analysis of the Problem and a Proposed Solution," *JETS* 34/1 (1991): 15.

[15] Compare here D. B. Garlington, "Burden Bearing and the Recovery of Offending Christians (Galatians 6:1-5)," *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 162, which refers to the ritual purity of the Pharisees, a standard dogma of NT scholarship; W. B. Russell, III, "Does The Christian Have "Flesh" In Gal 5:13-26?" *JETS* 36/2 (1993): 182, with a reference to the question of Jewish ritual, which is, however, never defined.

[16] *Andrews University Seminary Studies*: A. M. Rodriguez, "Leviticus 16: Its Literary Structure," *AUSS* 34/2 (1996): 269-286. *Bibliotheca Sacra*: H. W. House, "Resurrection, Reincarnation, and Humanness," *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 131-150; D. J. MacLeod, "The Present Work of Christ in Hebrews," *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 184-200; J. M. Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48," *BSac* 152/607 (1995): 279-289. *Emmaus Journal*: D. J. MacLeod, "The Primacy of Scripture and the Church," *EJ* 6/1 (1997): 43-96. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*: T. Kleven, "Hebrew Style in 2 Samuel 6," *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 299-314; M. G. Kline, "The Feast of Cover-Over," *JETS* 37/4 (1994): 497-510; B. Talbert-Wettler, "Secular Feminist Religious Metaphor and Christianity," *JETS* 38/1 (1995): 77-92; J. W. Hilber, "Theology Of Worship In Exodus 24," *JETS* 39/2 (1996): 177-189; W. D. Spencer, "Christ's Sacrifice as Apologetic: An Application of Heb 10:1-18," *JETS* 40/2 (1997): 189-197; B. R. Reichenbach, "'By His Stripes We Are Healed'," *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 551-560. *Trinity Journal*: D. A. deSilva, "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13," *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 185-208. *Westminster Theological Journal*: T. A. Turnau III, "Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse," *WTJ* 56/2 (1994): 345-377.

[17] "Resurrection, Reincarnation, and Humanness," *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 142-144.

all major world religions) have resolved the issue of death and whether reincarnation as understood by these religions is compatible with Biblical theology. House includes a very interesting quote when commenting on Shintoism that might provide an insight into the standard evangelical conservative approach to ritual:

> Human soteriology [in this religious framework] is a return to original perfection and unity with the divine essence of the universe. It involves individual (ritual) effort and/or belief, toward undifferentiated Being, through the cosmic law of karma worked out in reincarnation.[18]

House does not agree with the perspective of Shintoism. However, this "ritual effort and belief by the individual" has an off-putting effect. The second substantial discussion of ritual in this section involves a study of the importance of ritual (namely baptism and the Lord's Supper) in the early church by David MacLeod.[19] Actually MacLeod is more interested in proving that the specific ecclesiology practiced by the Open Brethren has a biblical basis. He only recognizes two rituals instituted by our Lord Jesus, though he argues that they have been "seriously compromised,"[20] when comparing the biblical standard with the modern practice of child baptism and the sacramental and automatic (*ex opere operato)* theology of communion found in many denominations. While this is not the place to discuss the biblical concept and theology of baptism and the Lord's supper (on which I tend to side with MacLeod), the use of the terms ritual and rite again display a negative perspective to which I will return later.

Theodore Turnau III[21] discusses the lack of cultural, political and—most obviously—religious consensus in the context of the predominant philosophical paradigm (which in itself is a contradiction), i.e., postmodernism. The very nature of postmodern reasoning, ideology, and thought patterns questions the existence of a common set of answers, generally understood as moral values. Turnau proposes the metaphor of the "narrative" or "texts," which, while being distinct, share some underlying center—according to him, the Christian story tradition. Specific "texts" include ritual, family tradition, TV, Hollywood—institutions we inhabit every day. Taking up the line of thought where Turnau ends, a proper understanding and consciousness of ritual can help us discover our common language again and represents an important tool for pastoral contexts.

Only one of thirteen studies containing an important reference to ritual could be found in the area of systematic/historical theology. Betty Talbert-

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[18] Ibid., 144.

[19] "The Primacy of Scripture and the Church," *EJ* 6/1 (1997): 43-96, esp. 56-57.

[20] Ibid., 57.

[21] "Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse," *WTJ* 56/2 (1994): 345-377, esp. 375.

Wettler[22] studies some current influential views on secular feminist religious metaphor and argues that they are ultimately insufficient to describe the nature of God. In this context, according to Talbert-Wettler, feminists commandeered the concept of ritual in religious myth and utilized it to "re-create" their new world order.[23] It is clear that ritual in this context is not compatible with conservative evangelical scholarship.

By far the highest quantity of references to ritual can be found in the biblical studies section, namely three and five respectively in NT and OT studies. David MacLeod discusses the ritual of the day of atonement in Hebrews as based upon the festival as described in Lev 16.[24] However, MacLeod, while referring many times to distinct ritual aspects of the festival, does not include a technical discussion of what ritual as a vessel of meaning involves. William David Spencer's study of Heb 10:1–18 includes a similar focus and discusses OT ritual superseded by Christ's ministry.[25] He discusses the general role of sacrifice in ritual systems. Drawing connections to ancient and modern religious expressions, he distinguishes between three general religious types, namely (1) power religions,[26] (2) life-style religions,[27] and (3) relationship religions. While he classifies Christianity in the third category, Spencer contends that the sacrificial language of both the OT and its NT typology does speak to practitioners of both power and life-style religions. In this sense, ritual and its sub-rite of sacrifice provides a basis for a powerful apologetic of Christianity and should be understood and utilized.

David deSilva studies Rev 13 in the context of the immediate historical context for the first audience of John's book.[28] He understands the use of the term "beast" as a de-legitimizing attack on a very important social order actually representing the Christian opposition to the domineering worldview prevalent in the Roman empire. Without a specific evaluation of deSilva's main thesis, his study is the first so far reviewed which includes a serious theoretical reflection on ritual and its function.[29] Thus, he mentions legitimization as part and parcel

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[22] "Secular Feminist Religious Metaphor and Christianity," *JETS* 38/1 (1995): 77-92.

[23] Ibid., 91.

[24] "The Present Work of Christ in Hebrews," *BSac* 148/590 (1991): 184-200, esp. 188, 193, 198.

[25] "Christ's Sacrifice as Apologetic: An Application of Heb 10:1-18," *JETS* 40/2 (1997): 189-197, esp. 190.

[26] He writes: "Power religions are those traditional (as opposed to written scripture) faiths that seek to balance power between the human and the divine. The traditional Canaanite faiths we cited earlier would fit here, as would pre-Columbian Carib faith and African traditional religions and their new world extensions in Haitian Voudoun, Latin Santeria, Brazilian Condomblé, Trinidadian Shango and Jamaican Obeah. The pagan systems that permeated Europe and produced Druidism into the neopagan revivals of Wicca and Asatru also qualify as power religions" (ibid., 195).

[27] In this category fall Buddhism, Hinduism, and other eastern religions.

[28] "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13," *TJ* 12/2 (1991): 185-208.

[29] Ibid., 190-192.

of the ritual agenda—an important point in ritual theory, which, however, has recently been challenged by theorists in the field.[30] DeSilva bases his comments on work done by anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Thus, by connecting a well known power symbol of the Roman cultural context (the imperial cult) and by utilizing this symbol in a negative sense (the image of the beast), John practiced a veiled but powerful criticism of the present system. It is clear that deSilva's observations tumble if one does not understand this biblical image as a reference to the Roman imperial cult. Notwithstanding this issue, it is important that this is the first study that provides even some cursory access to ritual theory.

Angel Manuel Rodriguez[31] published in 1996 a study concerning the literary structure of Lev 16. While he does not provide an introduction to or discussion of the theory of ritual, he distinguishes three sub-rites (or elements) that together integrate a new ritual complex, including the entrance rite, the cleansing rites, and the elimination rites. Rodriguez (in my view correctly) argues for a literary and theological unity of the chapter based upon the ritual elements. While not treating the issue of the complexity and interaction of ritual action as the main focus of the article, it is an important and innovative observation—something I also pointed out in an article on the sequence and ritual action in Lev 8 that appeared in *Biblica* in the same year.[32] Jerry Hullinger also focuses on the subject of sacrifice, albeit in Ezek 40–48.[33] Taking as his point of departure a dispensationalist perspective on eschatology, he suggests that the OT sacrificial ritual is efficacious, while Christ's sacrifice dealt with the internal cleansing of the conscience. Clearly, with this opinion Hullinger does not follow mainstream scholarly opinion on ritual.[34] However, at the least, many references to ritual are included in his study, although he does not get down to its basics.

Terence Kleven[35] in his study on 2 Sam 6 takes issue with Leonard Rost's thesis regarding the origin of the ark narrative. While he is not particularly concerned about definitions or a theoretical discussion about ritual, he discusses the

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[30] See here C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York-Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 193-196, who suggests that ritual is not the instrument of power structures (such as politics), but is actually the result of these power relations.

[31] "Leviticus 16: Its Literary Structure," *AUSS* 34/2 (1996): 269-286.

[32] G. A. Klingbeil, "The Syntactic Structure of the Ritual of Ordination (Lev 8)," *Biblica* 77/4 (1996): 509-519.

[33] "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48," *BSac* 152/607 (1995): 279-289.

[34] See here, for example, J. Milgrom, "Sin Offering or Purification Offering?" *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971): 237-239; idem, *Leviticus 1-16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3A (New York: Doubleday, 1991), and also B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord. A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), and B. A. Levine, *Leviticus, The JPS Torah Commentary* 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), to mention just a few. For a comprehensive discussion of OT sacrifice in the context of the ANE, see G. A. Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination as Found in Leviticus 8 and Emar 369* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 247-254.

[35] "Hebrew Style in 2 Samuel 6," *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 299-314.

question of a possible occurrence of a ritual in the bringing of a shrine for a coronation in this section. He suggests that the stylistic ritualistic language particular to the chapter represents a deliberate use of language to develop the dynamics of the narrative.

Meredith Kline studies ritual details of the Passover feast as described in Exod 12 and connects the image of the hovering Spirit of God in Gen 1:2 with the central term of פֶּסַח.[36] His discussion concerning the ritual is mainly comparative, focusing upon Egyptian material, and he does not provide a definition and adequate reference to what is understood as ritual and its elements.

John Hilber's[37] study of the worship theme in Exod 24 emphasizes the importance of blood manipulation "in a solemn ceremony of ratification"[38] of the covenant. The rites contain three sub-actions which are all introduced by the verbal form וַיִּקַּח, "and he took," an important marker of ritual sub-rites. His reference to Gordon Wenham's connection suggesting a common interpretation of the blood manipulation rites in Lev 8 and Exod 24 as symbolizing renewed communion seems to me—at least in the case of Lev 8—more intuitive than exegetical.

A rare discussion of the prophetic perspective in connection with ritual can be found in Bruce Reichenbach's study.[39] He argues that Isaiah understands atonement in terms of a healing metaphor. He writes: "The Servant bears our sins and heals us with his wounds. Healing understood in this way is at the very least a symbolic ritual."[40] Reichenbach provides some comparative and modern examples to the type of healing ritual he envisions for Isaiah.

Only four out of 1043 articles (0.38%)—according to my evaluation—deal with ritual in a systematic and technical way. All except one belong to the category of OT studies—which in a sense is understandable and to be expected, since it is the OT that contains a sizable amount of ritual textual data. Roy Gane's comparative study of the macrostructure of ANE Sancta purification days[41] concerns the structure of these rituals distinguishing between regular ("daily"), festival, and special subrites, constructed into a day for purifying the sanctuary of the respective culture. He indicates both comparable and distinct elements and traits of these complex rituals and finishes on a historical note, suggesting that the comparable structure actually could be used as an argument for the antiquity of the Israelite day of atonement as described in Lev 16. Gane does not discuss a specific underlying theory of ritual—perhaps he takes it for granted that it would be automatically understood by his audience.

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[36] "The Feast of Cover-Over," *JETS* 37/4 (1994): 497-510, esp. 504.

[37] "Theology Of Worship In Exodus 24," *JETS* 39/2 (1996): 177-189, esp. 182.

[38] Ibid., 182.

[39] "'By His Stripes we are Healed'," *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 551-560.

[40] Ibid., 558.

[41] "Schedules for Deities: Macrostructure of Israelite, Babylonian, and Hittite Sancta Purification Days," *AUSS* 36/2 (1998): 231-244.

Duane Christensen writes from a very distinct perspective.[42] His concern is the canonical process and, more specifically, the demonstration of this process in the book of Psalms.[43] However, his contribution to ritual study—which apparently has nothing to do with the process of canonization—involves a comparative ritual from last century Indians (Iroquois), including specific rites of intensification. He concludes by comparing the canonization process of the OT (and more specifically the book of Psalms) with the structure and oral transmission of the *Code of Handsome Lake*. However, while looking beyond the rim of traditional biblical studies, he does not provide the necessary theoretical basis concerning ritual.

Another helpful example of the importance of ritual studies for exegesis and theology can be found in David Howard's discussion of the recurring three-day period (1:11; 2:22; 3:2) in Josh 1–3.[44] He provides an extensive discussion of specific ritual actions in the context of the chronological framework of these three chapters, taking as his point of departure the fact that the first three chapters of Joshua are "concerned with proper ritual and cultic concerns."[45] Howard's discussion is helpful in establishing a viable chronology for these chapters, but also provides an important marker to highlight the interaction between regular exegesis and ritual studies. As with most examples seen above, Howard does not elaborate on specific theoretical aspects of ritual, but rather presupposes that we all understand the same thing when encountering this term.

The final important study was published by Peter Leithart in 1997 and studies the interaction of the Eucharist with culture. I have categorized it in the Systematic/Historical Theology section.[46] Leithart suggests that the traditional discussion of the Eucharist in terms of *what* is there or represented and *how* it works is too limited and due to past historical contexts. Modern anthropology "has explored how rituals express, reinforce, and even constitute the values and structures of a community"[47] and Leithart demonstrates in his presentation a good understanding of the basic works on ritual theory. Of all the reviewed publications, this is the only one dealing with the theory of ritual in an evangelical

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[42] "The Book Of Psalms within the Canonical Process in Ancient Israel," *JETS* 39/3 (1996): 421-432.

[43] This seems to be an evangelical study of the Psalms without Gunkel, as discussed by Martin G. Klingbeil, "Off the Beaten Track: An Evangelical Reading of the Psalms without Gunkel," presented on November 15, 2001, at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

[44] " 'Three Days' in Joshua 1-3: Resolving a Chronological Conundrum," *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 539-550.

[45] Ibid., 545. These include covenant renovation rituals, purification/preparation rituals, Passover celebration, etc.

[46] "The Way Things Really Ought to Be: Eucharist, Eschatology, and Culture," *WTJ* 59/2 (1997): 159-176.

[47] Ibid., 161.

conservative context. However, Leithart only refers to these models and does not contribute to or advance them.

Before attempting to pinpoint more specifically some of the probable causes for the present (sad) state of ritual studies in conservative scholarship, I would like to include a short note on two important books published recently by two major conservative publishers. In 1997 Zondervan published in five volumes the comprehensive *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*.[48] While keeping with traditional theological word books of the OT and following an alphabetic order of word entries, it also provides a helpful section of ten introductory articles to OT exegesis. However, among all the useful introductory chapters, no chapter talks about OT religion or more specifically ritual. Historiography, theology, textual criticism, literary analysis, narrative criticism, linguistics and others are well represented, but no reference can be found to the deciphering of ritual texts. Two years later, Baker Book House published the very useful *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*.[49] Of the sixteen essays included, two would lend themselves to a section dealing with ritual in the OT context.[50] However neither Gordon Wenham's chapter on the Pentateuch nor Bill Arnold's study on religion in ancient Israel discuss any significant aspect of ritual studies.[51] These brief references should by no means suggest that these volumes are somewhat less important or deficient. But as has already been seen in the review of the published journal material, they reflect the focus of OT evangelical scholarship.

4. Evaluation

How is it possible that in evangelical publications ritual studies play either no role or a very limited role? In 1998 I wrote in the introduction to my dissertation, published by Edwin Mellen Press:

> Ritual studies are booming! In the wake of renewed interest in the religious history of Israel, the sub-discipline of ritual studies is constituting an important part of the investigation into the religious ideas and practices of ancient cultures. This trend can also be observed outside the realm of OT and ANE studies and suggests a new urgency in attempts to understand man's religious conscience and behavior.[52]

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[48] W. A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

[49] D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold, eds., *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

[50] G. J. Wenham, "Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm," in Baker and Arnold, 116-144, and B. T. Arnold, "Religion in Ancient Israel," in Baker and Arnold, 391-420.

[51] It must be stated, however, that Arnold does mention the important ritual texts from Emar, albeit in very cursory manner (ibid., 417).

[52] Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination*, 1.

Clearly I was mistaken, and I publicly recant—or better, rephrase this statement. "Ritual studies are booming—but only in mainstream scholarship!" While evangelical scholarship has kept up to date and is contributing generously in most other major areas of biblical research,[53] ritual studies seem to have gotten small change. Major contributions in this field come from Jewish scholars[54] (although not exclusively), but are seldom published in evangelical publications. A good example is the work of Daniel Fleming of New York University.[55] While we share similar interests in our research, we also share a meaningful friendship and compatible perspectives concerning Scripture. Fleming could be included in the broad definition of theologically conservative scholars with a high regard for Scripture—however, all his numerous publications on ritual have appeared outside the evangelical community. In the Adventist community I see only three OT scholars working on ritual, one being Roy Gane from Andrews University (who studied under Jacob Milgrom at the University of California); Angel Rodriguez, who has, however, focused upon other areas of theological

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[53] One only has to think of the important contributions of serious evangelical scholars in the area of historiographical research in the face of the onslaught of rampant minimalism. Compare here, for example, I. W. Provan, "The End of (Israel's) History? K. W. Whitelam's *The Invention of Ancient Israel*: A Review Article," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 42/2 (1997): 283-300; V. P. Long, *The Art of Biblical History: Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation* 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); E. M. Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," in *Faith, Tradition and History*, ed. A. R. Millard, J. K. Hoffmeier, and D. W. Baker (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 1-36; A. R. Millard, "Story, History, and Theology," in Millard, Hoffmeier, and Baker, 37-64; I. W. Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel," *JBL* 114/4 (1995): 585-606; E. H. Merrill, "History, Theology, and Hermeneutics," in *NIDOTTE*, 1:68-1:85; M. W. Chavalas, "Recent Trends in the Study of Israelite Historiography," *JETS* 38/2 (1995): 161-169; E. H. Merrill, "Old Testament History: A Theological Perspective," in *NIDOTTE*, 1:68-1:85; V. P. Long, "Historiography of the Old Testament," in Baker and Arnold, 145-175; K. L. Younger, Jr., "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship," in Baker and Arnold, 176-206; and C. L. Quarles, "Midrash As Creative Historiography: Portrait of a Misnomer," *JETS* 39/3 (1996): 457-464, in the NT period.

[54] Immediately the works of Baruch A. Levine and Jacob Milgrom come to mind. Other important contributors include Menahem Haran and Moshe Greenberg.

[55] Some important contributions include D. E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar: A Window on Ancient Syrian Religion*, HSS 42 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); idem, "The Rituals from Emar: Evolution of an Indigenous Tradition in Second-Millennium Syria," in *New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Syria*, ed. M. W. Chavalas and J. L. Hayes, Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 25 (Malibu: Undena, 1992), 51-61; idem, "The Emar Festivals: City Unity and Syrian Identity under Hittite Hegemony," in *Emar: The History, Religion, and Culture of a Syrian Town in the Late Bronze Age*, ed. M. W. Chavalas (Bethesda: CDL, 1996), 81-114; idem, "The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests," *JBL* 117/3 (1998): 401-414; idem, "The Israelite Festival Calendar and Emar's Ritual Archive," *Revue Biblique* 106/1 (1999): 8-34; idem, "A Break in the Line: Reconsidering the Bible's Diverse Festival Calendars," *Revue Biblique* 106/2 (1999): 161-174; idem, "Mari's Large Public Tent and the Priestly Tent Sanctuary," *VT* 50/4 (2000): 484-498; idem, *Time at Emar. The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner's Archive*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 11 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

research over the past ten years; and myself.[56] And here we are talking about Seventh-day Adventist scholars with a supposedly high regard for OT legislative texts and an innovative theological perspective on the function and role of the OT sanctuary and its ritual!

In the following paragraphs I will present five possible reasons why ritual studies is the neglected stepchild of 21st century conservative scholarship. Most of these explanations can be reached by a careful reading of the mindset of evangelical scholars in the context of postmodernism, as visible in the research thrust, methodologies, and theological presuppositions.

1. In 1981, Gordon McConville observed that legislation on ritual is often "quietly and piously consigned to oblivion."[57] This was—in his opinion—(and still is) mainly due to the perceived "barbaric" nature of some of these rites and the underlying evolutionary theological concept of development from primitive religion to some type of higher religion not needing the spilling of blood or any other rituals to achieve reconciliation. Somehow, evangelicalism got caught in between law and grace, focusing upon the latter at the expense of the former.[58] Evangelicals claim a strong heritage of early Protestantism, and it might just be this Protestant bias against biblical ritual which is coming to the surface. Interestingly, Julius Wellhausen—a committed Protestant—co-developed the now (in)famous *Neue Dokumentenhypothese* in order to synthesize a religious system of Israelite religion that was acceptable to Protestant theology[59] and that was clearly pointed against Judaism and its accompanying legalism. I do not intend to resolve the tension between law and grace, but rather describe historical realities. Actually, this observation can already be found in an essay by Greg Chirichigno in 1981 in *JETS*.[60] Perhaps the time has come to discard inherited

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[56] To this one could add my friend Jiří Moskala, who recently published his dissertation studying the distinction made in Lev 11 between "clean" and "unclean" animals. However, his method and interest seems to be more theological than ritual.

[57] J. G. McConville, "The Place of Ritual in Old Testament Religion," *Irish Biblical Studies* 3/3 (1981): 120.

[58] Similar explanations can be found in F. H. Gorman, Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSS 91 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 8, and P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSS 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 16-19.

[59] See here the references in ibid., 16, note 2. Compare also C. Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 9 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 113, where Cees Houtman writes: "Es ist offensichtlich, dass Wellhausen auch im dritten Hauptteil nachweisen will, dass die Religion des alten Israels von Freiheit, Natürlichkeit und Spontanität bestimmt wird und dass erst mit dem Aufkommen des Gesetzes zur Zeit Josias der Übergang zum Judentum stattfindet, in dem sich die Gesetzesreligion dann zum Gegenpol zur Religion des alten Israels entwickelt."

[60] Writes G. Chirichigno, "A Theological Investigation of Motivation in Old Testament Law," *JETS* 24/4 (1981): 306, note 15: "This interpretation can be found in Alt, *Origins*, 84-85. Wenham, *Numbers*, 27-28, examines the prejudice that has prevented much discussion concerning the significance of OT ritual, particularly the sacrificial system. He critiques J.Wellhausen's work, *Prolegom-*

paradigms and return to the concept so aptly expressed by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

2. Relevance is in vogue these days. Worship needs to be "relevant." Meditation and Scripture reading,[61] preaching and mission need to be relevant.[62] So, when discussing ritual texts from a far-removed time period, the issue of relevance is often raised. Frequently, the explicit "non-human" nature of cultic/ritual texts makes them difficult to penetrate., since they can be classified either as *prescriptive* or *descriptive* ritual texts.[63] The technical term "descriptive ritual text" as a sub-genre of ritual texts was first introduced in 1965 by Baruch Levine and has counterparts in other ANE literature.[64] The often technical and repetitive language challenges both the biblical scholar and the lay reader. But does not the mere fact of their inclusion in the canon of both OT and NT indicate their importance?

3. There is a distinct bias in NT studies against ritual. Ritual is viewed as "dead," "legalistic," and connected to a type of Judaism that was always confronting the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, a dichotomy between OT law/ritual and NT grace/freedom is postulated—a dichotomy not

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ena to the History of Israel (1878), noting two presuppositions that run through it. The first is that freedom and spontaneity are good (early), the second that organization and ritual are bad (late). Such presuppositions have affected evangelicals, who fail to realize the significance of ritual and minimize the importance of form and organization in both religious and secular callings. Concerning the significance of motivation such authors as Cassuto, von Rad, Gemser, Payne, Eichrodt and Uitti attest that motivation is unique to Israel. Rifat, *Motive Clauses*, 153-175, notes that motivation occurs in extra-Biblical law codes. Comparing them with Biblical motivation he concludes that (1) motivation occurs more frequently in Biblical law than in cuneiform law, (2) multiple motivation occurs only in the Bible, (3) no cuneiform law is motivated by an historical situation, (4) the deity is completely silent in cuneiform law, (5) Biblical motivation is religious while cuneiform law is economic, and (6) motivation in Biblical law corresponds to motivation found in wisdom literature and probably was formed under its influence (under redactional influence during the prophets). While motivation in its simplest terms was known apart from Israel, Biblical motivation remains unique in its use and form. Just as the law, which was given at Sinai, was God-interpreted when given, so the same may be said for motivation."

[61] Relevance is an important issue in academic education for ministry. See, for example, R. B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 7-10. On the relevance of Scripture in worship see E. M. Curtis, "Ancient Psalms and Modern Worship," *BSac* 154/615 (1997): 286.

[62] See, for example, C. Trimp, "The Relevance of Preaching in the Light of the Reformation's 'Sola Scriptura' Principle," *WTJ* 36/1 (1973): 1-30, and T. S. Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," *BSac* 148/592 (1991): 473.

[63] C. L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 2 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press/The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1976), 1.

[64] See B. A. Levine, "The Descriptive Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch," *JAOS* 85 (1965): 307-318, and also his earlier work on the same text genre in Ugaritic literature in B. A. Levine, "Ugaritic Descriptive Rituals," *JCS* 17 (1963): 105-111.

necessarily reflecting Scriptural realities.[65] New Testament ritual exists and includes more than merely baptism and communion. In order to understand the structure and message of NT texts, one needs to grasp their often ritual focus. A good example of the importance of this issue has been presented by the different publications of K. C. Hanson.[66]

4. Another reason—based upon internal OT presuppositions—for the devaluation of ritual studies in evangelical scholarship might be the prophetic critique of ritual.[67] However, prophetic critique did not represent a discontinuation of the earlier legal and cultic traditions, as has been repeatedly demonstrated in recent scholarship.[68] Perhaps the news about this changed paradigm has not yet reached conservative scholarship?

5. Finally, one major issue connected rather with worldview than specific exegetical presuppositions should not go unnoticed. Most of us are children of modernism—although we love and accept the biblical model of revelation/inspiration of Scripture. However, modernism's emphasis upon the concrete, countable, and visible does not provide a fertile ground for studying and understanding rituals which functioned in a pre-modern society, with its distinct values, such as community, hierarchy, faith, order, tradition, etc.[69] In other words, it is difficult for us, having been brought up in a culture where we want to count and reason before we believe and feel, to delve into ritual, which—adding to its problematic nature—is only present in written form and cannot be observed and belongs to a cultural stream far removed from present

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[65] A good example of this tendency can be seen in the discussion of Rom 10:4. Compare here R. Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective*, JSNTSS 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 7-36, for a history of research. A recent evangelical exegetical commentary, T. R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), interprets the term in question as "end" instead of "goal," following long established traditional lines of argumentation.

[66] Compare K. C. Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain: Ritual Analysis and the Gospel of Matthew," *Semeia* 67 (1994)[1995]: 147-170, and also K. C. Hanson, "Sin, Purification, and Group Process," in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. H. T. C. Sun, K. L. Eades, J. M. Robinson, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 167-191.

[67] Compare here also Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 17.

[68] A good example in evangelical scholarship can be found in S. J. Bramer, "The Literary Genre of the Book of Amos," *BSac* 156/621 (1999): 42-60, esp. 50, note 37, where Bramer positions as opposites the worship in spirit and in truth against the "listless perpetuation of mere ritual." For a review of modern scholarship concerning the issue, see J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: From the Settlement in the Land to the Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 24-25; R. P. Gordon, "A Story of Two Paradigm Shifts," in *'The Place Is Too Small for Us': The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*, ed. R. P. Gordon, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 9-12, esp. where he writes: "Generally speaking, the notion of a fundamental opposition between prophecy and cult has fallen into disfavor in modern Old Testament scholarship" (12).

[69] Some good observations can be found in D. Jodock, *The Church's Bible: Its Contemporary Authority* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 15-20, 34-42, 72-84.

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experience.[70] While this does not preclude fruitful interaction with modern ritual studies of Scripture, it makes it much more difficult. Having lived in Africa and in South America, I find it enlightening to see how simple, often "under-educated" lay members handle and understand ritual texts from the OT that would only cause some raised eyebrows and the quick flick to turn over the page in a modern Western church context.

5. Future Strategies and Challenges

Taking into consideration some of the possible reasons for the paucity of ritual studies in evangelical thought, I would like to offer the following strategies and challenges.

1. Ritual studies must become part and parcel of our religious education. This first point has to do with introductory courses in religion or theology. Usually we include historical books (and thus historiography), the Pentateuch (with a brief introduction to legal texts), and prophetic writings. Sometimes an introduction to apocalyptic writings is included as well. However, never have I seen a seminary or university religion department course entitled "Introduction to Ritual in Biblical Studies." Perhaps this is the time to refocus and reflect in our curriculum what is present (in quite substantial amounts) in the text itself.

2. Evangelical scholars need to rise to the challenge of interacting in multi-disciplinary research work. In the past, anthropology and sociology (or any other non-religious discipline working with ritual) has had negative press in conservative circles—often justifiably so, since it was often used to re-write history in the context of overarching theories. The exodus/conquest discussion is a good example for this tendency. However, when we understand the tools that anthropology or sociology provide without necessarily accepting their philosophical presuppositions, we might just be able to make more sense of biblical ritual texts.[71]

3. In the western world we live in an environment that is ritually poor. Forms are not important, tradition is challenged, and symbolic action is for those who do not have the backbone to be go-getters. However, I believe that the contemporary Church (and I do not mean denomination) needs to rediscover ritual as a means of communication, conservation, and innovation. The days and weeks after September 11 were full of gestures and symbolic acts (for example, flying the flag) and these filled an important emotional and communicative void. As a contemporary Christian community/church, we also need these rallying

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[70] I include here also the issue of language and pragmatics. See, for more information, C. J. Klingbeil, "Mirando más allá de las Palabras—Pragmática Lingüística y su Aplicación a los Estudios Bíblicos," in Alomía, Klingbeil, and Klingbeil, 123-135.

[71] I have argued this point in more detail (albeit in Spanish) in G. A. Klingbeil and M. G. Klingbeil, "La lectura de la Biblia desde una perspectiva hermenéutica multidisciplinaria (I) - Consideraciones teóricas preliminarias," in Alomía, Klingbeil, and Klingbeil, 147-173, esp. 158-162. For a good evaluation of the evangelical reception of these disciplines, see E. M. Yamauchi, "Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural," *JETS* 27/2 (1984): 169-192.

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points and must rediscover the importance of biblical symbolic acts, rites, or more complex rituals and their contemporary application.

4. We need more undergraduate (and not necessarily postgraduate) textbooks dealing with ritual in the Bible. Most religious textbooks concentrate on ritual in existing cultures and are based upon anthropological fieldwork. However, biblical ritual studies are a somewhat different kettle of fish, since they are focusing upon physical observation and not on textual observation.

5. While presently the field of biblical ritual studies is dominated by historical-critical research or social-science research, there is a need for scholars with a high regard for Scripture to delve into this field and interact with these scholars, leading to a rediscovery of essential elements of worship and adoration in our contemporary context.

6. Ritual is a means of discovering, enacting, and reflecting about faith and present reality.[72] Actually, ritual is highly theological, since it gives us a good idea about what is important and what is not. It is my conviction that understanding ritual better will help us write a more authentic theology of the Old Testament—a point indicated recently by Walter Brueggemann.[73]

In conclusion, a lot of work lies ahead. If we are to understand and appreciate ritual and ritual texts in their OT context, we need to expose ourselves and our students to them. We need to rediscover their ability to cross cultural and linguistic barriers. We need to discover what artists and multi-media specialists have already known for ages: an image (and with this I would include the "image of a performed ritual") speaks more than a thousand words.

Gerald Klingbeil studied theology at Bogenhofen Seminary, Austria, and at Helderberg College, South Africa. He received the D.Litt. in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. Between 1995–2000 he taught at Universidad Peruana Union, Peru. Presently he teaches Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at River Plate Adventist University, Argentina, where he is also the director of the Research Institute and editor of the academic journal *DavarLogos*. His e-mail address is kling@uapar.edu

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[72] F. H. Gorman, Jr., "Ritual," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. D. N. Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1131.

[73] W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 652-654.

Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath?: Colossians 2:14–17 Revisited

Frank B. Holbrook

Colossians 2:14–17—the apostle Paul's only direct reference to the seventh day Sabbath—has long been used as evidence that Paul abolished the observance of the biblical Sabbath. In view of the nature of the fourth precept of the Decalogue and the weight of evidence drawn from the entire Bible, Seventh-day Adventists reject this position. In recent years, however, some ministers who have left the Adventist ranks for various reasons now argue that the Sabbath command functioned as a ceremonial type to foreshadow the spiritual rest we may now have in Jesus Christ.[1] Consequently, the observance of the Sabbath is no longer obligatory. The textual support for their argument is essentially Col 2:14–17 and Heb 4:1–11.

The Origin of the Bible Sabbath

The Godhead worked together in the creation of our earth (Gen 1–2). The NT observes that the Son served as the active agent to bring all things into existence (John 1:1–3, 10, 14; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:1, 2). With regard to the origin of the Sabbath, the evidence is plain. God the Son set aside the seventh day of creation to be the Sabbath for the human family by His example and fiat. "He **rested** the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then [He] **blessed** the seventh day and **sanctified** it, because in it He rested from all His work which [He] had created and made" (Gen 2:2, 3).[2]

It is evident that the Godhead intended the Sabbath to be both a universal and a permanent institution for mankind. Jesus endorsed this view many centuries later when He told the caviling Pharisees: "The Sabbath was made for man [Gk. lit. "**the** man," i.e., mankind], and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Obviously, the Sabbath was not a type or shadow of ceremonial instruction, because sin did not exist in

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[1] Evidently we have no more need of physical ceasing from labor!

[2] Biblical citations are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted; emphases mine.

the earth at creation. The Sabbath as a day of rest focused on creation and the Author of creation. The fourth precept of the Decalogue underscores this fact: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and **rested** the seventh day. Therefore the Lord **blessed** the Sabbath day and **hallowed** it" Exod 20:8–11).

New Dimensions of the Bible Sabbath

Satan's rebellion in heaven and his seduction of our first parents on earth led to hurtful consequences. When man sinned, God intervened with a plan designed to save sinful humanity—a gracious plan laid in eternity to meet such an emergency (for example, see 1 Pet 1:18–20). Hence, it is necessary to recognize that both Testaments of the Bible teach at heart the **same** gospel, namely, salvation from sin through faith in God-provided redemption, even if most who offered sacrifices had little inkling that this redemption would ultimately come by way of a heaven-sent Sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews declares: "For indeed the gospel was preached to us [Christians] as well as to them [Israelites]" (Heb 4:2). God intended Israel to learn about the gospel through the sacrificial rites and other rituals of the sanctuary system, just as Abraham learned it earlier through its simpler mode. Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Because he knew about substitutionary atonement through sacrifice (Gen 22:8), the patriarch would have known exactly what John the Baptist meant when he declared to a later generation of Abraham's descendants: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The changes brought about by the entrance of sin caused the observance of the Sabbath to take on certain new dimensions not needed in a sinless creation. The patriarchal record is too brief to take note of these, but we find them in Israel's early history.

A Day of Assembly/Worship. "There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, **a day of sacred assembly**" (Lev 23:3, NIV). The later institution of the synagogue developed this practice more fully (see Luke 4:16).

A Sign of Salvation. "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a **sign** between Me and you . . . that you may know that **I am the Lord who sanctifies you**" (Exod 31:13). Many centuries later God reminded the Jews in Babylonian captivity of what He had done for their ancestors: "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a **sign** between them and Me, that they might know that **I am the Lord who sanctifies them**" (Ezek 20:12).

"To sanctify" in the above contexts means more than simply to separate Israel from the pagan nations. It meant that God would separate them from their sins—would forgive and transform them by His grace. God's objective for His

people was clear: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2).

Lexicographers define the participle used in the above texts to mean, "God, keeping his people pure and sacred."[3] To establish the observance of the Sabbath as a sign of God's sanctifying power emerges as a natural step from the Sabbath as a memorial of God's creative power, since it refers to God's re-creative grace. As the apostle Paul describes it: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is **a new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Ellen White has phrased it in this manner: "The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. The Power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character."[4] "The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power."[5]

True, worshiping Israelites who participated in the gospel rituals with understanding and observed the Sabbath from their heart were assured of God's saving grace. By faith in God's promises they found spiritual peace. For them, the Sabbath was not a foreshadowing of a future spiritual rest, but a sign of a present reality, a present experience in grace. The observance of the Sabbath did not drop away as an unnecessary relic of the past. Rather, their love for God for saving them bound them more fully to God through this sign of divine grace.

A Sign of Creatorship and Authority. The first biblical passage to identify the Sabbath as a sign of God's creative power is Exod 31:12–17. It is in the same passage that defines it as a sign of His sanctifying power (v. 13). "Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath. . . . It is a **sign** between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed" (vs. 16, 17). By observing the Sabbath, the believing Israelite publicly acknowledged the full authority of his Creator. "Hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a **sign** between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God" (Ezek 20:20).

Centered in the Ten Commandments. The content of the Ten Commandments was apparently known orally from the time of Adam's fall and onward. This is implied in the book of Genesis by references to specific sins and the apostle Paul's sweeping statement: "for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20), and sin truly abounded in the Antediluvian world (Gen 6:5, 11).

At Sinai God personally proclaimed the Ten Commandments and arranged their sequence. The first four precepts dealt with man's duty to God; the last six with his duty to his fellow beings. God is referred to as Yahweh in three of the

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[3] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Boston/NewYork: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 873.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church.* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, l948), 6:350.

[5] ———, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, l942), 250.

precepts. But it is in the fourth—the Sabbath command—that He also identifies Himself as the Creator. In this manner the fourth precept functions as the seal to the document, certifying the authority behind the whole. Its permanence is further emphasized by the fact that God Himself inscribed the Decalogue on "tablets of stone" (Exod 31:18). Obviously, the Sabbath was intended to function as a permanent moral command to maintain a clear distinction between the Creator and His human family.

Reminder of Israel's Former Slavery. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses repeats and explains the instructions God gave the nation at Sinai. When presenting the Sabbath precept, he links it to their former bondage in Egypt. "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut 5:15).

The Sabbath and the Sanctuary System

Moses deposited the tablets of the Ten Commandments in a golden ark that stood in the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary (Exod 40:20). Israel regarded the ark with the Ten Commandments, its mercy seat lid, and attached cherubim as a symbol of God's heavenly throne (cf. 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 80:1; 99:1). From this perspective it is easy to see why the ark with its contents of the moral law was the hub to the wheel of Israel's ritual services. The Decalogue (including the Sabbath precept) served as the **foundation** of the Creator's throne, defining His will and His standard of righteousness. On the other hand, the gospel rituals taught Israel the divine way to find forgiveness and pardon when they realized their sinfulness and transgression against God's will. In this manner the moral law, that is, the Decalogue and the gospel rituals, were **joined together into one plan of salvation**.

When the typical rituals of the gospel came to their end as type met antitype, the Ten Commandments—the foundation of God's rule and an expression of His character—naturally continued to function. God's will for mankind doesn't change. This fact can be seen in the central vision of the book of Revelation (Rev 11:19–14:20). The scene is introduced in this manner: "Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the **ark of His covenant** was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail" (Rev 11:19). This heavenly scene indicates that the final events will focus on God's fulfillment of His covenant with His people and their fulfillment of the covenant they swore in return, represented by the Ten Commandments (the contents of the ark), and that the following references in the scene to God's commandments are dealing with the Ten Commandments (Rev 12:17; 14:7; 14:12) and thus include the Sabbath precept.

It is only natural that with the coalescing of the Ten Commandments with the ritual portrayals of the gospel into one system, that the Sabbath would take

on some aspects of the rituals. For example, in addition to the daily morning and evening sacrifices, the priests offered two extra lambs (Num 28:9). Probably because the Sabbath became a day of assembly and worship, it was sometimes listed with the ritual days of assembly. The following are examples:

The Levites served "on the **Sabbaths** and on the **New Moons** and on the **set feasts**" (1 Chron 23:31).

Offerings were made "on the **Sabbaths**, on the **New Moons**, and on the **set feasts** of the Lord our God" (2 Chron 2:4).

Offerings were made for "the **Sabbaths**, the **New Moons**, and the **three appointed yearly feasts**" (2 Chron 8:13, 16).

Offerings were made for "the **Sabbaths** and the **New Moons** and the **set feasts**" (2 Chron 31:3).

"The **New Moons**, the **Sabbaths**, and the calling of **assemblies** . . . Your **New Moons** and **your appointed feasts** My soul hates" (Isa 1:13, 14).

"Her **feast days**, Her **New Moons**, Her **Sabbaths**—All her **appointed feasts**" (Hos 2:11).

"When will the **New Moon** be past, that we may sell grain? And the **Sabbath** that we may trade wheat?" (Amos 8:5).

Finances were arranged to provide the sacrifices for "the **Sabbaths**, the **New Moons**, and the **set feasts**" (Neh 10:33).

The prince provides offerings at the **feasts**, the **New Moons**, and the **Sabbaths** (Ezek 45:17).

The arrangement of the Israelite sanctuary that combined the moral law of the Ten Commandments with the rituals into one system did not thereby turn these precepts into temporary rites, nor did the obligation to obey the Ten Commandments cease when the system ceased. The system illustrated the great themes of the Godhead's plan of salvation and offered spiritual rest experientially right then in OT times. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both the moral law and the ritual rites also had a forward-looking perspective. The moral law convicted the sinner, while the gospel rituals, faithfully entered into, assured him of forgiveness. This faith stood in the place of faith in the coming Redeemer typologically represented in the rites, "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

According to the apostle Paul, "the law" (the whole Jewish system) had a definite historical purpose. It functioned as a "tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). Naturally, this historical function ceased with the advent of Christ—the Antitype of the gospel rituals. The temple and rituals fell away as Christ's atoning death and subsequent priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary took their places (Heb 8:1, 2). But the Ten Commandments never ceased to be the foundation of God's rule and authority in the earth, expressing His will and being a transcript of His character.

The Sabbath and the Colossian Heresy

The apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians (written during his first imprisonment in Rome) did not address the more common problem of grace versus works that troubled the churches of Galatia and Rome. The apostle himself had not worked in the area of Colossae (1:4, 7–9; 2:1). Apparently, Epaphras, one of the apostle's helpers, had been instrumental in developing a group of believers in this location (1:7; 4:12, 13). He had now come to Rome to request Paul's help in dealing with a heresy troubling his church.

The "Colossian Heresy" has been described as "an early and simple form of Gnosticism."[6] The expression (derived from the Greek word for "knowledge," *gnosis*) alludes to an erroneous system of belief that early invaded the Christian church. Salvation could be obtained only through a mystical knowledge of certain secret beliefs. Up until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi or Chenoboskion "library" of Gnostic writings in Egypt (1945), most of the information about these beliefs came from the writings of the post-apostolic church fathers. It is now known that many systems or sects of Gnostic thought functioned in the second and third centuries. All were syncretistic in nature—combinations of ideas drawn from many different sources, such as Greek, Jewish, Parsic, philosophies, religions, theosophies, mysteries, etc.[7]

Gnostic speculations about origins concluded that all matter was evil; hence, gnosticism perverted even the elements of Christianity it adopted.

> Christ is not the Savior who saves His people from their sins, and who gives them unceasingly, through union with Himself, deliverance from the power of sin. He is only one of the *aeons* [semi-divine beings mediating between God and man], though the highest of them [some said the lowest]. He is an originated being, not God. Thus Gnosticism has no place either for the creation of the universe by God, or for the incarnation and work of Christ. Once the essential evil of matter is granted, the possibility of Christ's having assumed a true human nature is excluded, simply for the reason that the world and human nature are originally and necessarily evil. Thus, as already seen, a form of Docetism is being espoused.[8]

With our present understanding of its nature, we can see the beginnings of this strange perversion growing in the apostolic age. For example, near the close of his life, the apostle Paul warned his successor, "O Timothy! Guard what was

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[6] Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, l979), 1:733–35; brackets added.

[7] For an extended discussion of Gnosticism, see *Ibid*. (1982), 2:484–90. For other useful works, see Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, l957), 6:54–9; Justo L. Gonzalez. *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, l970), 1:128–44; Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, l970), 51–5; Colin Brown, *Christianity & Western Thought* (Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity, l990), 70–82.

[8] *ISBE*, rev., 2:488 (col. 2).

committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called **knowledge** [*gnosis*]—by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith" (1 Tim 6:20, 21).

A few years later the apostle John warned the churches not to receive the Gnostic doctrine of docetism. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits. . . . Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:1–3; cf. 2 John 7).

A third, more detailed reference to this heresy is given in Colossians. It consisted of a Hellenistic "philosophy . . . according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (2:8). This "philosophy" involved a worship of angels and other astral powers (2:15, 18–19), although such worship was forbidden by the Scriptures (Exod 20:2; Matt 4:10; cf. Rev 22:8–9). In addition, it adopted a very strict code of asceticism (2:20–23). The severity of these practices reflected the beginnings of the notion that the material body was evil and needed to be mortified and punished. "These tendencies were identical with the more fully developed Gnosticism of later days."[9]

In Colossae the false teachers also added to their mix the Israelite sanctuary system. The apostle mentions circumcision and ritual eating and drinking, summarizing the worship system in an admonition: "Therefore let none judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival, or a new moon or sabbaths" (vs. 16–17). "The Gnostics would take any doctrine that they found valuable, without any regard for its origin or for the context from which it was taken."[10]

In this case the typical shadow system of worship was out of date, "obsolete" (Heb 8:13). The Saviour had already atoned for human sin and had ascended to heaven years before. When the apostle stated that the Israelite sanctuary system was "a **shadow** [*skia*] of things to come, but the **substance** [*soma*] is of Christ ," he seems to be describing to these Gentile Christians **God's original intention** for the sanctuary system—namely to prepare His people to recognize the function of the coming Saviour (cf. Heb 10:1). But their heresy misused the system and degraded the Christ.

This latter fact may be clearly inferred by the apostle's strong polemic to uphold Christ's supremecy, "that in all things He might have the preeminence" (l:18). Note the following passages:

"He [the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (1:13–14).

"He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God. . . . For by Him [Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible,

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[9] *Ibid*., 487 (col. 1).
[10] Gonzalez, 129.

whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (1:15–17).

"For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power" (2:9–10).

"[H]olding fast to the Head from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase which is from God" (2:19).

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (3:1).

By the light of this background we can see that Paul is referring to the **misuse** of the outdated sanctuary system. As we have noted earlier, the moral law of the Ten Commandments functioned as the driving force behind the gospel rituals. The precepts and principles of the Decalogue convicted sinners of their sins; the sacrificial rites showed them how to find forgiveness and change of heart through faith in God and helped them feel sure they had received it. Thus, the Decalogue specifying the moral precepts of God's will and the typical rituals demonstrating the plan of salvation in type were combined together in one sanctuary system.

The Sabbath precept always belonged to the Decalogue as its seal. It had an important place in a system of typological shadows, but it was not itself shadowy, but the thing itself. Always it drew the believer back to creation. After humanity's fall, it took on the nuance of a sign not only of faith in the Creator, but also as a sign of God as the believer's Sanctifier or Saviour.

Because it became one of Israel's special days for assembly, it was only natural that the Sabbath came to be listed with the ritual assemblies and to have extra offerings attached to its observance (see the list of nine OT passages cited above). We may infer from these listings that the expression (festival, new moon, sabbath—or the reverse) formed a common "shorthand" to summarize Israel's worship system. Thus, in a few words the apostle could refer to the Jewish cultus: "Let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (2:16, 17). The apostle is not attempting to classify all elements of the sanctuary worship as **shadows**. The Ten Commandments were a moral code, the adaptation of God's will for the moral guidance of the human family. It was never intended to be a code of temporary shadows. Paul's argument is that the **sanctuary system—as a system**—was "a shadow of things to come."

Moreover, in the light of the growing heresy, we can see that in Col. 2:16–17 Paul is referring to the Gnostic misuse of the outdated sanctuary system. It is not the true use of the sanctuary, but the Gnostic misuse of it. It is not the true observance of the Sabbath, but the Gnostic misuse of it, that the true

Christian need not be concerned about. Let no man judge you about not observing the Gnostic Sabbath.

When the sanctuary shadow system ended and the gospel ritual types met their antitype in Christ, then the whole system ceased from its historic function. The moral Law of the Ten Commandments remained, however, to define the Creator's will in the New Covenant (cf. Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:8–12). Thus, the seventh-day Sabbath continues to be obligatory. For the Christian believer—as a spiritual Israelite (Gal 3:25–29; 6:15, 16)—it too is a double sign of God's creative power/authority and saving grace.

Frank Holbrook, before his retirement, was an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute. He served as editor of *JATS* for five years and also edited the Biblical Research Institute's seven volume Daniel and Revelation Committee Series. Among his books is *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ*, available from the ATS.

Marriage and Covenant: Reflections on the Theology of Marriage

Loron Wade
Montemorelos University

Marriage is presented in Scripture both as a covenant and as a covenant metaphor. That is, marriage is itself a covenant. Furthermore, the parallels between the marriage pact and God's covenant with Israel are so striking that marriage is used as a theological metaphor that both clarifies and is clarified by the meaning of the divine covenant.

Therefore, in this approach to understanding the theology of marriage, we will consider first the Biblical idea of covenant itself, and then we will consider some of the striking parallels that Scripture presents between the marriage covenant and the salvation covenant.

The Covenant

The covenant was a mutual choosing; it was a reciprocal promise of exclusive dedication and loyalty. In essence it said: "I will be their God; they will be my people" (Jer 31:31–34; also Ezek 11:20; 14:11; Zech 8:8; etc.).

The covenant with Abraham was ratified in a solemn ceremony with shedding of blood (Gen 15:1–21). It was subsequently renewed to Isaac (Gen 17:19) and to Jacob (Gen 28:11–15; 32:24–30). It was validated to each succeeding generation through the rite of circumcision (Gen 17:11). It was announced to Israel at Sinai (Exod 19:3–6), its terms were spelled out in the giving of the law, and then it was ratified by the sprinkling of blood (Exod 24:7, 8). It was renewed again at the end of the forty years in the wilderness (Deut 29:1–25).

In all of this the Lord was speaking to His people in terms that would be clear to their understanding and in harmony with the culture of the age in which they lived. They understood that the covenant gave them a situation of privilege and also placed them under solemn obligation.

The following are aspects of what the covenant meant to the Israelites.

Covenant Means Chosen-ness

Here is how the covenant is introduced at Sinai: "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine" (Exod 19:5).[1]

The polytheists of that time believed in territorial gods. They thought that Yahweh might be the God here, but over there it was Chemosh, and farther along maybe Marduk or Osiris. It was the custom for travelers when entering the territory of a different people group to stop and offer a sacrifice to the dominant deity.

But Yahweh, the Creator of the universe, rejects this idea. "All the earth is mine," He says.[2] This is His way of saying that He was not limited in His choice of a people. Nevertheless, He says, "If you will keep my covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples of the earth." The significance of this choosing is magnified in the light of all the options God has at His disposal. Later he tells them, "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6).[3] "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2).

In its best expression, the concept of chosen-ness filled the believer with a sense of awe and humble gratitude to God.[4]

> The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath [covenant] which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut 7:7, 8)

Covenant Means Belonging

Modern western ontology,[5] captive to the Greek mind set, places a heavy emphasis on individuality. Each person is conceived of as an island, distinct and isolated from all the rest.[6] But the Hebrews derived their sense of personal identity from the covenant through which they saw themselves as members of the family of Abraham.

We sometimes speak of "corporate solidarity," which is somewhat the modern equivalent of tribal loyalty. For us, the term probably means identification

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[1] With one or two exceptions, Scripture quotations are from the NASB.

[2] "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof" (Ps 50:10–12; cf. Ps 24:1).

[3] See also 1 Kgs 8:53.

[4] In its worst expression, it gave them a sense of arrogance and disdain for other people.

[5] Ontology: A study of the nature of being.

[6] Current existentialist philosophy pushes the isolation even farther.

with a group or a cause. In any case, we see the bond as strictly psychological. But for the Hebrew it had a physical dimension, as well.

We get a glimpse of this from reading Hebrews 7, where the apostle is arguing for the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood over the Levitical system. Here he tells us that Levi himself paid tithes to Melchizedek. How could that be when Levi lived many centuries after Melchizedek? To the Hebrew mind it was simple, because Levi was present in the loins of Abraham when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek.[7]

Similarly, the apostle Paul tells us that "in Adam, all die" (1 Cor 15:22). How could all of us have died in Adam? Because we were all there; we were present in his body when he fell. Thus we all participated in the effects of his sin.

The Lord said to Abraham, "Kings shall come out of thy loins" (Gen 35:11). Abraham was to engender kings. They might be many generations away, but they were already there in his body as the Lord spoke with him.

In the same way, every time an Israelite recited the words of the covenant, he understood it was for him personally,[8] because he was there; he was present in the loins of Abraham when the covenant was given.[9]

There is no indication that the apostles thought the Gospel dispensation had changed all this or that the Gospel was somehow bringing in a new way of salvation. They understood that the Lord was opening the gates of salvation to the Gentiles, but these converts were not new plants in God's garden; they were branches grafted into the trunk of Israel (Rom 11:11–21).

Thus, Paul tells the Gentile believers that they were once "separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise," but now, through Christ, they are "no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people, members of the family of God" (Eph 2:12,

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[7] "And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him" (Heb 7:9, 10). To us this language seems metaphorical, but it is difficult to know the extent to which the Israelites would have taken it literally. Certainly, without Abraham as an ancestor, Levi would never have existed, so it is fair to say that in a way Levi was present in Abraham's loins.

[8] Cf. John Donne: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee" (from *Devotions on Emergent Occasions,* Meditation XVII).

[9] John the Baptist showed his awareness of this way of thinking when he told the Jewish leaders, "Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'" (Luke 3:8). The Jews felt nothing could shake their hold on salvation because they were children of Abraham.

According to this understanding, descendants were extensions of the self, a perpetuation of one's own life. This clarifies the extreme importance of fertility in the Hebrew mind and why sterility was viewed with such horror. To have descendants was to achieve a kind of immortality. The levirate marriage in which a man was required to raise up children for a brother who died childless is another illustration of this idea. ("Levirate" comes from the Heb. *levir,* "brother-in-law.")

19). "If you belong to Christ," he says, "then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29).

Covenant Means Separation, That Is, "Separate-ness"

The covenant also imparted a sense of separation, that is, of separate-ness. It established the Hebrews as a people who were distinct and separate from all other people of the earth. This idea of separate-ness, of course, is the counterpart to the idea of belonging.

Separate-ness Is the Exclusive Worship of One God. In the pantheon of the pagan religions, there was always room for one more, but the Creator God would brook no rivals. The first injunction of the covenant was: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In the second injunction, He describes himself as "a jealous God" (Exod 20:3, 5). Complete separation from all other gods must be unconditional.

Separate-ness Is Holiness. The idea of separate-ness was the progenitor of the concept of holiness. It was the concept of separate-ness that determined the Hebrew understanding of holiness and made it a vital force in the people's lives. The Hebrews' exclusive devotion to God was expressed not merely by words and rituals, but by a lifestyle that set them apart.[10]

Separate-ness Is Transcendence. A fundamental concept of conservative theology is that God is transcendent. This means He is separate from what He has created. Pantheism, often expressed in creature worship, was and still is a common denominator of pagan religion.[11] Pantheism confuses the Creator with the creation by limiting Him to space/time dimensions, thus robbing Him of His infinity.[12]

Transcendence and Holiness. To say that God is transcendent is another way of expressing His holiness, and to say that God is holy is another way of expressing this transcendence.

As God is holy, so He commanded His people to be holy. Belonging to God can be accomplished only by separating from all that stands in opposition to Him. It is clear that a life style that destroys what He has created is in opposition to Him. Thus, God's people were to live in a way that would set them apart, distinct and separate from the creature-worshiping, thing-worshiping masses. They were to transcend popular culture. They were a "holy nation."[13]

The Gentiles might eat all manner of creatures, but God's chosen people could not. Why? We commonly think of the dietary laws given in Leviticus 11 as a series of health principles. Indeed they are, but it is interesting to note that

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[10] 2 Cor 6:17; Rev 18:4.

[11] "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Rom 1:25). Liberal theology teaches a sophisticated form of this ancient doctrine known as immanence.

[12] This is, in fact, the opposite of what its proponents allege.

[13] Exod 19:6.

health is not mentioned in the entire chapter. There is not a word about long life, being strong, avoiding disease, or anything of the sort. Notice the reason given for abstaining from unclean foods: "For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy" (Lev 11:44, 45).

They were not told to follow these laws to be healthy, but to be holy.

Similarly, the Gentiles might eat the flesh of an animal that died of itself, but God's people must not eat it. Why? Because "you are a holy people to the Lord your God" (Deut 14:12).

The Gentiles might live in the midst of unsanitary conditions, but God's people were to bury their filth. Why? Because "the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp . . . therefore your camp must be holy" (Deut 23:14).

Thus separate-ness, as it is prescribed in the covenant, both signified and deepened holiness.

Covenant Means Knowledge of God

Biblical epistemology[14] also points up another sharp contrast between the theology of relationships and the Greek/pagan point of view. According to the Greeks, knowledge is a matter of getting information into your head;[15] or to put it a bit more elegantly, it is the apprehension of ultimate reality.[16]

But in Hebrew thought, as reflected in the Old Testament, not only the means but the nature of knowledge is different. Here "knowledge" *(yada)* is not so much informational as relational.[17] It is not only intellectual but experiential. What this means is that one cannot be uninvolved[18] with what one knows.

The Psalmist writes, "the Lord *knows* the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Ps 1:6). The Lord's knowledge of the righteous means for them the opposite of what will happen to the wicked. It is clear that God's "knowing" does not imply that he is simply aware of His people or in-formed about them. It carries the idea of fellowship and concern, protection and caring. It means He is involved in their lives. So God's knowledge of a person means His providence and the carrying out of His good purposes toward that person.[19]

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that the idea of knowledge is closely related to the covenant. On a personal level, it is tied in with God's

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[14] Epistemology: A study of the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge.

[15] Knowledge might be achieved by rational contemplation, as with the Aristotelians, or by a sudden breakthrough of inner illumination, as with the followers of Plato, but in either case the na-ture of knowledge is the same.

[16] R. Bultman, "*Ginosko*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:689ff.

[17] Knowledge "connotes experience rather than contemplation or ecstasy" (George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 261).

[18] It also means that for human beings, there is no such thing as truly objective knowledge.

[19] E. C. Blackman, "Know," *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: Macmillan, 1950, 1962), 122.

choosing of an individual to serve Him. The Lord told Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I *knew* you" (Jer 1:5). On a national scale, God's knowledge of Israel meant His election of that nation as His chosen people. He says: "You only have I known among all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2).[20] Obviously, this cannot mean that the Lord had no information about other people groups; it means that with no other nation did God have the same relation of fellowship and concern.

Similarly, in the NT[21] we read that those who have not done the will of the heavenly Father will one day hear the words: "I never knew you" (Matt 7:23). The Lord is certainly not telling these people that He had no information about them. What He is saying is: You and I were never on that kind of terms. There was never a close relationship of love, concern, and obedience.

John presents Jesus as sent by God to bring mankind to a knowledge of Him. No man has seen God at any time, but Jesus has seen Him, and because of this intimate knowledge of (that is, relationship with) the Father, Jesus is able to mediate knowledge of the Father to humankind (John 1:18; 14:7; cf. John 18:37). The Saviour's mission was to glorify the Father by making known His name on earth (John 17:6). "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Covenant Means Faithfulness and Steadfast Love

The relationship between the covenant partners is expressed by *hesed,* a term that refers especially to love-inspired loyalty and faithfulness (KJV, lovingkindness; RSV, steadfast love; NEB, love, loyalty, constancy) to the terms of the covenant.

The Psalmist sang: "the lovingkindness [*hesed*] of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to those who keep His covenant, and who remember His precepts to do them" (Ps 103:17, 18). Isaiah was no less poetic when he wrote: "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness [*hesed*] will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken" (Isa 54:10).[22] Thus, the Creator pledged Himself to be faithful to the covenant promises, and He always was.

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[20] See also Hosea 5:3.

[21] Although the NT writers used the same vocabulary employed by the pagan philosophers, it is striking to note the clear continuity of the OT thought patterns. Nowhere is the relationship of the New Testament to the Old illustrated more clearly than in the degree to which the NT view of knowledge reflects OT thinking and stands in marked contrast to the epistemological formulations of Greek philosophy.

[22] Cf. Isa 55:3. Vernard Eller suggests that *hesed* is best translated by George Matheson's hymn title, "Oh Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go" ("Covenental Sex and Marriage: A Biblical View," http://www.hccentral.com/eller1/covsex.html).

The response of God's people was to be equally firm and fervent, though in actuality the Israelites frequently sinned against the covenant and had to ask forgiveness and reaffirm their commitment to it.[23] The Lord told Israel plainly that covenant loyalty meant that they were to "walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out" (Isa 26:3).

On the other hand, He warned, "If you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments; if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, *and so break My covenant,* I, in turn, will do this to you: . . ."(Lev 26:15, 16; emphasis added).

Notice that commandment breaking is here the equivalent of covenant breaking.

In a similar vein, we read in Exod. 34:28 that Moses "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." Here the ten commandments are identified directly with the covenant.

Whoever Breaks the Covenant Ceases to Be a Beneficiary of its Provisions

The Lord promised that *He* would never break the terms of the covenant (Judg 2:1; Ps 89:34), but He foretold that Israel would break it and specified how this would take place: "For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant" (Deut 31:20).

Whoever broke a covenant stepped outside its terms and ceased to be a beneficiary of its promises. The review of the covenant in Leviticus 26 is marked by three "if" clauses:

The first one, **"If** you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out" (v. 3), is followed by a series of blessings that were God's part of the covenant terms.

Next we read: "But **if** you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, . . ." (vv. 14, 15), then a series of curses will replace the promised covenant blessings.

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[23] K. Baltzer studied ancient covenants in the ancient Near East and concluded that there were six essential elements in covenant formulary: (1) the preamble mentioning the names of the partners; (2) a preliminary history of the relationship of those entering the covenant; (3) a basic declaration about the future relationship of the partners; (4) details of the new relationship; (5) an invocation of the respective gods worshipped by both sides to act as witnesses; (6) a pronouncement of curse and blessings (*The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings,* 1971, cited by Joachim Guhrt, "Covenant," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* ed. Colin Brown [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986] 1:365–376).

The third "if" clause foresees the possibility of repentance and restoration: "**If** they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, . . . then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land" (vv. 41, 42).

Our God is a God of new beginnings. A broken covenant can be renewed if the parties agree to return to the original terms. In fact, through Isaiah, He promises a renewal and the establishment of a new and everlasting covenant (Isa 55:3).

Jeremiah echoes this same promise:

> "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer 31:31–34; also Ezek 11:20; 14:11; Zech 8:8; etc.)

Marriage and Covenant

As we noted at the beginning, marriage is presented in Scripture both as a covenant and as a covenant symbol. It is a covenant in and of itself. And it is used as a theological metaphor to clarify and illustrate the meaning of the divine covenant.

Marriage as Covenant[24]

Scripture does not prescribe specific rites for enacting the marriage covenant. Apparently in early times it was an extremely simple matter, as we read about the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah: "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen 24:67).

Genesis 29:22 suggests a wedding feast was given by the bride's father (see also Judg 14:12; John 2:1–11). From Genesis 34:12 we learn that the marriage sometimes involved payment of a "bride price" (*mohar*) or dowry.

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[24] "The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities" (Ellen G. White, *The Christian Home,* p. 18).

Whether a public ceremony was involved or not, marriage was considered a binding covenant. Malachi declared: "The Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Mal 2:14).

The fact that Moses specified a "certificate of divorce" for dissolving marriage (Deut 24:1) is further evidence that the marriage covenant was a publicly recognized commitment.

And we have evidence that, at least by intertestamental times, a written contract was involved:

> Then he called his daughter Sarah, and taking her by the hand he gave her to Tobias to be his wife, saying, "Here she is; take her according to the law of Moses, and take her with you to your father, and he blessed them. Next he called his wife Edna, and took a scroll and wrote out the contract; and they set their seals to it. Then they began to eat. (Tobit 7:13ff)

Marriage as a Covenant Metaphor[25]

Giving the Covenant Is a Betrothal. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord compared the giving of the covenant to Israel to a betrothal. He says: "I spread my skirt over you . . . I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became mine, declares the Lord God" (16:14). Through Hosea the Lord told His people: "And I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the Lord" (Hos 2:19, 20).

Paul tells the believers in Corinth: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2).

Keeping the Covenant Is a Marriage. In speaking of His own covenant faithfulness, the Lord told Israel that He had been a "husband" to them (Jer 31:32; see also Isa 54:5).

In the Gospels marriage is a symbol of the kingdom (Matt 25:1–13; Luke 14:16–24).

In his discussion of marriage in Ephesians 5, the apostle cites Genesis 2:24: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." Then he adds, "but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

In a similar vein, we hear in the book of Revelation an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb whose bride is the New Jersualem, the church (Rev 19:7–9).

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[25] "In the Bible, the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined His people to Himself by a solemn covenant, He promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* 381).

Unfaithfulness Is Adultery and Can Result In Divorce. Following the marriage metaphor, when God's people are unfaithful to the covenant, this is frequently compared to adultery: "For all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also" (Jer 3:8; see also Exod 34:15; Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17).

The entire book of Hosea is dedicated to depicting God's relationship with His people through the marriage/harlotry metaphor.[26] Similarly, in the book of Revelation, Babylon, the unfaithful church, is depicted as a harlot and the mother of harlots (Rev 17:5, 15).

Parallels Between Marriage and Covenant

As we have considered some of the highlights of covenant theology, no doubt you have been impressed with some of the striking similarities between the covenant and marriage. We will now notice how Scripture itself draws out these similarities.

Chosen-ness. In the Song of Songs, the young women of the city ask the bride: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" (5:9).

It is a challenge, but the bride does not hesitate. She *knows* the answer: Her beloved is "outstanding among ten thousand" (v. 10). Among all the thousands, she has chosen him even as he has chosen her the "fairest among women."

Belonging. We saw that the covenant pointed to a relationship that was more than a psychological attachment; it was physical because God's people were physically present in the loins of Abraham when the covenant was given. Children were considered a physical extension of their parents. It seems hardly anything could be stronger than the tie between parents and children. But we find that there is indeed something stronger: the union of a husband and wife.

After Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs, Adam sang, in his joy:

> This is now bone of my bones,
> And flesh of my flesh;
> She shall be called Woman,
> Because she was taken out of Man. (Gen 2:23)

Now that is belonging! Eve is an extension of Adam's immediate person; she is his other self. It was a relationship closer than any other human relationship could ever be.[27]

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[26] For example, Hosea 1:2, 3; 2:5.

[27] Although this union is closer than any other human relationship, it does not destroy individuality. "I was shown that although a couple were married, gave themselves to each other by a most solemn vow in the sight of heaven and holy angels and the two were one, yet each had a separate identity which the marriage covenant could not destroy" (Ellen White, Letter 9, 1864).

In the next verse we read: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

The importance of this short statement is such that we must analyze it in more detail:

"For this cause . . ." "Therefore . . ." This means that the incident just related (the creation of Eve from one of Adam's ribs) is explicitly precedent-setting. It serves to explain the mystery and the meaning of marriage.

"A man shall leave his father and his mother." As we have noted, the eastern relationship between a man and his parents goes beyond what is generally understood in western culture. A man was considered a physical extension of his parents, as descendants were thought to be present in the body of their ancestors.

But here the text tells us that even this extremely close relationship is to be left behind, superseded by the relationship between a husband and wife. In forming a marriage relationship, a man would "leave his father and his mother."

"And shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." This cleaving and this becoming one flesh points to a degree of intimacy that is unparalleled in human experience.[28] It refers to a to a mental and spiritual union of which the sexual union is an expression and reaffirmation.

Sexual intimacy expresses and epitomizes the marriage covenant because it involves physically joining one body with another. Thus, it is a ritual of reenactment, recalling the creation of woman from the body of man.[29] In the exultant joy of the sexual act we hear an echo of the voice of Adam when he said: "This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh."[30]

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Walter Trobisch writes:

> Naked is not meant here in a physical sense only. It means to stand in front of each other, stripped and undisguised, without pretension, without hiding anything, seeing the partner as he or she really is and showing myself to him or her as I really am—and still not to be ashamed.[31]

This is a beautiful thought, even though it goes beyond the letter of the text. Trobisch is pointing to the depths of intimacy in marriage.

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[28] "The literal sense of the Hebrew word for 'to cleave' is to stick to, to paste, to be glued to a person. Husband and wife are glued together like two pieces of paper. If you try to separate two pieces of paper which are glued together, you tear them both" (Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 15.

[29] Thus the sexual union functions in a way that is similar to the ordinance of foot washing, which is a reenactment and reaffirmation of baptism, the act by which we enter the spiritual covenant in the Christian dispensation.

[30] Both Jesus and Paul cite Gen 2:24 and reaffirm its theological significance (Matt 19:4–8; 1 Cor 6:16, 17; Eph 5:31).

[31] Trobisch, 82, 83

However, he apparently overlooks the fact that this nakedness was exclusively a pre-fall condition. The innocence of our first parents made such total intimacy possible. Sadly, the entrance of sin brought about a fundamental change. As long as the sinful nature is not taken away, 100% intimacy is not possible. Total sharing of every thought, absolute revealing of the most intimate secrets of the soul is not truly possible even between marriage partners, nor would it be kind or beneficial or healthy.

This, of course, does not contradict the fact that marriage, even under sin, is the closest of all human relations.

Separate-ness. It may seem paradoxical that union requires separation. But a marriage involves both uniting and separating.

We have already noticed that it involves the separation of a man from his parents. In view of the exceedingly close nature of the parent-child relationship, we might ask why marriage cannot be *in addition* to the parent-child relationship, but it cannot. Rather, marriage is formed by breaking off, by abandoning and leaving.[32] So cleaving requires leaving (Gen 2:24).[33]

Separateness Implies Exclusiveness. If leaving one's parents is demanded, how much more does marriage demand a breaking off of all other intimate relationships? In fact, Jesus made it clear that the exclusiveness demanded by the seventh commandment embraces even our thoughts (Matt 5:27, 28).

In this transcending or standing apart from all other human relationships, marriage achieves and defines its holiness. It is holy matrimony because it is a sanctuary, a holy ground where only the partners may tread.[34]

The transcendence of the marriage relationship requires the Christian to transcend also the confused mores of popular culture. The Christian who follows the Biblical command to "abstain from sexual immorality" is thereby placed in sharp contrast with the "Gentiles who do not know God" (1 Thes 4:3–5).[35] By abstaining "from fleshly lusts which war against the soul," God's people become

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[32] "Leave" is from the Heb. *azab*, meaning "abandon, forsake." The word is frequently employed to describe Israel's forsaking Yahweh for false gods (Deut 28:20; Judg 10:13; 2 Chr 34:25; Isa 1:4; etc.). It is true, of course, that Israelite young people, in general, seem to have lived near one or both sets of parents after marriage, usually the man's parents, but there was a separation, none the less, even if only moving into a separate tent.

[33] Cf. "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

[34] The discovery of group dynamics has brought into existence intensive group sessions demanding of participants total unreserved intimacy. A frequently-heard comment after such sessions is: "I've said things here I would never say even to my wife." It is not hard to see this as a violation of the seventh commandment, even when sexual contact is not involved.

[35] "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God" (1 Thes 4:3–5).

"strangers and pilgrims" on the earth (1 Pet 2:11).[36] Thus we see that in marriage, too, transcendence and holiness are inseparable concepts.

Knowledge. The biblical understanding of knowledge as relationship is seen in the application of the word "know" in Scripture to sexual intercourse, as in Gen 4:1: "Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain."[37] The expression is not a euphemism; it is applied in the most essential sense of the Hebrew idiom—that is, knowledge as relationship, involvement, and intimacy.

Seventh-day Adventists have championed an anthropology that insists on the wholeness of human beings. We believe that body, soul, and spirit are legitimate concepts, but we reject the Greek trichotomy[38] that segregates these into distinct entities that can be isolated and treated separately. We insist that they are parts of an inseparable whole.

Thus, the intimacy of the sexual relation cannot be isolated from the total intimacy of mind, body, and spirit that is marriage. The apostle Paul reflects this concept, saying that even sex with a prostitute entangles the believer in this type of bonding: "Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "The two will become one flesh." But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor 6:15–17).

As a ritual of reenactment, sexual intercourse is a celebration and a renewal of the miracle of woman's creation from that part of man's body that is closest to his heart.

Faithfulness and Steadfast Love. The Lord's caring involvement in the lives of His people is expressed as *hesed,* the steadfast covenant love. This becomes *agape* in the LXX and the NT. This is the love Paul says husbands are to have for their wives:

> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. (Eph 5:25–27)

Notice how the apostle is interweaving covenant theology with marriage theology in this passage. And he continues:

> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause a man

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[36] "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11).

[37] See also Matt 1:25. Although the word here in Greek is *ginosko,* the meaning is clearly rooted in the Hebrew *yada.*

[38] Yes, I know this word does not really exist, but it is a good one anyway.

shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (Eph 5:28–32)

According to the Greek point of view, my wife is herself and I am myself. Thus I can stand apart from my wife and be irritated by her weaknesses. I can submit her to my judgment and pass sentence on her. But if I have understood—and am experiencing[39]—the Biblical concept of marriage, standing apart is impossible, because marriage, more than any other human relationship, converts the two into one flesh. Thus I cannot condemn my spouse for her weaknesses, because if we are one flesh, they are no longer her weaknesses alone. They are *my* weaknesses, too. So I cannot stand apart from her and treat her as a separate person; I cannot scorn her or cast her off, because she is part of my own body. Instead, I must feel her wounds; I must share the frustration and pain of her failures; I must experience her sense of loss and confusion. By the same token, I can rejoice in her victories, because they, too, are mine.[40]

In Christ, "none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself" (Rom 14:7, RSV). If this is true in our relationship with all fellow believers, how much more in Christian marriage?

One night Mr. Boaz awoke in the darkness and was startled to find a woman sleeping at his feet. "He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative'" (Ruth 3:9). Ruth is telling Boaz that she wishes to be joined to him in a levirate marriage.[41] But she does not say: "I want you to marry me"; she says: "Spread your covering over your maid." The expression carries the idea of benevolent protection. Thus, it is an indication of covenant responsibility.[42]

We do not find in Mosaic law a specific listing of the duties involved in the marriage covenant, but there are some indications. A man who had taken a second wife was commanded not to neglect the first: "He may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights" (Exod 21:10). So at least three things were included in the husband's duty toward his wife, and it is interesting that sexual intercourse, here called "her conjugal rights," was one of them.

Paul also refers to intercourse as a husband's "duty to his wife," but adds that it is also the duty of "the wife to her husband." He says that this is a duty because marriage gives the wife authority over her husband's body, and the husband authority over his wife's body. Therefore, he says, "Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to

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[39] Remember that according to Scripture, understanding is experiential. So I can only understand the Biblical concept by experiencing it.

[40] See 1 Cor 9:22; 2 Cor 11:29.

[41] See footnote 9.

[42] Cf. Ezek 16:8.

prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:3–5).[43]

Fidelity, enjoined in the seventh commandment, is another duty of the marriage covenant. The wise man says that the unfaithful wife "leaves the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God" (Prov 2:17). And Malachi's rebuke to unfaithful husbands presents a striking parallel: "The Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Mal 2:14; cf. Prov 5:18–29).

From Paul's admonition, recorded in Ephesians 5, we draw the following list of marital duties:

> Love your spouse with a self-sacrificing love
> Care for her as you care for yourself
> Love her as you love your own body
> Seek your spouse's honor
> Nurture her
> Cherish her
> Leave all others
> Cleave to your spouse alone

Loving, caring, nurturing, and honoring are overarching principles that invite expression in a multitude of ways. Paul does not say: You must wash the supper dishes for your wife; you must straighten your husband's tie before he leaves for work in the morning; but the application of these principles may lead to behavior such as this.

Dominance and Obedience. We must not leave this section on covenant duties without considering Scripture's teaching on the wife's duty of subjection to her husband.

There is no hint in Genesis 1 or 2 of subjection or submission of Adam to Eve or of Eve to Adam. The matter of rule or headship appears for the first time in chapter 3, where the Lord is telling the man and the woman the consequences of their fall. In v. 16 the Lord says to the woman:

> I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;
>   in pain you shall bring forth your children.
> Yet your desire shall be for your husband,
>   and he shall rule over you.

"I will greatly multiply your pain." The expression is given in first person, active voice. It does not say, "Your pain will be multiplied*,"* but *I* will do it. It is

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[43] According to the Mishnah, the school of Shammai ruled that a man may abstain from sexual intercourse with his wife for two weeks, while the School of Hillel ruled that he may abstain for only one week, but both schools agreed that the husband must obtain his wife's consent. Likewise, a wife was not to abstain from intercourse with her husband without his consent (*M Ketubah* 5:6).

a deliberate act. So we have here a divine pronouncement. The Lord is speaking, and He is passing sentence in a context of judgment. What is spoken here comes with the weight of divine authority.

The last phrase says: "He [your husband] shall rule over you." The word "rule" (*mashal*) establishes an order of authority.[44]

It is significant that the Lord is not saying this to the man, but to the woman. This indicates that her submission to him is in recognition of the Lord's order of things. It is not a forceful domination of woman by reason of man's superior strength.

Consistent with this is the concept of submission and rulership presented by Paul in Ephesians 5. Here, the discussion begins with an admonition to mutual submission: "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Eph 5:22).

Then he writes, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (v. 23). Here "be subject*,"* *hypotasso,* is in the Greek middle voice, indicating a reflexive action in which the action reverts upon the doer. It means, literally, "Subject yourselves." Again, it is a voluntary submission, not one that is to be demanded or gained by tyrannical exercise of force. It is a submission given in recognition of heaven's order for marriage, an acknowledgment of the necessity and benevolence of the plan under which the husband exercises his divinely designated servant leadership.

And immediately, the apostle adds a word of balance. The wife is to submit to her husband "as to the Lord*,"* and the husband is head of his wife "as Christ is head of the church." Furthermore, husbands are to love their wives "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Thus, marriage is portrayed as a free and voluntary relationship of love and respect in which the wife respects and supports the servant leadership of her husband, and the husband loves and encourages and supports his wife.

Further light on this can be gained from Paul's discussion of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Here we can only admire the fine-tuned balance (the numbers in brackets indicate not verses, but the progression of the passage):

To Men	To Both	To Women.
[2] let each man have his own wife,	[1] Because of immoralities,	[3] and let each woman have her own husband.
[4] Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife,		[5] and likewise also the wife to her husband.
[6] The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does;		[7] and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

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[44] A different word, *radah*, is employed to refer to man's dominion over the animals. An idea of the rulership implied by *mashal* may be gleaned from Gen 1:16, where the sun is created to "rule" (*mashal*) over the day and the moon over the night. See further illustrations of its meaning in 2 Sam 23:3; Prov 17:2; Isa 40:10; 63:19; Zech 6:13.

	[8] Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.	
	[9] But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.	
[11] and that the husband should not send his wife away.		[10] But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband
[12] But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away.		[13] And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away.
[14] For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife,	[16] for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.	[15] and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband;
	[17] Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.	
[19] Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?		[18] For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband?

Thus the submission of the wife to her husband is not something that the wise husband demands, but that the wise wife freely gives, "in the Lord."[45]

Breaking the Covenant. Can the marriage covenant be broken? Both Moses and Jesus say, yes, it can. Here is Moses' answer: "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some **indecency** in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts [it] in her hand and sends her out from his house" (Deut 24:1).

And Jesus said: "Whoever divorces his wife, except for **immorality**, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matt 19:9).

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[45] "You have taken special delight in exercising your authority because you thought you could do so. But time will show that if you pursue the course your own temperament would lead you to do, you will not inspire in the heart of your wife to love, but will wean her affections from you, and she will in the end despise that authority" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce,* 30).

It would seem logical to interpret these verses together—that the "indecency," (*ervah*)[46] mentioned by Moses as grounds for divorce and the "immorality" (*porneia*) mentioned by Jesus[47] must be interpreted together, that each one will be seen to throw light on the other. But we will leave further analysis of these texts to others. Here we are asking if a covenant can be broken.

The writings of the prophets also offer an answer to our question. We have noticed that through Jeremiah, the Lord said that He was divorcing both Israel and her sister Judah for their unfaithfulness (Jer 3:8ff.; Isa 50:1). In the book of Hosea the Lord also represents Himself as moving reluctantly toward divorce. We see him suffering long, forgiving much, and finally accepting the inevitable with sorrow and regret. And even when divorced, He waits, hoping for reconciliation and the restoration of the broken relationship (cf. Lev 26:3-45).

This is similar to Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 7. Living with an unbeliever may be a less-than-desirable situation. But, he says, if the unbelieving spouse consents to live with the believer, "let him not send her away" and "let her not send him away" (vv. 12, 13). If, however, the believing spouse finds it impossible to live with the unbeliever, she may leave, but "let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband" (v. 11). This apparently refers to standing by for a time to give the unbeliever a chance to reconsider the situation that caused the separation, for the apostle recognizes that there are situations under which the reconciliation is finally impossible: "If the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace" (v. 15).

The Future of the Marriage Covenant

We have been noticing the close parallels between the marriage covenant and the salvation covenant. But what about the future life? Is there an eschatological dimension to the marriage covenant paralleling the salvation covenant?

Scripture tells us that the future life will bring the final and complete fulfillment of the salvation covenant:

Promise	Fulfillment
Exod 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.	**Rev 1:6** And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father. (Also Rev 5:10)
Exod 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. **Jer 32:38** And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:	**Rev 21:3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.

[46] Literally, "a matter of nakedness." The same word in Deut. 23:14 refers to excrement.

[47] Among the *tannaim* (early rabbinical sages) there were some who believed that "indecency" must be interpreted strictly as adultery. Others felt that any masculine displeasure whatsoever was sufficient grounds for divorce. By the time of Jesus, the second viewpoint was generally accepted (Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Marriage," *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary.*

The passages from the book of Revelation in the right-hand column make it clear that the life of the redeemed in heaven, rather than being the end of the salvation covenant, is its fulfillment; that in heaven the objectives of the covenant are finally and fully met.

The prophecy of Jeremiah 31 regarding the future of the New Covenant offers a further insight into this fulfillment. Here the prophet says: "'And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord" (Jer 31:34).

Our study of the word "know" (*yada*) revealed that one must be involved with what one knows. Knowledge includes relationship, concern, and involvement. Now, in this prophecy, we learn that God's people will all "know" Him, to the point that no one will ever again need to urge others to "Know the Lord."

This tells us that the fulfillment of the covenant means an end to the isolation and separation between God and His people. The salvation covenant is a covenant of connectedness—of *divine-human interconnectedness.* Jeremiah's prophecy assures us that in the future life this dimension will find its fulfillment.

But what about the marriage covenant in the future life? It might appear that this is where the parallelism between the marriage covenant and the salvation covenant ends, for we recall Jesus' words: "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt 22:30).

Jesus did not elaborate on what he meant by saying "as the angels of God in heaven," but if He is contrasting the married state with the state of the angels, this would indicate that marriage, at least as we know it in this life, will no longer exist.[48]

But what is the purpose of the marriage covenant? "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Gen 2:18). Marriage was created by God as an antidote for alone-ness. So the marriage covenant, too, is a covenant of connectedness. And marriage is the highest form of human-to-human inter-connectedness.

Jesus' remark about no marriage after the resurrection was made when the Saducees asked him who would be the husband in heaven of a woman who had had seven husbands in this life. It is a logical question. In the present state of affairs, it is impossible to imagine happiness under such circumstances. Feelings

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[48] Many students of the Word believe Jesus is saying here that in the future life there will be no sexuality, but this is mere speculation based on personal feelings toward the subject. Actually, we don't know enough about the nature of angels to be able to understand this enigmatic saying. Jesus may be saying that the marriage customs of his day (and ours) would be obsolete in a place where everyone is as faithful to covenants as are the angels. Or he may even be saying that after resurrection, when we are completely transformed, we will be able, like the angels, to fully and intimately know others without need of the protection of marriage. We simply don't know.

of rivalry and jealously would be inevitable. But in heaven—says Jesus—we will be "as the angels." Whatever else may be included in the meaning of this expression, it certainly must mean that our selfish natures will be radically transformed, because this is the only way we could conceive that seven successive husbands could associate together lovingly.

So if Jesus' prophecy means that in the future life there will be an end to marriage as we know it, it certainly does not mean that in heaven there will be a return to isolation and aloneness. Rather, we will see the fulfillment of the great objective of the marriage covenant—we will see the *perfection of human-to-human interconnectedness.*

And just as the salvation covenant will have achieved its purpose, and no one will ever again say, "Know the Lord," the marriage covenant will also have achieved its purpose, and no one will ever again be alone or isolated.

What better way to conclude than with this well-known picture of the social life of heaven:

> There the redeemed shall "know, even as also they are known." The loves and sympathies which God Himself has planted in the soul shall there find truest and sweetest exercise. The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the sacred ties that bind together "the whole family in heaven and earth"—these help to constitute the happiness of the redeemed.[49]

APPENDIX
A Theology of Singleness?

Could there be such a thing as a "theology of singleness"? After all, doesn't the Bible say that it is "not good" to be single? Does it have something to say to the 50% or more of the "families" in some of our churches that are in this category? Or does the Christian faith actually lay an additional burden on these people by placing them in the "not good" category?

At first glance, it would appear that the Christian single is, indeed, under a stigma, because of Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for man to be alone." But a closer look at this text and others offers a different picture.

When the Lord spoke these words, Adam was not just single; he was alone. So we would have to ask if the unhappy situation God was addressing is singleness, or is it aloneness? Aloneness goes beyond loneliness. It translates into isolation, and at times into self-centeredness, looking out for number one and maybe even a back-to-the-wall defensiveness.

Marriage may be the opposite of singleness, but it is not the opposite of aloneness. The opposite of aloneness is connectedness. It is possible to flee from the curse of aloneness through marriage, but that is not the only possibility, for

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[49] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 676.

connectedness is not the exclusive privilege of the married. In fact, marriage does not guarantee the end of aloneness any more than singleness makes it inevitable. The apostle Paul was single, but he was not alone. He was one of the most connected individuals on the planet. Maybe that is why he did not consider his status to be a curse or an unbearable burden (1 Cor 7:7).

Scripture reveals that the believing Jew had a strong sense of personal connectedness. Every time an Israelite repeated the words of the covenant between God and Abraham, he felt personally included. He derived his sense of worth and his personal identity from his status as a member of a family—the family of Abraham.

And the New Testament reveals that the Gentiles come into the kingdom of God under exactly the same plan. They are branches grafted into the trunk of Israel (Rom 11:11–18). To the Ephesians Paul says: Remember that you were formerly "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise," but now in Christ "you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and *members of the family of God*" (Eph 2:12, 19). This means that all who are in Christ are members of God's "family in heaven and earth" (Eph 3:15).

So, far from placing an additional burden on singles, Christianity teaches that single persons can be as connected as the married, that neither need be more alone, and neither is more protected.

And thus the promise of Isaiah 56:4, 5 is fulfilled:

> "For thus says the Lord, to the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off." (Cf. Matt 19:29)

Loron Wade is a member of the Theological Faculty of Montemorelos University in Mexico, where he teaches Science and Religion, Daniel, Revelation, Bible Teachings, Research Methods, and Greek. lwade@umontemorelos.edu.mx

Amos 5:18–20 in its Exegetical and Theological Contexts

Kenneth D. Mulzac
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

Since the turn of the 20th century there has been much discussion regarding the origin of the Day of the Lord (*yôm YHWH*). Hermann Gunkel, followed by Hugo Gressmann, declared that the *yôm YHWH* marks the provenance of Hebrew eschatology, which in itself is to be found in Babylonian mythology (and its claim that the world could be divided into several periods, each of which ended in cosmic catastrophe).[1] Some scholars connected the Day of the Lord with holy war.[2] Others maintained that the origin of this concept is to be found in Israel's cult, when Yahweh as King enthroned Himself and wrought salvation for His people.[3] A fourth group notes a nexus between the blessings and curses of the covenant (Deut 28) and the Day of the Lord.[4] Finally, it is posited that the

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[1] H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1901), 242; H. Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der judisch-israelitischen Eschatology* (Gottingen:Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1905), 147. See too L. Cerny, *The Day of Yahweh and Some Relevant Problems* (Prague: Nakladem Filosofieke Fakulty, 1948), 34ff.

[2] J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und judische Geschichte* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1914), 25; W. W. Canon, "The Day of the Lord in Joel," *CBQ* 103 (1926–27): 50–51; S. R. Driver, *The Books of Joel and Amos* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1934), 185; G. von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of the Yahweh," *JSS* 4 (1959): 97–108; K. D. Schunk, "Strukturlinien in der Entwicklung der Vorstellung vom 'Tag Yahwes'," *VT* 14 (1964): 319–30; Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 353.

[3] G. Holscher, *Die Ursprunge der judischen Eschatologie* (Giessen: Topplemann, 1925), 12; J. Morgenstern, "Amos Studies," *HUCA* 11 (1936): 12–13; A. S. Kapelrud, *Central Ideas in Amos* (Oslo: Oslo UP, 1956); S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 145; J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), 317; J. Gray, "The Day of Yahweh," *SEA* 39 (1974): 5–37.

[4] W. S. McCullough, "Some Suggestions About Amos," *JBL* 72 (1953): 253; F. J. Helewa, "L'origine du concept prophetique du 'Jour de Yahve'," *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 15 (1964): 3–36; F. C. Fensham, "A Possible Origin of the Concept of the Day of the Lord," in *Biblical Essays of Die*

Day of the Lord has its origin in the theophany. It "is a day on which the Lord reveals Himself in some way."[5]

Although Amos mentions the Day of the Lord only in 5:18–20, it is "one of the most intriguing passages in [his] prophetic message. . . ."[6] Further, this passage "is the only prophecy combining the *hôy*-call and the *yôm YHWH* motif."[7] Hence, it merits our attention. Our approach is largely exegetical as we attempt to answer the following questions: Who are those who long for the *yôm YHWH?* Why do they long for this day? What is the essential character of the Day to the Lord in Amos? What are the theological implications?

Translation and Textual Considerations

(18) Woe unto you who long for the Day of the Lord. What is this[8] day of the Lord to you? It is darkness and not light.[9] (19) [It is] just like a man who escapes from the face of a lion, but a bear meets him. When he comes into the house and leans his hand on the wall, a snake bites him.[10] (20) Is not the Day of the Lord darkness with no light? Thick darkness with no brightness in it?

Literary Factors. The literary context places 5:18–20 as the first subunit[11] of the rhetorical section that extends to v. 27. Nevertheless, the entire unit forms a coherent whole, as indicated by the following factors:

(i) No special introductory formulas indicating a new beginning appear in the section;

(ii) A central theme, the topic of cultic services, ties the subunits together;

Outestamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid Afrika, 1966 (Bepeck, South Africa: Potchefstroom, 1967), 90–97.

[5] M. Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord'—Reconsidered," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 40. Cf. T. Hoffmann, "The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature," *ZAW* 80 (1968): 203–15.

[6] Hans M. Barstad, "The Religious Polemics of Amos," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 89.

[7] C. Van Leeuwen, "The Prophecy of the Yom YHWH in Amos v. 18–20," in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis*, Oudtestamentische Studien 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 117.

[8] The LXX takes *zeh* ("this") in *lāmmâ-zeh lakem yôm YHWH* (18b) as a subject relating to *yôm*. It renders the following: ἵνα τί αὕτη ὑμῖν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου. But as Van Leeuwen correctly notes, "The word *ze* [sic] is here, however, not the subject of the sentence, but the intensification of the interrogative *lāmā* [sic]" (113).

[9] The negation of noun clauses by *lō'* (18b, *w'lo'-'ôr*) carries a special emphasis because the force of the negation falls on a particular word rather than on the whole clause. Hence, the emphasis is on no light. See E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., rev. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 479.

[10] Only verse 19 uses verbs, and they are all perfects. This places stress on the action of the person in the futile attempt to escape.

[11] The other three are: vv. 21–24, rejection of the cult because of injustice; vv. 25–27, rejection of the cult because of idolatry; v. 27, the ultimate judgment, which is exile. See Stuart, 352.

(iii) No climax or definitive concluding statement (as in 2:13–16; 3:11; 4:12–13; 5:16–17) appears before verse 27;[12]

(iv) The *hôy* particle is resumed in 6:1, indicating the beginning of a new unit.

The literary style—the prose form—is generally considered "an introduction to the first-person poetic judgment sentences which begin in v. 21."[13]

Structure. The passage may be divided as follows:

> Woe Oracle:
>   "Woe unto you who long for the Day of the Lord" (v. 18a);
> Question:
>   "What is this Day of the Lord to you?" (v. 18b);
> Answer:
>   (a) As a declaration (vv. 18c–19): "[It is] just like a man who escapes . . . a lion but . . . a snake bites him."
>   (b) As a rhetorical question (v. 20):[14] "Is not the Day of the Lord darkness . . . with no brightness in it?"

Interestingly, v. 20 demonstrates a parallel structure:

> *hᵃlō᾽-ḥōšek . . . wᵉlo᾽-᾽ôr,* "Is not [the Day of the Lord] darkness, not light,"
> *wᵉ᾽āpēl wᵉlō᾽-nōgâ,* "and thick darkness with no brightness (in it)."

Historical Background. Amos' epic sermon was proclaimed during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel.[15] His preaching announced the imminent demise of the kingdom, an announcement that was not kindly accepted but steadfastly rebutted by the priests of Bethel (7:9–11). Jeroboam, though noted for his wickedness, had restored the ancient boundaries of the Israelite nation.[16] Under him, Israel achieved prosperity and peace, especially because both Assyria and the kingdom of Damascus had become weak. Therefore, as Amos' speeches indicate, the people felt confident in their riches (6:1, 8, 13). With such political prosperity, individual wealth was accumulated and sharp distinctions made "between the luxury of the rich and misery of the poor."[17] The rich were indolent and indulgent (4:1; 6:1–6), residing in lavish winter and summer homes (3:12; 6:11), while the poor were exploited (2:6–8; 4:1; 5:10–12; 8:4–6). All of these atrocities were incurred as religion flourished with high festivity (4:4–5; 5:5) and elaborate sacrificial rites and ritual (5:21–23), patronizing the Lord

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[12] John H. Hayes, *Amos: His Time and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 170.

[13] Stuart, 353.

[14] Ibid., 354, calls this a "second, reinforcing answer."

[15] Amos 1:1 explicitly states that Amos preached during this time. Since Jeroboam II reigned from 786 to 746 B.C., Amos' preaching and prophetic task must be dated sometime during that time. Contra Stuart, 353, who places the original delivery of this oracle between 745 and 740 B.C.

[16] See 2 Kgs 14:23–29.

[17] J. L. Mays, *Amos,* OTL (Philadelphia: SCM, 1969), 2–3.

"with presumptuous arrogance" (5:14, 18–20; 6:3).[18] It was into this milieu that Amos was called to pronounce the message of the "Day of the Lord."

Interpretation

The *Hôy* Particle. The passage (5:18–20) begins as a woe oracle, as indicated by the *hôy* particle.[19] Since the particle is not completely defined by Amos, it is necessary to first understand its use in the rest of the OT and then relate it to the text under investigation.

The word[20] appears to be used in three different ways in the OT:

(i) as a vocative appeal or address (Isa 18:1, *hôy*, "Woe to the land shadowing with wings . . .");

(ii) as a mourning cry (1 Kgs 13:30, "He laid the body in his own grave and they mourned for him saying, 'Alas' [*hôy*]"[21];

(iii) as the woe oracle in prophetic indictments, as evidenced in Amos 5:18.[22]

The debate concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of this woe oracle demonstrates that there is no scholarly consensus. S. Mowinckel maintained that its origin was in the curses of the Israelite cult.[23] However, as van Leeuwen rightly notes, "The lists transmitting such curses (Deut xxvii–xxviii) do not use the particle *hôy,* but the participle *ʾārûr.*"[24] E. Gerstenberger[25] and Hans Walter Wolff[26] have placed the woe-oracle as having originated in the wisdom literature as wise men reflected on how "to turn against the rottenness and corruption of their contemporary society."[27] They insist that the particle *hôy* was used in parallel to *ʾăsrē.* However, *hôy* never occurs parallel to *ʾăsrē* in the OT and is not even found in Wisdom Literature.

More recently, R. J. Clifford[28] and W. Janzen[29] have placed the prophetic woe-oracles in the context of the ancient mourning cry.[30] Further, they have demonstrated that the three categories of woe-oracles are not independent, as has

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[18] Ibid., 3.

[19] The *hôy* particle implies direct confrontation.

[20] The word occurs 88 times in the OT. For its various combinations of usages, see H. J. Zobel, "*Hôy*," *TDOT* (1978), 2:359–60.

[21] Cf. *hô* in Amos 5:16, "There shall be wailing in every street and in all open places and they shall say, *hô, hô* ('Alas! Alas!')"

[22] Van Leeuwen, 114.

[23] S. Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien V* (Oslo: Oslo UP, 1924), 119 ff.

[24] Van Leeuwen, 114.

[25] E. Gerstenberger, "The Woe Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81 (1962): 249–63.

[26] Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia, vol.. 6 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 255.

[27] Gerstenberger, 262.

[28] R. J. Clifford, "The Use of *hôy* in the Prophets," *CBQ* 28 (1966): 458–64.

[29] W. Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracles* (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1972). See too, J. G. Williams, "The Alas Oracles of the 8th Century Prophets," *HUCA* 38 (1967): 75–91.

[30] Cf. 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 34:5.

been suggested.[31] Indeed, "the vocative appeal/address does not constitute a different and special type of *hôy,* but shares in a quality very characteristic of the funerary *hôy* (i.e., the somber quality of the context), and that the latter itself shares in this appellative quality."[32]

Moreover, the *hôy* particle is not only used in laments for the dead, but also in prophetic invective. In such uses (Isa 5:18, 20–22; 29:15, 17; Amos 5:7, 18; Hab 2:5, 9, 12), human misconduct is sharply criticized. Also, since a human being pronounces the *hôy* cry in both invective and funerary lament, a common bond between both is suggested. Therefore, when the prophet cried *hôy,* it was, according to Zobel, "tantamount to a prediction of death, a proclamation of the judgment of Yahweh."[33]

This interrelatedness of usages associated with Amos points to certain conclusions:

(i) The woe oracle is probably not impersonal ("Woe to *them* that long for the day of the Lord"), but rather is the prophet's direct address to his hearers, ("Woe unto *you* that long for the day of the Lord").[34]

(ii) It is not by accident that Amos' *hôy* oracles are placed in a context where the choice between life and death is so strong (5:14); or where the verdict that threatens God's visitation will bring death and mourning.[35] Hence, the *hō hō* of the mourners of v. 16 appears

> to be identical in motivation and content with the *hôy* of v. 18, called out by the prophet over the secure people who will be overtaken by the darkness of the day of the Lord . . . The *hôy* of v. 18 projects a contrast to the expected day of light and brightness (vv. 18, 20), but that contrast consists of mourning.[36]

It denotes that Amos' cry was one of judgment and a precursor to death.

We can, then, summarily say that the *hôy* particle in Amos 5:18 has the vocative appeal to catch the attention of the people. It also has the power of a prophetic indictment and the force of the funerary lamentation as a "dramatic way of disclosing the dire consequences of their conduct."[37]

The People Addressed. Amos' death threat is directed to the *hammiṯʾawwîm,* those who long for or desire the Day of the Lord. This brings us to the questions: Who are these people? Why do they long for the day? The context

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[31] See G. Wanke, "*ʾôy* und *hôy,*" *ZAW* 78 (1966), 217. He sees *ʾôy* as a cry of dread, lamentation, and peril, whereas *hôy* stems from the lamentation for the dead. I agree with Barstad, 108, n. 169, that this distinction is unnecessary.

[32] Van Leeuwen, 115. He goes further to show the similar usage in Ugaritic literature, in the Legend of Aqhat.

[33] Zobel, 363–64.

[34] Van Leeuwen, 116. Hayes, 171, sees it as purely impersonal.

[35] Van Leeuwen, 116–17.

[36] Janzen, 46.

[37] Mays, 103.

of vv. 18–20 does not specifically identify the people. However, the designation is too pointed to be the people of Israel in general. Thus, a more limited group is in view here. There are basically three opinions concerning the identity of these people:

(i) The king and his court may be in view here.[38]

(ii) The prophets who misguided Israel into believing that God will deliver His people in any situation and that Israel's enemies are not ambassadors of God to destroy Israel (rather, YHWH will destroy them). As such, they lead Israel to complacency rather than repentance.[39]

(iii) These are the Israelites who acted in self-reliant independence of the sovereignty of Yahweh. They had a false security and were "defiant of covenant obligation towards the poor and needy."[40] Hence, these people, I believe, are the covenant breakers, those who have separated or distanced themselves from God by their godless actions and sinful misconduct.

A further clue to the identity of this group is found in the participle *miṯʾawwîm*, which has a nominal function here. It is derived from the root *ʾwh,* the basic meaning of which is "to crave," mostly in a bad sense (Num 11:34); "to feel a desire for something" (2 Sam 23:15); or "to long for something" (e.g. "a day," as in Jer 17:16; Amos 5:18). It is used 28 times in the OT, only in the Hithpael (17 times) and Piel (11 times) forms. Amos 5:18 uses the Hithpael participle, the exact form of which is used only in one other place, Num 11:34. There it describes the craving of God's covenant people for meat. It seems likely that this historical picture was in Amos' mind for both groups of people in that they both acted in defiance of God and His covenant. As reported in Numbers, people defied the basic covenant guaranteeing God's protection and care over them. Therefore, they craved meat. So, in Amos, some people defied their covenant obligations toward the poor and needy (5:7, 11), yet they craved the Day of the Lord. These covenant breakers are the *hammiṯʾawwîm.*

The second question is somewhat more difficult. The historical analysis points out that this was a time of prosperity. No obvious calamity was on the horizon of the future. So why did they have this longing for the appearance of Yahweh, an appearance seen as an act of salvation, a fact portrayed in many parts of Scripture (Judg 5:1; 6:12–13; Isa 40:10; 42:13; 52:8)?[41] The answer, I believe, lies in their misguided theology of the inviolability of Zion.

The idea of Yahweh's appearance to destroy His enemies was a primary tenet of Israelite religious and political faith.[42] In their false religious piety and fervor, fueled by their misplaced confidence that "Yahweh is with us" (5:14b),

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[38] K. A. D. Smelik, "The Meaning of Amos 5:18–20," *VT* 36 (1986): 247.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Janzen, 81–82.

[41] Hoffman, 42.

[42] Mays, 104.

they cherished "infatuated hopes"[43] that Yahweh's theophanic victory would exalt them to might and dominion over all the earth. They never anticipated that God's wrath would be upon those who worshipped Him in the cult. Hence, they longed for the *yôm YHWH*. In their self-satisfaction, surrounded by the wealth and opulence of Jeroboam's government, they could only see it as a day for God to act in their favor while crushing their enemies.

Amos' stinging woe oracle declares that these covenant breakers are in-voking their own doom. Further, it "implicitly reveals that God's people and God's enemy are one (cf.3:2), i.e., they have been rejected by God, as vv. 21–27 will make clear."[44]

The Essential Character of the *Yôm YHWH*

What does the *yôm YHWH* mean in Amos? First, a brief consideration of *yôm* is in place. The word points to a particular time. As time, it is charged with substance, or, rather, it is identical with its substance; time is the development of its very elements. The time or day of a man or a people is therefore identical with their actions and fate when the day of decisive importance in their lives is mentioned. Just so, the day of Yahweh is the violent action in which Yahweh more particularly manifests Himself.[45]

Further studies have corroborated this fact. J. R. Wilch indicates that "*yôm* also implies a qualitative aspect of the particular occasion as . . . 'the day of evil' (Amos 6:3), or refers to *crisis* situations, e.g., 'on the day of battle' (Amos 1:14) and particularly in the expression *yôm YHWH.* The 'Day of the Lord' is . . . the intervening activity of God."[46] Hence, "day" here refers to some time or event, and not necessarily a single day.

With this understanding, we can now deal with the *yôm YHWH* in Amos 5:18–20. Note that this is the only passage in the prophetic literature that joins the *yôm YHWH* concept with the woe oracle.[47] In light of the discussion of the

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[43] C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 1:287.

[44] Stuart, 353. Owing to space restrictions, we shall not exegete vv. 21–27. However, much interesting work has already been done on these texts. See Stanley Gervitz, "A New Look at an Old Crux," *JBL* 87 (1968): 267–78; E. A. Speiser, "Note on Amos 5:26," *BASOR* 108 (1947): 5–6; Charles D. Isbell, "Another Look at Amos 5:26," *JBL* 97 (1978): 97–99; J. Phillip Hyatt, "The Translation and Meaning of Amos 5:23–24," *ZAW* 68 (1956): 17–24; S. Erlandsson, "Amos 5:25–27 et Crux interpretum," *SEA* 33 (1968): 76–82; P. von der Oisen-Sacken, "Die Bucher der Tora als Hutte der Gemeinde: Amos 5:26f in der Damaskusschrift," *ZAW* 91 (1979): 423–35.

[45] J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, trans. A. Moiler (London: H. Milford, 1926), 2:487–88.

[46] J. R. Wilch, *Time and Event* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 166. For a similar view, see James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: Oxford UP, 1969), 106ff.

[47] However, as Van Leeuwen (117), has observed, there are several passages which connect the *yôm YHWH* motif with the mourning motif, by means of the word *hēlilû,* ("wail"), used both against foreign nations (Isa 13:6) and against Judah and Jerusalem (Joel 1:5; Zeph 1:11).

woe oracle, therefore, it appears that this Day of the Lord was an event filled with frightening realities.

Nevertheless, the longing desire associated with it implies that the populace already saw it as a day of salvation for the people of God. However, the point of interest is Amos' use of the expression. He uses a paradoxical style, "which is typical of his writing, namely, speaking about a familiar idea by applying to it a meaning which contradicts the popular one."[48]

Therefore, Amos' *yôm YHWH,* the oldest such literary expression in the Bible,[49] is a day of disaster *against* covenant-defiant Israelites. It harmonizes well with the *hôy* funerary lament, preceded by the announcement of doom and waiting (vv. 16–17) that accompanies the theophany: "'I will pass through the midst of you,' saith the Lord" (v. 17b).[50]

The Light/Darkness Motif (vv. 18b, 20). The rhetorical question of 18b is concerned with what kind of advantage the Day of the Lord will bring. In effect, it inquires, "What is the advantage of this Day of the Lord for you?" "What good is this Day of the Lord for you?" The answer given is that it is *darkness and not light* (18b). This is a recurring theme in the Day of the Lord prophecies outside of Amos.[51] Nevertheless, this motif needs development.

In the OT, darkness is associated with a state of chaos (Gen 1:2; Jer 4:23). However, the good will of God is connected with light. Light, not darkness, is modified by the adjective "good" (Gen 1:4). Darkness is shown to be inferior to light. For example, light is associated with life. To see the light means to live (Job 33:28). An increase of light means increased vitality and joy (Ezra 9:8; 1 Sam 14:27, 29). But darkness is associated with the underworld. It is a land of no order, for when "it is bright, it is as darkness" (Job 10:22). Again, sinners, night, and darkness belong together. Job contends that they do not "know the light" (24:16), devising evil plans at night (v. 14). Light stands for success, prosperity, and salvation (Job 17:12; 18:5ff; 22:28; Lam 3:2; Esther 8:16). It symbolizes the salvation given by God (Isa 58:8; Ps 43:3; 97:11). Conversely, darkness stands for suffering and failure (Isa 8:22; Jer 23:12; Ps 23:4; Job 17:12).[52] Darkness is used as a symbol for evil, in contradistinction to light symbolizing good (Isa 5:20). Darkness is also associated with ignorance (Job 22:15;

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[48] Hoffmann, 42. He continues that this is not the only place where Amos represents the idea that the appearance of God can cause destruction and not necessarily salvation (4:12; 5:17).

[49] This is generally conceded by many scholars: Wolff, 25; Jan de Waard and William A. Smalley, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Amos* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1979), 246; Weiss, 46.

[50] Cf. ῾br as a theophanic expression in Exod 33:18ff. See Van Leeuwen, 132.

[51] Cf. Isa 13:9–10; Ezek 30:3; Joel 2:1–2; Zeph 1:15 (cf. Amos 5:8; 8:9). The elaboration of this theme in Zephaniah is significant since he is considered the "great continuator of Amos' thought." See A. L. Welch, *The Religion of Israel Under the Kingdom* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 95.

[52] S. Aaten, "᾽ôr," *TDOT* (1974), 1:157–61.

Jer 18:15), disaster (Job 15:22, 23), and death (1 Sam 2:9, where darkness becomes a poetic name for Sheol).[53]

Therefore, when Amos characterizes the Day of the Lord as darkness and not light, he is painting a sordid picture of destruction and calamity. This picture is intensified by the use of rhetorical questions with the addition of two other words—ʾapel ("darkness," "gloom") and nōgâ ("gleam," "brightness")—in parallel construction to hōšek ("darkness") and ʾôr ("light").

The word ʾapel appears only ten times in the OT—six times in Job, twice in the Psalms, once in Isaiah, and here in Amos.[54] In Job 3:6, Job bewails the day he was born. He wishes the deepest gloom to overtake it so it would not be reckoned with according to regular time (i.e., days, months and so forth). In Job 30:26, when he looks for light (ʾôr), then came gloom (ʾapel) or misfortune. Further, "darkness and gloom are frequently used as metaphors indicating trouble, distress, misery and even death."[55] Consider Job 5:14, "They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night." Further, Ps 91:6 claims that the "pestilence walks in darkness."

The noun nōgâ, which occurs nineteen times in the OT, is derived from the verb ngh, ("to shine"). The noun carries the idea of "brightness," or "gleam." The force of the negation wᵉlō emphasizes that there is absolutely no light, let alone brightness or gleam.

Hence, Amos' message is crystal clear. The Day of the Lord, contrary to popular belief, will be filled with misery, destruction, distress, and death. J. D. Smart puts it succinctly:

> Popular expectation in Amos' time was fixed on a glorious 'day of Yahweh' when Israel would triumph over her foes . . . The existing prosperity was interpreted as a sign of God's favor. But, where kings, priests, prophets, and people saw only a culmination of national success in the near future, Amos saw only darkness and disaster. He proclaimed a day of Yahweh, but it was to be darkness and not light, fiery judgment and not deliverance.[56]

This is the significance of the light/darkness motif. Undoubtedly, the Northern Kingdom is faced with destruction and annihilation, not deliverance.

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[53] A. Ringgren, "*hāšak*," *TDOT* (1986), 5:252–56. For further information on the light/darkness motif, see A. P. B. Breytenbach, "The Connection Between the Concepts of Darkness and Drought as well as Light and Vegetation," in *Essays in Honor of A. Van Selms,* ed. H. Eybers, F. C. Fensham, C. L. Labuschagne, W. C. van Wijk, and A. H. van Zyl (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 1–5; H. Ringgren, "Light and Darkness in Ancient Egyptian Religion," in *Studies in Honor of C. J. Bleeker* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 140–50; C. J. Bleeker, "Some Remarks on the Religious Significance of Light," *JANES* 5 (1973): 23–24.

[54] Job 3:6, 10:22 (used twice); 23:17; 28:3; 30:36; Pss 11:2; 91:6; Isa 29:18.

[55] Stuart, 354.

[56] J. D. Smart, "Amos," *IDB* (1962), 1:120.

Inescapable Destruction (v. 19). Amos illustrates the people's predicament by use of the simile. Thus he discusses Israelite life by using a device characteristic of his style. A man escapes a lion, but a bear confronts him; finally he arrives home, leans against the wall, and a snake bites him.[57]

This is what I call comic irony. The man escapes the lion only to meet a bear, an animal just as dangerous as the first. However, he escapes this threat and enters a place of safety, his house. In exhaustion and relief, he leans against the wall in this place of safety and is bitten by a snake,[58] the enemy of humankind.[59] Precisely when the person feels secure at last is when he is fatally bitten.

Here is depicted a deadly serious pedagogical picture. The finger is pointed against the violators of the covenant, since "harm from wild animals is a covenant curse (cf. Ezek 14:21)."[60] Further, the audience learns that there is no deliverance. Every word drives home this fact, because the audience never envisioned or expected any kind of defeat. As the covenant people, they felt that Yahweh was obliged to protect them, claiming that "harm or disaster will not come near us or overtake us" (9:10). Also, God had singularly delivered them from their enemies in the past,[61] so they lived with the expectation of deliverance only; never disaster.

The dramatic story[62] vividly reveals that "any deliverance will be illusionary."[63] In fact, the Day of the Lord will be "a time of inescapable crisis, a time of unavoidable judgment, a time when man would be abandoned by every known source of aid."[64]

Theological Implications

Consequent of the above discussion, several theological implications may be observed.

Judgment. Undoubtedly, the text of Amos 5:18–20 is pregnant with the tone of punitive judgment. A negative outcome is forecast. This is most markedly depicted in the light/darkness motif, a theme that is also present in other

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[57] Mays sees this as two separate adventures (105). However, I agree with Wolff that "the chain of consecutive perfects and the single reference to 'someone' speak unequivocally in favor of there being here one single story" (256).

[58] There seems to be some word play here in that *nšk*, "to bite," has the same sound as *nšq*, "to kiss."

[59] In the OT, the snake is portrayed as people's enemy (Gen 3:15; Num 21:6; Jer 8:17). See Wolff, 256; O. Grether and J. Fichter, "*ophīs*," *TDNT* (1967): 5:572, where the snake is described as "an especially dangerous animal."

[60] Stuart, 354.

[61] One only has to recall the history of God's protection over Israel to see this fact. The Exodus and the Conquest of the Promised Land both show significantly that God was acting in behalf of His people.

[62] This has been called a "fairy tale" by W. Baumgartner, *Die Religion in Geschichte fur Theologie und Religionwissenchaft* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1957–1965), 4:586–87.

[63] Stuart, 354.

[64] Roy L. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message* (Nashville: Broadman, 1963), 104.

passages where God's judgment is portrayed in the darkening of celestial bodies (Isa 13:9–10; Joel 2:1–2). The same subject is behind the dramatic story of verse 19, defining the absolute inescapability of judgment. The language expresses disorder and chaos, and the Day of the Lord becomes the key expression for the announcement of judgment.

While vv. 18–20 leave unspecified the reason why Israel's expectations of deliverance will be dashed to pieces, those reasons are spelled out in vv. 21–27. Furthermore, these verses also indicate the type of judgment that was forthcoming: rejection of the cult and ultimately exile.

Indeed, "in Amos the announcement of impending judgment never wavers. The unrepented sin of the nation is certain to bring doom."[65] Amos details various forces for punishment, including fire (1:4); drought and hunger (4:6–7); war (9:10); and deportation (5:5; 6:7; 9:4). All express the certainty of desolation. Further, the oracle of judgment arises not only from reflection on the immoralities of the nation, but because the people are confronted by a holy God whom they must meet (Amos 4:12).

Further, this judgment comes because of covetousness, as indicated in the word *ʾwh,* which has a negative connotation referring to coveting, as in Num 11:34 and 2 Sam 23:15. Judgment is also due to pride and arrogance (6:1–6; cf. Isa 2:12ff). Because of the people's carelessness and indifference, their apathy and ease in luxury, the Lord declares that Israel will go into captivity (6:1–7); because of their bold audacity, self dependence, and disregard of justice, Israel will be overrun by a foreign nation.

Finally, one must recognize that it is God Himself and not some neutral agency who is the focus of this prophecy of judgment. God is the one who will, in effect, direct the judgment against His people. They cannot claim "favored nation" status. Therefore, "Judgment is pronounced on the false religion that claimed national security in the Lord but could ignore the ethical demands of the covenant."[66]

Covenant. While Amos does not mention the covenant, it is implicit in his preaching. Amos denounces crimes that come as a result of breaking the covenant. Some of these crimes include the oppression of the poor and exploitation of the defenseless by the rich (2:7; 5:10–12). Further atrocities against the covenant may be pointed out, such as a righteous man being sold for silver and a poor man for a pair of shoes (2:6); violence and robbery as the trademarks of the palace (3:9–10); the rich oppressing the poor and crushing the needy (4:1); taking wheat from the poor for debt (5:11) and accepting bribes, thus denying the poor their rights (5:12); ruling through violence (6:3) and turning right into gall (6:12); and trampling down the poor and cheating them in every possible way.[67]

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[65] Smart, 120.
[66] J. Robertson and C. Armerding, "Amos," *ISBE* (1979), 1:115.
[67] Kapelrud, 64.

Other forms of unfaithfulness to the covenant include sexual immorality (2:7) and idolatry (8:14). Smart is correct in his evaluation:

> What Amos rejects is not the covenant itself but its perversion, whereby God's grace in delivering Israel from Egypt becomes an excuse for national pride and for extravagant claims upon God . . . Because of its covenant relation with God, Israel must reflect in its life the justice and truth and mercy of God, and the absence of these in the common life of the nation is evidence that the bond with God has been broken.[68]

Therefore, in His rejection of the cult, God counsels, "Let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:24). As Douglas K. Stuart comments, "Justice and judgment cannot stop and start like a wilderness wadi that flows with water only during the rainy seasons and otherwise is just a dry stream bed. They must instead continue night and day, all year, like the . . . strong stream that never goes dry."[69]

Furthermore, it is the covenant of love between God and Israel that made God more severe in His dealings with Israel than with any other nation. God declares, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2). Hence, God advises Israel, "Seek the Lord and live" (6:6); "Seek good and not evil and ye shall live" (5:14). This is a practical appeal to make the people turn away from their sins and come back to Yahweh and His covenant.[70] We may conclude that the Day of the Lord, as a day of destruction, also rejects the perversion of the covenant.

Theophany. A theophany is when God appears in person. This concept is implied in the word *nōgâ* ("brightness") in verse 20. The word, used nineteen times in the OT, has a very limited usage in describing the luminary bodies. It is never used with reference to the sun, even in texts devoting special attention to the moon (Isa 60:19) and two references to the stars (Joel 2:10; 3:15). However, the occurrence of the word in Ezek 1,[71] definitely describing a theophanic activity, strongly suggest that this is a "technical term (which) refers to God in His theophany."[72]

Eschatology. Indeed, the motif of light/darkness is an element of prophetic preaching with regard to the future. This is especially so in light of the fact that darkness spreads over the land (cf. Amos 8:9; Isa 5:30; Joel 2:2). Of course, the basic theme is the Day of the Lord. However, I agree with Wolff that "the oracle

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[68] Smart, 120.

[69] Stuart, 355.

[70] Kapelrud, 41.

[71] Ezek 1:4, 13, 27, 28; 10:4; cf. similar usage in Ps 18:12; Isa 4:5; 62:1; Hab 3:4.

[72] Aelen, 164. One must also note that theophany is linked with judgment in the Scriptures (cf. Pss 7:6–12; 9:19–20; 33:23–28; 82:8; 94:1–2). As such, the various traditions of cosmic upheaval and judgment of evil point essentially to the motif in prophecies dealing with the Day of the Lord. See Hoffmann, 45.

can be called eschatological only in the precise sense that it testifies . . . that the end of the state of Israel is totally inescapable."[73]

The evidence is insufficient to posit a view of the universal, terminal epoch in history. Nevertheless, if one compares the animals of Amos, namely the lion and the bear, with that of Daniel 7, which definitely has a cosmic eschatological character, it seems likely that a similar eschatological view may be present in Amos. Also, when one puts the darkness motif alongside Zephaniah's description of the Day of the Lord stressing "finality and extinction,"[74] one can see a cosmic eschatology. But Zephaniah wrote his prophecies about 150 years *after* Amos, and by then the expression "Day of the Lord" could have already assumed the proportions of a universal eschatology.

Salvation. The Day of the Lord signifies annihilation of all sinful people and, at the same time, the deliverance of those who are faithful to God. These loyal ones constitute the remnant. This motif is clear in Amos. Note the following: "It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (5:15). Hence, deliverance and salvation are possible for those who seek God and His will (5:4; 6:14). The same concept is found implicitly in 2:16; 3:12; 5:3, 16; 7:17; 8:11–13. However, it is very explicit in chapter 9. In v. 1 everything is destroyed, but 9:8 declares that God will not utterly destroy the House of Jacob. Therefore, we may infer that the Day of the Lord is equal to physical destruction of the kingdom, but a limited group will be saved. This salvific quality must not be overlooked.

Conclusion

It is clear that Amos understood the nature of the Day of the Lord. However, he pronounced a crucial difference: to those who desired it (namely, the covenant breakers), the Day of the Lord was not to be deliverance but disaster. This is most dramatically portrayed in the metaphoric use of light and darkness and also in the ironic story of the fleeing man who encounters new dangers until, "safe" at home, the deadly serpent bites him.

Further, it is insufficient to say that the Day of the Lord originated only in the theophany or in some other singular motif. The text of Amos 5:18–20 and related passages indicate that the covenant is also essential, in that it underscores who the Day of the Lord is directed against, namely, the violators of the covenant. Hence, I propose that the Day of the Lord must be seen in the context of the theophany *and* the covenant. These two must not be separated, for indeed, Yahweh's appearing to destroy His enemies results in deliverance and salvation only for those within, those adhering to the principles of the covenant.

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[73] Wolff, 257.

[74] Hoffmann, 46.

Kenneth Mulzac has a Ph.D. in Old Testament from the S.D.A. Theological Seminary, Andrews University, and is a Professor of Old Testament at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, located in the Philippines, but providing graduate theological training throughout the Far East. kmulzac@aiias.edu

The Creation Account in Genesis 1:
Our World Only or the Universe?

Ferdinand O. Regalado
Adventist University of the Philippines

A cursory reading of Gen 1:1 has led many to conclude that it refers to the absolute beginning of the heavens and the earth. In other words, Gen 1:1 is seemingly not a part of the six-day creation, so therefore it must describe an earlier creation of the "entire physical universe," including "galaxies, stars, planets, etc."[1] One believer in this view maintains that "the creation of Gen 1:1 is the original and earlier creation which precedes the six-day creation mentioned from Gen 1:3 on."[2]

Those who look at the creation narrative that way tend to base their scientific[3] or philosophical deductions on that simple yet profound account of creation.[4] However, such deductions might not do justice to the intention of the author.

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[1] Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), 153, table 16.1.

[2] Yoshitaka Kobayashi, "The Primordial Creation (Heaven and Earth)," 3, Lecture Notes for OTST 640: Old Testament Theology, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 1992. Dr. Kobayashi translated Gen 1:1–2 this way: "In the beginning *when* God *had* created the heavens and the earth, then the earth was formless and void, and the darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Ibid.; italics his).

[3] For example, in some Protestant circles, scholars tried to harmonize "the Mosaic account of creation with the idea then being advanced by certain scientific men, that the earth had passed through long ages of geological change . . . According to the view, the stratified layers of rock that compose much of the earth's surface were deposited during the course of the supposed cataclysms, and the fossils buried in them are presumed to be the remains of life that existed on this earth prior to that time" ("Additional Note on Chapter 1," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1953–1978], 1:218).

[4] P. J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis: A Case for the Literary Unity*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 88, observes the simplicity of the creation narrative, writing: "Naturally the wording is simple, but the truth conveyed is profound. Human as

Does the creation account in Gen 1 also concern the creation of the universe beyond our world or mainly the creation of this planet earth? Siegfried Horn observes that "[T]he Creation narrative (Gen 1 and 2) is concerned primarily with the bringing into existence of this earth, the sun, the planets and the living creatures found on earth."[5] Clearly, there is a divergence of opinions regarding Gen 1:1.

The purpose of this paper is to discover whether the creation week as portrayed in Gen 1 concerns only this world (i.e., this planet earth) or the creation of the whole universe. To accomplish this purpose, we will examine contextually Gen 1 and some of its significant wordings. Hence, we will mainly focus our attention on the account of Creation week as described in Gen 1. We will also examine other OT texts in so far as they might help us clarify the issue at hand. Next, we will look at the Hebrew conception of the physical world as revealed in the OT and the distinctive Hebrew thinking about this planet earth in the framework of creation.

A Closer Look at Genesis 1

Neils-Erik Andreasen admits that the wording of Gen 1:1 is a plain statement that even a child can easily understand, and yet "the object of interpretative disagreement."[6] Hence, in this section of the essay we will look closely at Gen 1, particularly the phrase "in the beginning" and the words "heavens and earth," within the context of Gen 1. Then we will examine other usages of those words in the OT to ascertain their real meanings.

In the Beginning. The phrase "in the beginning God created" (Heb. *bᵉrēʾšît bārāʾ ʾᵉlōhîm*) in Gen 1:1 elicits various defensible interpretations.[7] Gordon J.

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the language is, it is still the best medium by which God could communicate with man. It is God teaching Adam, in a simple yet faultless way, how the earth and the things which he could see on and around it had been created. . . . Adam is told just as much as his mind could understand. The details and processes are not fully revealed. Had they been, how could he and later ages have understood them? We could claim, then, that the first section of Genesis is the most ancient piece of writing. It is the record of what God told Adam. It is not an impersonal general account. It is God teaching the first man the elemental things about the universe, at the very dawn of human language. . . . Let us note the simplicity with which the facts are presented. There is a type of repetition and simplicity recurring in the Scripture." Wiseman is, of course, merely speculating when he writes that God revealed the Genesis 1 account to Adam. The text itself does not say so.

[5] "Creation," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (1979).

[6] "The Word 'Earth' in Genesis 1:1," *Origins* 8 (1981): 13. Shalom M. Paul writes, "The opening sentence in the story—many commentators think—begins with a temporal clause, 'When God began to create the heavens and the earth' (Gen. 1:1), continues with a circumstantial clause telling of the existence of the darkness and void (1:2), and then in two main clauses (1:3) relates the first act by which God, by divine fiat, created cosmic order out of primeval chaos: "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" ("Creation and Cosmogony in the Bible," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* [1972], corr. ed., 5:1059).

[7] For example, Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 31, states that the word *berēʾšît* can be classified as "being either in the construct case or the absolute

Wenham enumerates "four possible understandings of the syntax of these verses [i.e. vv. 1–3]."[8] First, v. 1 can be considered as a "temporal clause subordinate to the main clause in v. 2," and thus should be translated as: "In the beginning when God created, . . . the earth was without form . . ." Second, v. 1 can be regarded as a "temporal clause subordinate to the main clause in v. 3," while v. 2 "is a parenthetic comment." Based on this second view, the translation then is like this: "In the beginning when God created . . . (now the earth was formless) God said . . ." Third, v. 1 can be viewed as a "main clause, summarizing all the events described in vv. 2–31," as if it were "a title to the chapter as a whole." If v. 1 is understood that way, it is translated as "In the beginning God was the creator of heaven and earth." Then the nature of God as creator of heaven and earth is explained in the subsequent verses of 2–31. Finally, v. 1 can be viewed as "a main clause describing the first act of creation." Then vv. 2 and 3 "describe subsequent phases in God's creative activity."

Interestingly, Wenham observes that all of these translations except for the last one "presuppose the existence of chaotic pre-existent matter before the work of creation began." William White observes, however, that not only do they presuppose the existence of chaotic elements, but they also presuppose that the first words are related to "'*enuma elish*,' which begins the Babylonian epic of creation."[9] He adds that "there is no evidence to connect the two different terms [i.e. *bᵉrēʾšît* and *enuma elish*], the one in Hebrew and the other in Babylonian." In fact, the Genesis and the Babylonian creation accounts have more differences than similarities.[10]

The presupposition that the world was in a chaotic condition before the work of creation began comes from those who believe that the creation account in Genesis is borrowed from Israel's ancient Near Eastern neighbors. This belief has no plausible support. Gerhard F. Hasel's conclusion after examining the cosmology of Gen 1 in comparison with its ancient Near Eastern counterpart is worth quoting here in full:

> G[e]n[esis] cosmology as presented in Gen 1:1–2:4a appears thus basically different from the mythological cosmologies of the ancient Near East. It represents not only a "complete break" with the ancient Near Eastern mythological cosmologies but represents a parting of

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case. . . . If it is absolute then Genesis 1:1 is an independent clause. If it is construct then 1:1 is a dependent clause. Although this is not a source of relief to the reader, it must be pointed out that grammatically *berēʾšît* can be defined, as it stands, as either in the absolute or the construct case."

[8] *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 1:11 (all quotes in this paragraph and the first quote in the next).

[9] William White, "*reʾshit*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:826.

[10] See, for example, Gerald W. Wheeler, "Appendix A: The Genesis Creation Account," in *The Two-Tailed Dinosaur: Why Science and Religion Conflict Over the Origin of Life* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), 182–91; William H. Shea, "A Comparison of Narrative Elements in Ancient Mesopotamian Creation-Flood Stories with Genesis 1–9," *Origins* 11 (1984): 9–29.

the spiritual ways which meant an undermining of the prevailing mythological cosmologies.[11]

In other words, the creation account was written with a polemical purpose. It challenges "the theology and ethics of ancient orientals," exposing their wrong beliefs on "polytheism and the human situation."[12] The Genesis creation account declared to the pagan nations that "the world was not run by a set of capricious amoral deities for their own benefit, but was created by one sovereign holy God who controlled all things and desired the good of his supreme creature, man."[13]

Going back to the issue of different interpretations of Gen 1:1–2, we can notice that the preference of one translation over another depends basically on one's presuppositional lenses. If Bible students presuppose that Gen 1:1 is a statement about the beginning of everything or an earlier creation, then they choose a translation that suits their own scientific or theological framework. But the question we should ask is whether the original author of Genesis intended to make a statement regarding an earlier creation or had other concerns.

Another difficulty in deciding which translation is closest to the intention of the author lies "in the difficulty of harmonizing the assertion of v. 2 concerning the chaotic primitive condition of the earth with a comprehensive statement concerning the creation of the universe" in v. 1.[14] Indeed, Gen 1:2 is a problematic text which is "often used to describe the condition of the very first earth."[15] The account in v. 2 also implies that the earth was already in existence before the work of creation began in v. 3. If this is how v. 2 is to be understood, it suggests then that there were two stages of creation with a temporal "interval between the original creation of matter [of the planet] and the creation of life [on earth]."[16]

The supposition that v. 2 describes "the chaotic primitive condition of the earth" has no grammatical support. Based on the rules of Hebrew grammar, v. 2

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[11] "The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 20. See also, idem., "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 81–102.

[12] G. J. Wenham, "Creation, The Genesis Account," *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed., ed. J. D. Douglas et al (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 241. Cf. Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 94–95.

[13] Wenham, "Creation, The Genesis Account," 241. Larry G. Herr ("Why [and How] Was Light Created Before the Sun?" *Adventist Review* [21 November 1985]: 9) explains why the light was created first before the luminaries—the sun and moon. He notes, "Could it be that, by creating light and the daily cycle *before* [italics his] the luminaries, God declared them to be dependent upon Him, rather than upon pagan deities? The dependence of light upon God rather than the sun became an avowal of His omnipotence in Creation" (Herr, 9).

[14] Walter Eichrodt, "In the Beginning: A Contribution to the Interpretation of the First Word of the Bible," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984; London: SPCK, 1984), 65.

[15] Andreasen, 16.

[16] Ibid.

is not a verbal clause but "a pure noun clause,"[17] and must be translated as "'the earth *was* unformed and unfilled,' not 'the earth *became* unformed and unfilled.'"[18] Likewise, accepting the idea of a chaotic condition of the earth "could lead to the impossible suggestion that God's first creative act was not good."[19]

In contention with the idea of a temporal interval between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2, Andreasen notes that the earth in v.1 and in v.2 has no temporal distinction but merely a distinction of perspective. We will discuss this in the next section of this paper when we come to the subject of "heavens and earth." Moreover, a temporal interval between vv.1 and 2 has been construed because of a misconception that Gen 1:1 is "an absolute temporal start to creation."[20] However, Francis Andersen argues that

> the term "beginning" in Gen 1:1 marks the commencement of the story,[21] not the absolute beginning of everything,[22] . . . it does not deal with ultimate origins. *When the story begins* (in verse 3), darkness and water already exist. Nothing is said, one way or the other, about how they came to be there, and no inference whatsoever can be made . . .[23]

As has already been noted, the description of Gen 1:2 seems to suggest that the earth was already in existence, and earth is specifically portrayed as *tōhû*

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[17] E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, eds., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910, 1990), 454 [¶141i].

[18] Richard M. Davidson, "In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1," *College and University Dialogue* 6:3 (1994): 11; italics his.

[19] Andreasen, 16.

[20] R. K. Harrison, "Creation," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1975–1976), 1:1022.

[21] "The creative activity of God is also enclosed by two similarly worded inclusions, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the six days of God's creative work. Genesis 1:1, the first verse of the Bible, is well known: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' The final inclusion occurs in Genesis 2:1: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished.' Because of the similarity of the phrases and their location at the beginning and the end of God's creative activity, we can conclude that Genesis 1:1 is a parade example of a beginning inclusion" (Larry G. Herr, "Was There More Than One Creation?" *Adventist Review* [5 July 1984]: 10).

[22] Davidson, 11, thinks Gen 1:1 is an account of the absolute beginning and thus seemingly faces a dilemma and asks, "When did the absolute beginning of the heavens and the earth in verse 1 occur? Was it at the commencement of the seven days of Creation or sometime before?" He solves this by explaining that "It is possible that the 'raw materials' of the heavens and the earth in their unformed-unfilled state were created long before the seven days of creation week. This is the 'passive gap' theory. It is also possible that the 'raw materials' described in Genesis 1:1, 2 are included in the first day of the seven-day Creation week. This is called the 'no gap' theory."

[23] "On Reading Genesis 1–3," in *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. Michael Patrick O'Connor and David Noel Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 141; italics his. Cf. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 24 (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 153; Harrison, 1:1022–23; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 156 [section 9.6e].

wābōhû (unformed and unfilled). However, David Toshio Tsumura suggests that "the main reason for the author's mentioning the earth as *tōhû wābōhu* in this setting is to inform the audience that the earth is 'not yet' the earth as it was known to them."[24] He further indicates that the author of Genesis "uses experiential language in this verse to explain the initial situation of the earth as 'not yet.'"[25]

If we will allow such an interpretation, then Gen 1:1 has other concerns than to tell its original readers about the ultimate origins of primordial life. Thus, any inference that the first phrase of Genesis concerns an earlier creation or a statement regarding the absolute beginning of everything in the entire universe is unwarranted. We can safely say then that the creation account of Gen 1:1 "concerns this world, our earth, and that it involves the ecological system within which we live."[26]

Heavens and Earth. As noted above, one of the problems in designating a temporal interval between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2 is the impression that vv. 1 and 2 are actually referring to two different "earths." The "earth" (Heb. *ʾāreṣ*) in the phrase "heavens and earth" is commonly understood as distinct not only temporally but also chronologically from the *ʾereṣ* in Gen 1:2 onward.

This is the common understanding of *ʾereṣ* in v. 1, probably because heavens and earth in that verse is misunderstood as being two different and separate realms. However, the literary study of those two terms (i.e. "heavens and earth") helps clarify the apparent distinction. Harrison writes: "[T]he phrase 'heavens and earth' is an expression known technically as *merismus*, in which antonymic pairs describe not elements, but the totality of the situation." Hence, "the phrase should be rendered simply 'the cosmos,'" as understood by the author.[27]

Andreasen writes that "in the expression 'heaven and earth,' *ʾereṣ* is part of an inclusion encompassing everything God has created from the terrestrial to the celestial realm."[28] He further maintains that *ʾereṣ* here "is concerned neither with the material nor with the territory of the earth, but simply with the lower end of the spectrum that describes God's whole creation." He adds, "[W]hen we ask, therefore, What is the heaven and the earth God created in Genesis 1:1?" the answer is "everything that follows in Genesis 1:2–2:4, but the chief attention is given to the earth, the fruitful surface that can sustain and maintain life." It

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[24] David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 43.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Andreasen, 17–18.

[27] Harrison, 1:1022; Cf. A. M. Honeyman, "Merismus in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952): 16.

[28] Andreasen, 16.

suggests then that Gen 1:1 "announces in summary fashion that God created the heavens and the earth, followed by a description of this event."[29]

Furthermore, based on his study of the Hebrew word *ʾāreṣ*, Andreasen concludes that Gen 1 is not depicting "a second stage of a two-stage creation, first the matter of the planet, then the earth, with a *temporal interval* [italics mine] in between."[30] He further writes that "any temporal distinction between them [our world system and the earth as dry land] we will have to introduce on our own initiative, without the help of the Bible."[31] This fact would allow us to say that "Creation week did not involve the heaven that God has dwelt in from eternity. The 'heavens' of Genesis 1 and 2 probably refer to the planets and stars nearest the earth."[32] It seems to suggest then that the "heavens and the earth" in v.1 refers to our world system and not to other worlds.

Admittedly, we have a tendency to make a distinction "between earth and planet because science has given us a long chronology for the existence of the planet, whereas the Bible has given us a short chronology for the earth."[33] However, the Hebrew Bible is not making any such distinction. After all, biblical creation is not meant to give a detailed scientific report.[34]

On the other hand, there is a distinction

> between the earth as land and planet (world) because the former represents the realm of human life and its dominion, whereas the latter is God's work and charge: thus God created the heavens and the earth (the whole world), whereas the earth (dry land) was made for life and for mankind. The distinction is based upon a perspective of function, not of chronology, and consequently no explicit temporal distinction between the two can be expected, nor indeed is found.[35]

Evidently, Gen 1:1 is silent about the first universal creation. Any inference to make room for an earlier destroyed creation or the creation of the entire universe is going beyond the intent of the text. As Andersen puts it, "[Gen 1] is

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[29] Ibid., 17. However, in opposition to the belief that v. 1 is simply a summary, Davidson, 11, argues that "if Genesis 1 begins with only a title or summary, then verse 2 contradicts verse 1. God creates the earth (verse 1), but the earth preexists creation (verse 2). This interpretation simply cannot explain the reference to the existence of the earth already in 2 in the use of the term earth. Therefore I conclude that Genesis 1:1 is not simply a summary or title of the whole chapter."

[30] Andreasen, 18.

[31] Ibid.

[32] [P. Gerard Damsteegt], *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 71.

[33] Andreasen, 17.

[34] Cf. Bernard W. Anderson, "The Earth Is the Lord's: An Essay on the Biblical Doctrine of Creation," *Interpretation* 9 (January 1955): 4.

[35] Andreasen, 17.

what it is and it says what it says, and to expect it to say more, to make it say more, is to pervert it."[36]

The Hebrew Conception of the World

In this section of the essay, based on the unique understanding the Hebrew people had of their world, we will be able to decide whether they were really concerned with the world beyond them in the context of creation. In the following discussion, we shall see that the Hebrews were not much concerned with whatever might be beyond this world because they perceived their world in unity, looking at their world in a concrete way, and they did not perceive their world as preexistent.

The World Is in Unity. When Gen 1:1 says God created the "heavens and earth," we are quick to accept that as a statement of the creation of the entire universe,[37] thinking probably that there is a separation between "heavens" and "earth." However, the way the Hebrew Scriptures meant such an expression is not the way we understand them today, as if they were a dichotomy. They are in unity and refer to this world in which the Hebrews lived and moved.

Jacques B. Doukhan indicates that heavens and earth "applies only to the human universe and does not refer to worlds which are beyond human experience. The Hebrew concept of the world refers only to the created world in which man is a part."[38] He further indicates that "the Hebrew is not concerned with other worlds (although he does not ignore them, Job 38:7; Ps 148:2–4) nor is he with the scientific objective reality of the world. Only the created world as it relates to him interests him."[39] In the same line of thought, John H. Sailhamer indicates that "the phrase 'the heavens and the earth,' or more precisely, 'sky and land,' is a figure of speech for the expression of totality. Its use in the Bible appears to be restricted to the totality of the present world order."[40] In sum, the

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[36] Andersen, 141.

[37] Similarly, such acceptance has led to this kind of thinking, too: "Some people are puzzled, and understandably so, by the verses that say that God 'created the heavens and the earth' (Gen 1:1; cf. 2:1; Ex 20:11) and that He made the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day of Creation week 6,000 years ago (Gen 1:14–19). Were all heavenly bodies brought into existence at that time?" (*Seventh-day Adventist Believe . . . ,* 71).

[38] Jacques B. Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians: A Textbook for the Study of the Biblical Hebrew in Relation to Hebrew Thinking* (Lanham, MD: UP of America, 1993), 196.

[39] Ibid., 196.

[40] John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 84. Sailhamer also writes that the phrase heavens and earth "is equivalent to the 'all things' in Isaiah 44:24 (cf. Ps 103:19; Jer 10:16). Of particular importance is that its use elsewhere in Scripture suggests that the phrase includes the sun and moon as well as the stars (e.g. Joel 3:15–16 [MT 4:15–16]). Since Genesis 1:1 describes God's creating the universe, we should read the rest of the chapter from that perspective" (Ibid.). Cf. Herman J. Austel, "*shāmayim*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:935–36.

Hebrew people viewed their world holistically, and it was primarily this world that interested them.

There are many illustrations in the Hebrew Bible that reflect such holistic thought. For example, the Hebrew word *ʿᵃbōdâ* can mean either "work"[41] or "worship,"[42] depending on the context. Though this similarity is not unique to Hebrew, it may suggest a recognition, perhaps, in a subtle way, that work can be worship and worship can be work. Though this idea may be strained, it is in line with the Hebrew tendency to see every domain of life as belonging to God.[43] Indeed, the holistic worldview of the Hebrews is without any hint of dichotomy.

Meanwhile, let me reiterate the fact, pointed out by Doukhan, that although the Hebrews are not so much concerned about other worlds, they do not totally ignore them, as evident in the books of Job and Psalms. But in the Genesis creation account, it is doubtful whether the original author or readers were aware of the creation of other worlds—worlds beyond their phenomenal language and experience.

Since the ancient Hebrews perceived the world (i.e., the heavens and the earth) of Gen 1 as a totality and in unity, it is difficult to accept the idea that Gen 1:1 is also talking about the creation of other worlds. For them there seems to be no other world than the earthly world.

The World Is Perceived in a Concrete Way. It has been long acknowledged that the Hebrew people were not much given to abstract or metaphysical thinking. They were rather more concrete, not only in their expressions, but also in the way they perceived things. This distinctive Hebrew thought shines throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, "'be angry' is 'burn in one's nostrils' (Exod 4:14); 'disclose something to another' or 'to reveal' is 'unstop someone's ears' (Ruth 4:4); 'have no compassion' is 'hard-heartedness' (1 Sam 6:6); 'stubborn' is 'stiff-necked' (2 Chron 30:8; cf. Acts 7:51); 'get ready' or 'brace oneself' is 'gird up the loins' (Jer 1:17); and 'to be determined to go' is 'set one's face to go' (Jer 42:15, 17; cf. Luke 9:51),"[44] to mention only a few.

If this is true in many aspects of Hebrew thinking, then this must be also true in the way ancient Hebrews perceived their world. One of the evidences of this is the way they describe their world. As Luis Stadelmann puts it:

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[41] See, e.g., Gen 29:27; Exod 1:14; Lev 23:7–8; Num 28:18, 25–26; Ps 104:23; 1 Chron 27:26, where *ʿᵃbōdâ* is also translated as "work."

[42] The Arabic root meaning of the Hebrew word for "worship" also reflects the meaning of "work." See Walter C. Kaiser, "*ʿᵃbōd*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:639.

[43] Marvin R. Wilson, "Hebrew Thought in the Life of the Church," in *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, ed. Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 131. See also, Walter Zimmirli, *The Old Testament and the World*, trans. John J. Scullon (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), 10.

[44] Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Dayton: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1989), 137.

> Their notion of the world starts from the concrete sphere of their land, which is extended only very gradually by widening its scope toward the concept of the inhabited world as a whole. . . . Thus, the spatial world became intelligible to the Hebrews to the degree that they were able to describe it in terms of concrete images.[45]

The concrete understanding of the Hebrews about their world is found in one of the levels of their perception of reality. For them reality is anything related to human experience, not outside of it. Indeed, "[T]he biblical author has conceived, written and intended the creation pericope according to the same pattern of reality he meets in his real life."[46] Moreover, "[T]o communicate the subject of creation to human beings it is impossible to avoid using the language and literary forms known to them."[47] This idea would not allow us to think that when Gen 1:1 mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth, the author has in mind the world beyond what he had already perceived as a reality on the level of human experience.[48] Hence, we have to accept the fact that the creation account in Gen 1 is not meant to be scientific or metaphysical. Charles C. Cochrane observes that the writer was "not attempting to give a scientific account of the origin of the universe. . . .We are simply told that he did it: God spoke, and it was done."[49]

The way the Hebrew Scriptures materially describe our world suggests that the ancient Hebrews perceived our world in a concrete way. Tivka Frymer-Kensky, using the biblical data, describes our cosmography as follows:

> Our universe is an earth-spaceship, a cosmic submarine. Waters remain above the firmament (Genesis 1:7), and it is in these waters that God established his dwelling chamber (Psalm 104:3, Amos 9:6); there that he keeps his storehouses of rain (Deuteronomy 28:12), wind (Psalm 135:7; Jeremiah 10:13; 51:16), snow and hail (Job 38:22–23); and there that he keeps his weapons (Jeremiah 50:25), almost certainly a term for atmospheric phenomena. From there he waters the mountains (Psalm 104:13). These waters are kept from cascading down upon the earth by the ordinance of God, by the firmament of the sky, and by the locks that guard the sky (Psalm 135:7; Jeremiah 10:12–13; 51:15–16). There are also waters beneath the earth (Exodus 20:4). The storehouses of the earth beneath the ground

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[45] Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological And Literary Study*, Analecta Biblica 39 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 180–81.

[46] Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1978), 217.

[47] Tsumura, 43.

[48] Cf. Frederick C. Grant, *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1959), 59.

[49] Charles C. Cochrane, *The Gospel According to Genesis; A Guide to Understanding Genesis 1–11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 5–6.

are filled with waters (Psalm 33:7), and the great deep stretches out
beneath the land (Genesis 49:25).[50]

Whatever one may think of Frymer-Kensky's description of the Hebrew concept of our world, the idea of the concreteness of Hebrew thought cannot be ignored.

The absence of abstraction in the Hebrew worldview is evident in the vivid and most often earthy pictures painted by the Hebrew writers. For example, in Gen 1:2, where it is mentioned that the "Spirit of God was hovering over the waters," "the Hebrew term translated 'hovering' (*mᵉraḥepet*) is an ornithological term, used in Scripture of an eagle who hovers with loving care over the nest of its young (see Deut 32:11)."[51] Another example is the "filthy rags" in Isa 64:6 (MT 64:5), compared to one's "righteous acts." The Hebrew word for "filthy rags" is *beged ʿiddîm*, which is literally translated as "garment of menstruation."[52] Moreover, describing heaven (Heb. *šāmayim*) as a tent, or a garment, or a cloth[53] is another evidence of the Hebrew mental pictures of their world. Such representative examples indicate that the Hebrew worldview is indeed concrete.

The World Is Not Perceived as Preexistent. The last argument aginst the idea that Gen 1:1 talks about the creation of the universe or about primordial creation is that in Hebrew thought our world is not perceived as preexistent.

Having an impression of the world as preexistent would lead to mythicizing the world as being a god or gods who is (are) present in the uncreated nothingness of space.[54] Indeed, "the space of the Hebrew . . . is demythologized."[55] Bernard W. Anderson is doubtful whether the teaching of *creatio ex nihilo* "is found explicitly in Gen. 1 or anywhere else in the OT."[56] He continues, "the notion of creation out of nothing was undoubtedly too abstract for the Hebraic mind,[57] and in any case, the idea of a created chaos would have been strange to a narrative which is governed by the view that creation is the antithesis of chaos."[58]

Furthermore, Anderson adds, "there is not the slightest hint that God is bound or conditioned by chaos, as in Babylonian Enuma Eliš, which portrays the

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[50] Tivka Frymer-Kensky, "Biblical Cosmology," in *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. Michael Patrick O'Connor and David Noel Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 233. See also, Paul Heinisch, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. William G. Heidt (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1955), 146.

[51] Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 148.

[52] Ibid., 147.

[53] Isa 40:22; cf. Stadelmann, 180.

[54] Cf. Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians*, 196.

[55] Ibid.

[56] B[ernhard] W. Anderson, "Creation," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:728.

[57] See William Dyrness, *Themes in the Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 70.

[58] Anderson, 1:728. Cf. Arthur J. Ferch, *In the Beginning* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 25–26.

birth of the gods out of the water chaos."[59] To the contrary, the biblical creation is through the "effortless, omnipotent, unchallengeable word of a God who transcends the world. The author of Gn 1 thus shows here again his distance from the mythical thought."[60] The Hebrew verb *bārāʾ* ("to create") is used to portray the idea that the world was created by divine fiat. The word *bārāʾ* has significant theological implications.[61]

Accordingly, *bārāʾ* "implies that the world came out as something new." It "is significantly always associated with the idea of newness (Jer 31:22; Isa 65:17; Ps 51:10)."[62] The term also "affirms unequivocally the truth laid down elsewhere (e.g., Heb. 11:3) that until God spoke, nothing existed."[63] Again, this reinforces the fact that the world is not perceived as preexistent, "implying an essential breech between the actual world and what is before."[64]

Creation by Word teaches "the dependence of the world in relation to a sovereign God who 'speaks and things are' (Ps 33:6–9), who governs the laws of nature (Gn 8:22), and through His providence integrates the universe into the plan of salvation which has man at its center."[65]

The Hebrew's conception of the world as limited reflects the idea of the world as not preexistent. It is evident in the "usage of the Hebrew word 'ancient,' 'everlasting' (*ʿôlām*)," which carries limited connotations.[66] Accordingly, "*ʿôlām* is not used in such a cosmic sense within the Hebrew Bible, and other expressions ('earth' [*tēbēl*], 'heaven and earth' [*haššāmayim wᵉhāʾāreṣ*], or 'the all' [*kol*]) are similarly limited."[67] In fact, "the Hebrew uses two specific words when he wants to refer to the earthly world: *ʾareṣ* (Ps 22:27; Isa 23:17) and *ʿôlām* (Ps 73:12; Isa 64:4)."[68]

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[59] Anderson, 1:728.

[60] Hasel, "The Significance of Cosmology," 11.

[61] See for example, Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "*brʾ*," *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:728–35; Jan Bergman, Helmer Ringgren, Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, and G. Johannes Botterweck, "*bārāʾ*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:242–49; Werner Foerster, "κτίζω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 3:1000–35.

[62] Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians*, 196.

[63] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leceister, Eng: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 1:43; "And God said" [Gen 1:3], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1953–1978), 1:209.

[64] Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians*, 196.

[65] Colomban Lesquivit and Pierre Grelot, "World," *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd and rev. ed., ed. Xavier Léon-Dufour (New York: Seabury, 1973), 677.

[66] Robert A. Oden, Jr., "Cosmogony, Cosmology," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1163.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians*, 197.

Apparently, to the Hebraic frame of mind the world is not perceived as pre-existent. If this is so, then in the framework of the creation story in Gen 1, most likely, it is also the way the original writer of Genesis understood the world when he described it.

Conclusion

The question whether the creation account of Gen 1 is also talking about what is beyond the human world has been adequately answered in this paper. We have seen that when we closely examine Gen 1, especially such words as "in the beginning" and "heavens and earth," contextually and linguistically, we can say that the creation narrative is talking only about our world and is silent about the creation of the entire universe, as we understand the universe today.

Moreover, in our study of the Hebraic understanding of the world in the framework of creation, we discover that there is no hint whatsoever that Gen 1 is concerned with the creation of other planets or other worlds.

Thus, making any scientific inference or metaphysical deduction from the creation account of Gen 1 is unsafe. The creation narrative in Gen 1 is giving neither a scientific explanation nor a scientific mechanism for the process of creation. The simplicity and conciseness of the creation account, expressed in phenomenal human language, do not allow any scientific or philosophical theory to be imposed upon the text. Doing this is not sympathetic to the intent of the Hebrew Bible, nor to its original writers. It is therefore imperative not to go beyond what the Bible plainly says.

Ferdinand O. Regalado is an Assistant Professor in the College of Theology at the Adventist University of the Philippines, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, where he has until recently coordinated the B.Th. program. He is also a doctoral student in Old Testament at AIIAS and has participated in archaeological excavations in Jordan. fergreg@yahoo.com

The Challenges of Emancipatory Theological Education for Churches in the Third World

Nestor C. Rilloma

Emancipatory theological education is not new. It is as old as the gospel itself. It is yoking a pedagogy attuned to disprivileged peoples with the empowering gospel, thus enabling people to characterize the Kingdom of God in their personal lives and to transform communities. It is both reflective and proactive; personal and social; redeeming and empowering. An emancipatory approach to theological education takes seriously the wounds of history and the resulting present context, bathes them with the Word of God, and gives new strength. It brings healing to downtrodden psyches and aims to develop leaders for a new order. It goes beyond filling the head with knowledge or the heart with devotion—it prepares the whole person to summon the world to the rule of the kingdom.

This essay examines emancipatory education as a means of overcoming oppressive patterns and building leadership. An emancipatory style of teaching is viewed as a means of overcoming the ill effects of history and as such is a fundamental element of a theological education curriculum.

A major emphasis in Third World education that also has roots in Christian theology is the emancipatory or liberatory dimension of learning. The terms "emancipate" and "liberate" connote the presence of oppressive historical factors that have shaped assumptions, values, attitudes, and behaviors in both students and faculty. These traits have had an attenuating effect in developing leaders for the church and society as a whole. In proclaiming the good news of liberty in the Christian gospel, theological schools and churches must practice an emancipatory style of teaching and learning that overcomes the historical patterns of tribalism, colonialism, authoritarianism, and hierarchicalism. The objectives of Philippine theological education, then, must include the preparation of men and women who will lead the church and influence society in transcending these historical patterns.

Philippine theologian Emerito Nacpil, in his essay "A Gospel for the New Filipino," has identified such characteristics as ability to shape the future, an orientation toward change, and an awareness of human dignity and community responsibility as some of the Christian characteristics needed for modernization.[1] These characteristics are similar to the characteristics of emancipatory education: creativity, the skills of problem solving, decision-making, human relations, and leadership.

Efficacy, creativity, and conscientization represent the philosophical and psychological bases for developing emancipatory skills. Generally, oppressed peoples of the Third World have considerable difficulty with the skills of problem solving, decision-making, human relations, and leadership. They do demonstrate these skills in relation to survival, but not in terms of creating new paradigms and ideas. Hope and Timmel, in *Training for Transformation*, their three-volume handbook for community workers among the masses in Africa, have focused on the development of these skills.[2] This inability is largely due to deeply ingrained feelings of inferiority and dependency, resulting in a corporate sense of learned helplessness.[3] Enabled with an understanding of their efficacy and their newly discovered creativity through the nurturing context of the church and school, awakened to their ability to read and write their world, students will gain confidence to develop the skills needed to change their world.

A Theology of Emancipatory Education

A holistic view of salvation from a biblical perspective involves one's empowerment by God in restoring the qualities God intended for internal psyches, interpersonal relationships, and the sociopolitical and economic dimensions of life, as well as restoring the freedom to commune with God Himself. In overcoming oppression, Scripture speaks of the liberating powers of the Christian faith. Terms such as confidence (Prov 3:26; Heb 10:19), power (Heb 6:18), courage (2 Chron 15:7; John 16:33), encouragement (Heb 6:18), blessing (Deut 27:9–28:68), clear conscience (Heb 10:22), salvation in relation to both sin and oppressive social forces (Luke 1:57–79), forgiveness (Matt 6:12, 14–15), and hope (2 Cor 3:12–18), to suggest just a few, point to the liberation we have in Christ.

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[1] Emerito P. Nacpil, "A Gospel for the New Filipino," in Gerald A. Anderson, ed., *Asian Voices in Christian Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 117–145; also discussed by Rodrigo D. Tano in *Theology in the Philippine Setting: A Case Study in the Contextualization of Theology* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day, 1981), 127–130.

[2] Anne Hope and Sally Timmel. *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers* 3 vol. (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mam Press, 1984).

[3] Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*: *A Social Cognitive Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 445–458.

These words, however, reflect our empowerment in Yahweh or in Christ, rather than the self-efficacy of secular psychology. This is observed in Jesus' use, recorded in Luke 4:18–19, of Isaiah's proclamation in Isa 61:1–2.

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me
> Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.
> He sent Me to proclaim release to the captives
> And recovery of sight to the blind,
> To set free those who are downtrodden,
> To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

The "year of the Lord" was the Jubilee—meant to be celebrated every fifty years—during which the accumulated injustices and inequalities were erased through the restoration of freedom and property to the original owners. Yoder, in his *Politics of Jesus*, identifies four biblical prescriptions concerning the Jubilee: 1) "leaving the soil fallow," 2) "the remission of debts," 3) "the liberation of slaves," and 4) "the return to each individual of his family's property."[4] In Jesus' use of Isaiah, He was not only referring to liberation from individual sin and liberation from the corporate injustices of society,[5] but also to the resultant emancipation of psyches starved by a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. The psychological effects of the Jubilee were the restoration of the dignity and empowerment intended for all humanity—needed to be fully human.

On the fiftieth year Israelites were to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev 25:10). They were to fulfill Israel's covenantal responsibilities for the great liberation. The jubilee trumpet or ram's horn was the Liberty Bell of ancient Israel, proclaiming the "year of the Lord." Israel, unfortunately, did not faithfully keep the Jubilee, and Jeremiah pronounced judgment upon them for reneging on their Jubilee promise (Jer 34:15–22). Isaiah 61 expands the "favorable year of the Lord" to include Israel's own liberation from their exilic captivity. The Jubilee brought an exhilarating sense of freedom to Israel (Isa 49:8–9). When Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1–2 in inaugurating His ministry, the message was clear: the Messiah has come to proclaim the Great Liberation! Through His redemption the "slaves" are bought back and the cycle of oppression is broken, along with all its psychological trappings. The void of powerlessness, worthlessness, and hopelessness is filled with the vicarious efficacy of Christ and the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

If the Jubilee was a divine directive for emancipation in an ancient, agrarian, Middle Eastern society, how can this emancipatory Jubilee be contextualized in Philippine society, and specifically in the educational cultures of Philippine theological schools and churches? Perhaps in our zeal to emphasize the fallenness of man we have failed to address the Jubilee liberation and empowerment we have in Christ. Discussed below are the biblical precedents for

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[4] John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 36.
[5] Ibid., 64.

seven interrelated elements of education for leadership: efficacy, creativity, conscientization, and skills related to problem-solving, decision-making, human relations, and leadership. Education for leadership may be likened to a suspension bridge. The scriptural text makes up the foundation or deck. The sociocultural context makes up the supporting towers. The cable superstructure, which consists of efficacy, conscientization, and creativity, tethers the supporting vertical cables (problem solving, decision-making, human relations, and leadership, which in turn support the bridge deck. As a complex of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, education for leadership enables students to overcome the personal and psychological effects of structural sin and empowers them to holistically engage their world for Christ.

Efficacy is both a self-oriented or individual trait and a group-oriented or collective trait.[6] Perceived self-efficacy refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances,"[7] that is, "judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations."[8] This is the perceived ability to control and regulate one's world. Since such efficacy is a prerequisite for action, and since oppressed peoples possess low levels of efficacy,[9] its development in Third World Bible and theological students is essential to spiritual and societal development.

From the biblical perspective, efficacy is the psychological manifestation of the vicarious work of Christ and has a spiritual dimension of great significance to Philippine churches and Bible and theological schools. Efficacy is not inordinate pride, conceit, or egoism; nor is biblical spirituality to be associated with self-devaluation. The image of God within us, our redemption in Christ, and our possession of the power of the Holy Spirit are all biblical sources of our significant worth. They are our basis for collective efficacy and self-efficacy. Thus, in Eph 3:20 Paul implied that the power of Christ (*dynamis*—the power to carry out an action) that "works itself out within us" (middle voice denotes reflexive action) is an awesome source of empowerment that goes "beyond all that we ask or think" (*hyperekperissou*—literally meaning very much more, infinitely more). In Col 1:29 he personalized his efficacy: "For this purpose I also labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." In Phil 4:13 he concluded, "I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me."

The great majority of early Christians came from groups possessing low efficacy. Paul wrote to the members of the young church at Corinth, "For consider your calling brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. God has chosen the weak things . . . the base things . . . the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are . . ." (1

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[6] Bandura, *Social Foundations*, 390–449.

[7] Ibid., 391.

[8] Ibid., 122.

[9] Ibid.,, 445–453.

Cor 1:26–28). Yet through their vicarious efficacy in Christ, they significantly changed the Roman world. Theological schools and churches need to consider vicarious efficacy and psychological Jubilee in reference to their particular church and school cultures. If the institutional culture simply reproduces the oppressive power structure of society, it is acting contrary to the proclamation of "good news." In terms of students from oppressed backgrounds, Jubilee implies the regaining of efficacy vicariously through the efficacy modeled by Christ and transmitted by His redemptive power. Applying these principles, churches and schools must recognize that efficacy is a modeled behavior that is more than imitation. It is identification with Christ's power and must be expressed in their core values and assumptions, including systems of thought that provide meaning, motivation, ideals, and conscience.[10] Scripture presents for us a living faith, and with it is a sense of efficacy in the power of God, passed on by the discipling of one generation by another (2 Tim 2:2).

Philippine churches and theological schools need to consider Christian behavior in light of the freedom of redeemed persons who have identified with Christ and His people. It is not the result of the legalistic suppression of behavior. Churches and schools should then actively promote individual and group expression and avoid suppression based on rank or status. Self-efficacy is a high predictor of performance, and thus the conditions that build efficacy in the institutional culture should be modeled. Churches and schools should be models of open, encouraging, nutritive atmospheres that emphasize process. A narrow, legalistic, perfectionistic atmosphere fails to build self-efficacy, particularly among students from marginal backgrounds. Churches and theological schools in the Philippines have a biblical responsibility to build efficacy in students. Applying such concepts as the psychological Jubilee and vicarious efficacy to institutional cultures and modeling corresponding behaviors will help shape an educational atmosphere that builds leaders. When these environments enhance personhood through the modeling of vicarious efficacy, then a significant psychological Jubilee will have taken place.

Conscientization, as popularized by Paulo Freire, is the ability to think and act critically in relation to one's world.[11] Freire reminds us that education is never neutral.[12] A theological curriculum that does not confront the structural inequities of a society perpetuates injustice. It is either domesticating—"banking" education by making deposits of knowledge into the head of the student—or liberating, "problem-posing" education.[13] Education for critical awareness must be relevant, problem-posing, dialogical, and praxis-oriented (consisting of reflection and action).

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[10] Ibid., 48.

[11] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1990), 19–21,101.

[12] Ibid., 15.

[13] Ibid., 57–74.

Conscientization is also a style of teaching that enables persons to become more aware and responsible for themselves and their world. From a Christian perspective, it is demonstrated by the prophetic role. Biblical literature abounds with descriptions of the prophets as critical thinkers and actors. Men such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, and John the Baptist, in their critiques of the covenant community of Israel, are models for modern day Bible and theological students. Their prophetic criticism of unjust social structures should induce a sense of boldness in churches and theological schools confronting the many unjust structures of society and personal life. Separating the prophetic role from the Gospel of the Kingdom results in an incomplete gospel, full of "spirituality" but devoid of its biblical expression in society.

Such criticism, of course, begins with critiquing the church, its associated structures, and the personal lives of its members. It is useless to critique society if the church itself, actively or passively, knowingly or ignorantly, perpetuates the ills of the world. For the church, the essential prerequisite for conscientization is holistic self-analysis and repentance. We have so focused on producing leaders for local churches that we have neglected producing leaders for business, local and national politics, and the professions. In the Philippine context we have hardly begun to shape a positive ethic for these areas beyond that of devotional platitudes. We have unwittingly mimicked traditional Roman Catholicism in maintaining a strict separation of the sacred and the secular. Instead of integrating our faith into this world, we only prepare people for the next world. Our understanding of transformation is limited to personal conversion, and as a result our Bible schools develop personal "spirituality" and "character" but are not change agents for the Kingdom.

Critical awareness in education results in transformation of the oppressive elements in society in terms of quality of life, environment, social structures, and community. It is a dynamic process of education and development, and thus cannot be an individual academic exercise, but rather is a group effort. Thus, Bible teachers need to enable students to address societal needs in the context of group dialogue.[14]

Critical awareness in education nurtures the student as subject.[15] Freire often speaks of the student functioning as subject rather than as object in the processes of learning and living. Critical consciousness can only take place from a subject perspective. This concept relates closely to the dichotomy between "banking" education and problem-posing education. If teachers are to follow Freire, they need to value a subject orientation in their students like Jesus, who did not teach a systematized form of theology but, rather, caused His disciples to think critically about the world around them from the perspective of Scripture.

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[14] Hope and Timmel, 1:22–24; also see Ira Shor, *Freire for the Classroom* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987), 25.

[15] Shor, 25; see also "Developing Student Autonomy in the Classroom," *Equity and Excellence*. 24/3: 35–37.

Finally, critical awareness in education transcends historical conditioning. One's consciousness is conditioned by history. The historical context creates the culture of silence because the oppressed have historically "overdetermined" the powers of the oppressor.[16] Many oppressed people tend to be like the carabao who does not know his own power to break through his corral. He simply accepts his condition as fate.

Third World churches and theological schools are to be arenas for the theological deconstruction of historical presuppositions through critical analysis,[17] as well as through the construction of our own salvation history. In this view, a curriculum designed for the oppressed must be particularly uplifting for building efficacy, creativity, and conscientization. It should provide positive experiences through affirmation and encouragement. Students should be able to verbalize their efficacy as a basis for conscientization. Teachers need to guide students in developing the skills to discern and transcend the elements of historical conditioning.

Creativity refers to an individual "quality of intellect," as well as to the "intellectual quality of the school."[18] Creativity is both an awareness of problems and the capacity to find solutions. Any individual or school desiring to transcend traditional patterns must have a degree of creativity.

From a theological perspective, "Creativity is rooted in creation, i.e., man as *imago Dei* (Image of God), and lived out in the context of the community of faith."[19] Creativity is the normal activity of mankind and should not be considered the quality of only a few talented people. Creativity in Scripture is associated with wisdom, both for creative thinking and creative skills (Exod 28:3, 31:3–6). Old Testament wisdom literature and stories, such as Solomon's creative solution to the case of the two women claiming the same child, extol creative wisdom and decision-making as a highly desirable trait (1 Kgs 3:16–28).

Oppression produces a survival-based creativity, but it does not allow for the creation of new ways of thinking or new paradigms. We need to examine church and school structures and teaching methods for their ability to nurture creativity in students whose background emphasizes conformity. If Third World churches and theological schools only emphasize the transmissive purposes of education, they suppress the God-given creative powers of their students. Churches and schools rightly concerned with "correct" doctrine and practice are often overly concerned with conformity to a host of thoughts and actions that

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[16] Freire, 27–56.

[17] Hope and Timmel, 3:3–66.

[18] *Creativity of the School: Conclusions of a Programme of Enquiry*, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (n.p.: n.p.,1978), 15.

[19] Samuel F. Rowen, *Curriculum Foundations, Experiences and Outcomes: A Particpatory Case Study in Theological Education*, doctoral dissertation submitted to Michigan State University (1981), 91.

keep students from creatively expressing their faith and life in Christ. This kind of conformity squelches unique expressions of renewal as well as thwarting the development of contextualized expressions of the Christian faith.

Problem-solving and decision-making are implied in what theologians call the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:26–30. In this text mankind is given dominion by God over the earth and is to exercise stewardship in managing its affairs and resources (Ps 8:4–6). Stewardship is a pervasive idea in Scripture. It includes shepherding physical resources (Gen 1:26–29), the ordering of society (Judg 9:8–15), and guarding the gospel itself (2 Tim 1:13–14). It denotes not only faithfulness, but also the problem-solving and decision-making skills associated with functioning as a steward or manager. The development of problem-solving and decision-making skills among our students necessitates decisive action based upon our empowerment in Christ.

In an atmosphere where efficacy, creativity, and conscientization are valued, problem-solving and decision-making skills will find fertile soil for growth. Oppression limits options in solving problems, and as a result, oppressed peoples often narrow their problem-solving skills to traditional patterns, such as appealing to a higher authority. Any deviation from accepted patterns has proven to be a negative reinforcement for change.[20] For example, in order for the oppressed/oppressor relationship to "work," there must be a perpetuated imbalance of dependency whereby the oppressed defer problem solving to the oppressor. Bandura stated that "perceived self-inefficacy fosters dependence on proxy control, which further reduces opportunities to build the necessary skills for efficacious action."[21]

Developing problem-solving skills in the indigenous context is necessary to overcoming dependency. Problem-solving involves both thinking skills and information gathering skills. Thinking skills include analysis/synthesis, application/prediction, and evaluation/judgment. Information skills include asking questions, observing, and listening.[22] In theological education, thinking skills and information gathering skills will find fertile soil for growth if practical work and coursework utilize problem solving in the text/context matrix. An inductive approach, such as case study, can elevate problem-solving capacities both for developing the more context-oriented pastor/teacher/counselor skills, as well as the more text-oriented hermeneutical and exegetical skills.

Problem-solving and decision-making are closely related. As a creative act, problem solving emphasizes the skills needed to regulate individual and group processes in discovering workable solutions. Decision-making, on the other hand, relates to the skills needed to examine core values and assumptions,

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[20] Margaret Bell-Gredler, *Learning and Instruction* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 85.

[21] Bandura, *Social Foundations*, 448.

[22] Edward W. Cassidy and Dana G. Kurfman, "Decision Making as Purpose and Process," in *Developing Decision-Making Skills,* ed. Dana G. Kurfman, 47th Yearbook. (n.p.: National Council for Social Studies, 1977), 18.

norms, biases, and presuppositions in choosing between options. For example, one such assumption that affects decision-making is one's perceived self-efficacy. Bandura stated that "decisions involving choice of activities and certain social milieus are partly determined by judgments of personal efficacy."[23]

Decision-making is defined as "making reasoned choices from among several alternatives. Reasoned choices are based on judgments which are consistent with decision-maker's values."[24] Decisions that require the church to take new directions of thought and action will encounter resistance from traditional elements, both among clergy and laity. The rallying cry of traditionalists is, "We've always done it this way." This kind of decision-making abrogates the text/context matrix in decision-making in favor of a form of historical determinism.

A decision-making approach in theological education de-emphasizes knowledge for its own sake and emphasizes the social construction of reality. Utilizing such an approach, students are required to use their knowledge and values in choosing solutions to cases from their own context. The classroom ought to be "wired" into society. Theology should be constructed rather than just transmitted. We evangelicals tend to draw distinct lines between right and wrong that fail to recognize the complexity of Scripture and society. As a result, our simplistic solutions don't fit our world.

Human-relations skills, for example, in the context of the hierarchical social structures of the Philippines, emphasize communicating to those of perceived higher status. Emphases on *bahala na* (fatalism)*, pakikisama* (getting along), *utang na loob* (sense of indebtedness)*,* and *hiya* (shame) in Philippine society are values that can perpetuate unequal relations.[25] Each of these values has the capacity within its range of meanings to be either a positive or a negative force for development in Philippine society.[26]

Although Scripture affirms respect for authority (Exod 20:12—"Honor your father and mother . . ."), it also affirms the essential equality of mankind in creation and in the brotherhood of all Christians (Gal 3:28—"All [groups] are one in Christ Jesus"). An understanding of the equality of mankind is necessary for encountering the David-and-Goliath situations that Third World theological school graduates will face in their ministries. Another foundational biblical principle pervasive in Scripture is the concept of *Shalom* (peace, well being). It is more than an expression of a desire for the absence of conflict; it is a desire for the well being of another, and as such is the basis of trust and community for the covenant people of God.

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[23] Bandura, *Social Foundations*, 393.

[24] Cassidy and Kurfman, 1.

[25] Gorospe, *Christian Renewal*, 218–224.

[26] For a valuable popular discussion of these values see Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano, *Filipino Values and our Christian Faith* (Manila: OMF Literature, 1990).

Human-relations training also involves building leadership and participation skills. Shouldn't our students see the gospel as a force for eradicating shame and inadequacy? Emphasis should be given to developing more egalitarian communications patterns across status-related barriers so that those of low status will communicate based upon their vicarious efficacy in Christ and those of high status will not "talk down" to the masses. There should be an emphasis on shared leadership as opposed to the *caudillo* style of many Latin societies. Third World churches and theological schools should also address issues related to administering and receiving self and mutual criticism, building team effectiveness, and using some form of analysis to understand relationships.

Leadership is one result of developing the elements already discussed: efficacy, creativity, conscientization, and skills related to problem solving, decision-making, and human relations. Emancipatory learning means little in terms of changing society without the exercise of leadership. Disembodied ideas have little significance apart from their concrete expression in society. "Ivory tower" theologizing cannot be revolutionary apart from leaders willing to bring change. From a theological perspective, the product of education for leadership is not "the socialist man," and not the "rugged individualists" of capitalism, but rather the Christian servant-leader who loves God and loves mankind. As leaders in the early church, Paul, Timothy, James, and Peter refer to themselves as bond-servants (Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). The spirituality of the Christian servant-leader finds expression in the personal interaction of text and context, not in separation from the world. The Christian servant-leader knows and applies the Word of God in a praxis relationship with society. Servant leadership is to be identified not only with the vertical relationship with God achieved through prayer and worship, but also with a corresponding horizontal relationship to society.

This understanding of servant leadership in theological education does not require a reinterpretation of the biblical gospel, as has been done by some liberation theologians, such as Jon Sobrino or Gustavo Guitierrez.[27] Emerito Nacpil provides a starting point for theologizing on the preparation of leaders for the 21st century. His "Gospel for the New Filipino" emphasizes: 1) liberation from a cyclical view of time, a sacral universe, and a kinship-based society; 2) responsibility in mastering the earth; and 3) hope—the *telos* or final cause of social change in the Philippines.[28] His views of secularization, however, fail to account for the transcendent nature of God as portrayed in Scripture. Servant leadership will require some personnel to reinterpret their traditional Western theological positions that have ignored the social and structural dimensions of

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[27] Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Hope of Liberation," in Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, ed., *Mission Trends No. 3* (New York: Paulist Press, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 64–69; also see D. D. Webster, "Liberation Theology," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 635–637.

[28] Nacpil, 117–145; Tano, 127–129.

the "good news." Jesus, quoting Isaiah, proclaimed "good news for the poor" and "liberty for the captives" (Luke 4:18). As seen in these verses, the Kingdom of God is not only identified with a future reality, but also with the annihilation of present evil structures.

Although the servant-leader motif is prominent in Scripture, it must be balanced with other biblical models. In the context of poverty and domination this motif conjures up inappropriate images for peoples who have always known the underside of servanthood. The poor already know very well how to be abased. The ambassador metaphor, carrying an uplifting sense of dignity as well as a sense of mission, corrects the "doormat" mentality many ascribe to servanthood. Together these two metaphors may present a more appropriate model on which to build relationship.

Summary

In proclaiming the good news of liberty in the Christian gospel, churches and theological schools would do well to practice an emancipatory style of teaching and learning that overcomes the historical patterns of tribalism, colonialism, authoritarianism, and hierarchicalism. The objectives of theological education in the Third World, then, would include the preparation of men and women who would lead the church and influence society in transcending these historical patterns. Within a matrix of text and context, principles of efficacy, creativity, and conscientization were identified as essential principles. Emerging out of these principles, the skills of problem solving, decision-making, human relations, and leadership were identified as key for bringing change to the Third World churches and societies.

Nestor C. Rilloma currently serves as the Acting Editor of Philippine Publishing House. Prior to this he was Academic Dean and head of the Theology Department of Northern Luzon Adventist College in Artacho, Sison, Pangasinan, Philippines. He holds a Th.D. degree from Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines. email: ncrilloma@hotmail.com and ppheditor@edsamail.com.ph

Scripture in Memory: Jesus as a Model for Spiritual Formation

Robert H. Banks

One of the many things that captured the interest of Christ's disciples was His fervent and consistent devotional life. The Gospels, especially Luke, illuminate the importance of prayer for Jesus. His followers were inspired by the spiritual power they had come to associate with His words and works. While His life in the Spirit stemmed from several sources, it also included His intent to store Scripture in memory. This ingredient in Christ's spiritual life is not as explicitly described as His life of prayer, but is evident in the record of his earthly ministry. Our study will trace this practice through the Gospels so that we might be inspired by Jesus' example and see its relevance for God's people living in the time of the end.

It has been observed that the Gospels (particularly Matthew) describe Christ as the perfect representative of Israel who repeats the history of the Old Testament covenant people.[1] God called both Israel and Christ—as the embodiment of Israel—His "servant" (Isa 42–53). Both similarly received the designation of God's "Son" (Exod 4:22; Isa 42:1; Matt 3:17). Like Israel of old, Jesus found refuge in Egypt for His own survival. The first chapters of Matthew's Gospel represent Jesus as retracing the steps of Israel, experiencing a "new Exodus" from Egypt after a death decree (Matt 2:14–15). Christ then makes a spiritual journey, crossing a figurative Red Sea at the time of His baptism (cf. 1 Cor 10:1–2; Matt 3). As the pillar of cloud went before Israel to lead them in the desert, so Jesus was "led up of the spirit into the wilderness" (Matt 4:1), dwelling among "wild beasts" (Mark 1:3). There He resided forty days in the desert, paralleling the forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness. As Moses proclaimed the law of God's kingdom on Mount Sinai, so did Jesus, the great Law Giver, proclaim His spiritual kingdom on the Mount of Blessings (Matt 5). Jesus later selected twelve disciples as the counterpart of the twelve tribes of Israel.

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[1] See, for example, O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,* (Phillipsburg, NJ; P & R, 2000), 101–103.

Notice that Jesus faced the same temptations in the desert (Matt 4:4, 6, 7, 21) as Israel did during their time of wandering. Temptation came to Jesus in the three areas of "appetite," "love of the world," and "presumption." Where Adam failed, Christ was victorious and became an example to His followers.[2] It's significant that Christ recognized that passages quoted by Satan were out of their immediate context and only partially quoted (cf. Matt 4:6–7 and Ps 91:11). He overcame all of these temptations by quoting passages from memory out of the book of Deuteronomy. The precepts in this book, many written in the desert, had also been available to Israel in the wilderness as they struggled with temptation. (Deut 8:3; 6:16; 6:13).[3] In other words, Jesus used the very same weapon available to Israel as they battled temptation. Christ had evidently, through years of careful application and study, fortified His memory in preparation for this intense battle with the adversary.

The Gospels exalt many facets of the life of the Messiah as an example for those who are following His example. The Gospels record no less than forty-three occasions when Jesus quoted or alluded to Scripture from memory. His purpose for quoting the Scriptures seems to fall into three categories: 1) as an aid in His battle with sin,[4] 2) to clarify a doctrinal question for His hearers,[5] and 3) as a confirmation or clarification of His mission as the Messiah.[6]

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[2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:372.

[3] Regarding the role of Scripture in resisting temptation, Ellen White says: "In the wilderness, armed with the weapon, 'It is written,' he met and overcame the strongest temptations that the enemy could bring against him. He proved the power of the Word. It is God's people who have failed. That his Word has not the power on hearts that it ought to have is shown by the present condition of the world. But it is because men have chosen to disobey, not because the Word has less power." "An Appeal for the Colored Race," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (October 27, 1904): 8.

[4] Matt 4:4/Luke 4:4 (Deut 8:3); Matt 4:7 (Deut 6:7); Matt 4:10/Luke 4:12 (Deut 6:13). Although this category includes the least number of quotations recorded in the Gospels, they provide a window into the spiritual life of Christ and the secret of the victorious faith that characterized His entire ministry.

[5] Matt 5:21 (Exod 20:13); Matt 5:27 (Exod 20:14); Matt 5:31 (Deut 24:1); Matt 5:33 (Lev 19:12); Matt 5:38 (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21); Matt 5:43 (Lev 19:18); Matt 12:7 (Hos 6:6); Matt 19:4/Mark 10:6 (Gen 1:27 or Gen 5:2); Matt 19:5/Mark 10:7–8 (Gen 2:24); Matt 19:18–19/Mark 10:19/Luke 18:20 (Exod 20:12–16; Deut 5:16–20; Lev 19:18); Matt 21:13/Mark 11:17/Luke 19:46 (Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11); Matt 21:16 (Ps 8:3 LXX); Matt 22:37 (Deut 6:5); Mark 12:29–30 (Deut 6:4–5); Mark 7:6 (Isa 29:13 LXX); Luke 23:30 (Hos 10:8); John 6:45 (Isa 54:13).

[6] Matt 9:13 (Hos 6:6); Matt 10:36 (Mic 7:6); Matt 11:10/Luke 7:27 (Mal 3:1); Matt 11:29 (Jer 6:16); Matt 13:14–15/Luke 8:10 (Isa 6:9–10); Matt 15:4/Mark 7:10 (Exod 20:12 or Deut 5:16); Matt 15:4/Mark 7:10 (Exod 21:17); Matt 15:8–9/Mark 7:6 (Isa 29:13; LXX); Matt 18:16 (Deut 19:15); Matt 21:42/Mark 12:10–11/Luke 20:17 (Ps 118:22–23); Matt 22:32/Mark 12:26/Luke 20:37 (Exod 3:6;15); Matt 22:39/Mark 12:31 (Lev 19:18); Matt 22:44/Mark 12:36/Luke 20:42–43 (Ps 110:1); Matt 23:39/Luke 13:35 (Ps 118:26); Matt 24:30/Mark 13:26/Luke 21:27 (Dan 7:13); Matt 26:31/Mark 14:27 (Zech 13:7); Matt 26:64/Mark 14:62/Luke 22:69 (Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13); Matt 27:46/Mark 15:34 (Ps 22:1); Luke 23:46 (Ps 31:5); John 10:34 (Ps 82:6); John 13:18 (Ps 41:9); John 15:25 (Ps 35:19); John 19:30 (Ps 22:31).

The Scriptures sustained Jesus during the trying ordeal at the closing hours of His life. Of the "seven last words" of Jesus on the cross, three were texts of Scripture from memory. The three passages quoted by Jesus during the closing hours of His betrayal and crucifixion were: Ps 22:1 (Matt 27:46/Mark 15:34); Ps 31:5 (Luke 23:46); and Ps 22:31 (John 19:30). A fourth statement, "I thirst" (John 19:28), though not a direct quote, is contextually parallel with events described in Pss 22:15 and 69:21. In the midst of His terrible suffering, under the weight of the sins of the world, He uttered the prayer, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46/Mark 15:34, quoting Ps 22:1).[7] Even the last spoken words of Jesus before He died, "It is finished," were words of Scripture that He had committed to memory (John 19:30, quoting Ps 22:31).[8]

Jesus understood, from His meditation on Scripture revealing His Messianic work, that He was the new antitypical David, repeating in His life the experience of the first David.[9]

All three OT texts quoted by Jesus on the cross came from the Psalms of David. It is appropriate that Jesus would identify himself with David, who had hidden the Word in his heart (Ps 119:11). Probably no other OT character declared a stronger devotion to the words of the Lord.[10] It was David who said, "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Ps 119:16). This resolve Jesus had also made, and it sustained Him in His final hours. As the Davidic Messiah, it is no wonder that Jesus armed Himself with the words of Ps 22 and other relevant verses from the Psalter. He gained encouragement as He witnessed how the events described in the Psalm so closely paralleled events happening before His eyes.

The Gospel narratives contain additional parallels with the experience of David in the Psalms: They mocked Christ on the cross (Ps 22:7; cf. Matt 27:39/Mark 15:29). The tormentors tempted Him to deliver Himself (Ps 22:8; cf. Matt 27:43/Luke 23:35). Christ suffered great thirst on the cross (Ps 22:15; cf.

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[7] Jacques Doukhan points out that Daniel makes an additional connection between the Messiah and the experiences described in Ps 22. In Dan 9:26, the angel Gabriel refers to the Messiah's death with the expression "he has no . . . " (*ên lô*), a contracted form of "he has no help" (*ên 'ôzer lô*) of Dan 11:45. These words allude to the abbreviated phrase "no help" (*ên 'ôzer*) of Ps 22:11. For his complete treatment of this connection, see Jacques Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9: An Exegetical Study," *AUSS*, 17 (1979): 18–19. For a further discussion of the NT Messianic fulfillment of Ps 22, see Hans LaRondelle, *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1983), 53–60.

[8] This word *asah,* in the Qal perfect (3rd sing. masc.), can be translated as an "impersonal passive." W. Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2d English ed., rev. A. E. Cowley (London/New York: Oxford UP, 1910 [15th printing, 1980]), 387 (¶121a). Therefore, the translation of the final words of this Psalm mean either "He has done [it]" or "It is done!" The latter translation means that Jesus died with the closing words of this Psalm on His lips (John 19:30). Ps 22 and the similar narrative in the Gospels indicate that the second phrase is the best translation.

[9] Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–5; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 8:3; John 13:18–27, etc.

[10] Ps 119:11, 16, 25, 28, 50, 97, 105, 113, 140, 161, 163, 165, etc.

John 19:28). His hands and feet were pierced (Ps 22:16; Matt 27:35/Mark 15:24/Luke 23:33/John 19:18). His garments were parted and taken by casting lots (Ps 22:18; Matt 27:35/Mark 15:24/Luke 23:34). The Savior's naked faith, hanging on the words of Scripture, energized Him with courage to face the crisis before Him.

In the same manner, the people of God, before the day of the Lord, will be "like David" (Zech 12:8). Like the Davidic Messiah, they will draw upon the storehouse of Scripture during earth's final conflict. The end-time generation will face a similar trial and will use the same means to overcome through the Word of God.[11]

Robert H. Banks earned a DMin at Andrews University and a BA in Ancient History at the University of Connecticut. He is the senior pastor of the Patterson Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church in Richmond, VA. His work of teaching and evangelizing has taken him to many countries around the world. He has committed 560 chapters of the Bible to memory, including twenty-seven complete books (among them Isaiah, Matthew, John, Romans, Hebrews, and Revelation). Pastor Banks enjoys spending time with his wife, Joannie, and two children, Timothy and Emily. rhbanks@earthlink.net

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[11] The closing days of Jesus' betrayal, trial, and passion are thematically parallel to the betrayal, deception, and hardship that the Gospels prophesy will come upon the final remnant. (Matt 10:16–18, 22–25, 40; 24:9–10 etc.). Ellen White declares: "Today men are choosing Barabbas, and saying, Crucify Christ. They will do this in the person of His saints. They will go over the same ground as the Jewish priests and rulers did in their treatment of Christ." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 131.

Biography of the Devil: An Alternative Approach to the Cosmic Conflict

Nestor C. Rilloma

The intention of this article is to provide an overview of how Christian history has understood the Devil. In the process of looking at the Devil through time and across many cultures, I hope to illustrate the following. First, our understanding of evil is a developing process. Second, the way we have looked at the Devil in history can tell us something distinctive about ourselves. In this sense, our understanding of the Devil is a mirror reflecting how we interpret our experience. I hope to illustrate further that the twin character traits of the Devil in history as "the Possessor of Souls" and "the Tempter" reflect our own self-understanding as persons who are paradoxically "held in bondage" by something external to us yet simultaneously "choosing to sin" of our own accord. Until our Christian theological response to evil, in this case the Devil, addresses this paradox of "bondage and responsibility," we are destined to have only partial success in our battles with the Prince of darkness.

I have chosen the analogy of a "biography" as my method for discussing the Devil. A biography is a written account of another person's life from a third person perspective. In choosing this method I acknowledge certain unavoidable problems. One is attributing personality to evil by calling it "the Devil" when in fact evil is "sub-human." We tend to grant a certain status to evil when we refer to "it" as a "he" or "the devil." We also face the danger of focusing on the stories of personified evil while overlooking the structural components of evil all around us, such as those found in our own institutional life. A second problem is that biographies are best written at the end of a person's life so that major changes in character can be incorporated into the subject's story. The end of one's life is always character-forming and identity-fixing. Thus, a sinner can always repent and change and a famous public figure can always fail morally, and in either case their biographies will change. Therefore, biographies written while a person is still alive are always subject to rewrites. The devil, however, though still alive as long as human beings rebel against God, has a fairly stable

core of identity as the source of rebellion against God. In this sense, a biography of the Devil will probably not call for a radical rewrite in the near future—we are not anticipating his repentance.

With these problems in view, I nevertheless believe that the analogy of a biography will provide a way of approaching the very real but inhuman being we know as the Devil.[1]

The Devil's Infancy Narratives

The Hebrew Scriptures. To look for clues to a Christian understanding of the Devil, we should first examine Satan and the demons in late antiquity and specifically in the Old Testament.

Before the Babylonian exile of 586 BC, Israel apparently saw little problem in ascribing everything to God: God brought about good and evil; God hardened human hearts, but in such a way that humanity was always responsible for its own sin. The ideas of tormenting spirits in the popular beliefs of neighboring lands only reached the periphery of Israel's belief in Yahweh as it is reflected in written form in the Scriptures.

In the Old Testament the words "Satan" and "Belial" are the most frequent references to the developing Hebrew understanding of the devil. In Hebrew, *šatan* clearly means "enemy" or "accuser," as in the secular sense of the work of the prosecutor in a legal dispute (Ps 109:6). By contrast, there is a great deal of argument over the etymology of "Belial." The word is connected with the kingdom of the dead. In the Old Testament, "sons of Belial" are often anti-social people. The monarchy of Israel was a social institution; therefore, the sons of Belial were considered to be those who undermined the monarchy and Belial became as it were the antithesis of the just king. These social and secular concepts were later applied to heavenly beings, angels.[2]

There are three specific passages in the Old Testament where "the Satan" is mentioned in connection with "heavenly circumstances."[3] In Zechariah he is "the Accuser" at the heavenly court of judgment who challenges the fitness of Joshua ben Jozadak to function as the high priest at the time of the restoration

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[1] I must acknowledge at the outset that my own understanding of evil has evolved over the years from two seeming contradictory perspectives that I now hold in tension. As a young adult I witnessed what I believe were manifestations of evil in seemingly graphic and realistic forms. The presence of the spirit world was never questioned in my Asian context. Yet, from the perspective of the post-enlightenment West, the spirit world is a mere metaphor for moral actions and responsibilities, or if literal, a form of psychosis. Thus, my understanding of evil had been shaped by both concerns for human responsibility in the structures of evil, as described by Western thinkers, and by the experience of possession, invasion, and bondage to an evil external to an individual, as demonstrated in life in an Asian context.

[2] Excellent resources for further study on the Devil in ancient times are: John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972); and Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1981).

[3] Zech 3:1–7; Job 1:6; 2:1; 1 Chron 21:1–27.

from the Babylonian exile (Zech 3:1–7). "Satan" is not used here as a proper name but as a description of this being's task: he is "the accuser" or "the prosecutor." In Zech 3:1–7 the prosecutor's case is rejected by God in the presence of the Angel of the Lord.[4] In this passage God acquits Joshua. Even though Joshua may be unrighteous and unworthy of serving as a high priest, God has the power to make him righteous for a future role in God's kingdom. At this point in biblical history, "the Accuser" seems far from being a demonic counterpart of God. At worst, Satan is an overzealous prosecuting attorney who is unfamiliar with the mercy of the Judge.

The passages found in the prologue of Job (chapters one and two) likewise use the definite article (the) to clearly refer to the role of accuser or prosecutor and not as a proper name for an evil being. This angel is subordinate to God and not beyond doubt a cosmic challenger. Note, however, that most English translations refer to "Satan" in the Book of Job as if it were a proper name, when in fact *ha-šatan* should be translated "the accuser" or perhaps "the prosecuting attorney." The satan or accuser seems to be a member of God's court—even if rarely present—assigned the task of monitoring God's earth to see if there are those who violate his laws. He seems to be charged with presenting their names before God for punishment or acquittal. Admittedly out of character, however, is the dialogue between the Judge—Yahweh—and the Accuser in 1:6–12. The Accuser's job is to report the breach of the law, not to tempt it. This is a potential turning point in the biography of Satan as understood by the Hebrew mind.

In 1 Chron 21:1–27 (a parallel account of 2 Sam 24:1–25), "Satan stood up against Israel" (Satan, without a definite article), commanding David to take a census. This same story is recounted in the earlier 2 Sam passage, but the role of the angry one there is God, not Satan. What we identify in these two passages is Israel's realization that there is more to suffering than the punishment of God alone. The sources of suffering had been assumed to be only the punishment of God. This was orthodoxy for the Israelites. But writers like the Preacher of Ecclesiastes and the author of Job began to question this conclusion and suggested that if there was not another party involved, like Satan, then at the least the source of suffering was a mystery.

After about 180 BC, however, a number of things happened to Israel that made the orthodox solutions to the problem of evil and suffering difficult to assume. There was too much seemingly meaningless suffering to be ascribed to either punishment or testing from God. The desecration of the Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the bloody persecutions of those who remained faithful to the Law and, somewhat later, the disillusionment which arose over the defeat of the Maccabean resistance fighters all contributed to the Jewish reevaluation of the meaning of suffering in Israel's history. The Jews reasoned that there had to

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[4] "Go away from me, Satan"—A rejection taken up in Mark 8:32ff and Matt 16:22ff. These New Testament references, however, are built on a far more developed understanding of the Devil.

be some other cause of their suffering than merely retribution from God for their wayward ways, and the most reasonable source appeared to be Satan.

In an analogical sense, Satan moves from the image of a "prosecuting attorney" to a possible source of suffering and evil as we approach the intertestamental period. During late antiquity, the concept of Satan emerges from an "age of innocence" where he was understood as a servant of Yahweh into a full-fledged "identity crisis" with evil implications for humanity.

Satan's Identity Crisis: Between the Testaments. A new conception of the devil began to develop in the intertestamental writings[5] on the basis of various popular legends. These manuscripts introduce the "devil" in a way more familiar to us, especially in the books of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and in the Lives of Adam and Eve. All these works come from the period around 150 BC, though the first works mentioned have sections dating as late as the early Christian era. These writings were popular reading during Christianity's early years and had a notable impact on the belief systems of those in the ancient Near East.

1 Enoch has an interesting heritage. It was a canonical book in the Christian churches of Ethiopia. Some Hebrew and Aramaic fragments have been found in Qumran. The book is quoted in the New Testament, in Jude 14ff, where there are also a number of implicit references to it as authoritative scripture (example: Jude 14–15).

An important feature of Enoch is its interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4, in which there are fallen angels who consort with beautiful earthly women, thus giving birth to a race of giants. On the one hand, this "fall" of the angels is not a feature of the biblical passage, but a popular legend from Enoch apparently used to explain how these angels were present on earth and simultaneously explaining the origin of evil as a result of fallen angels. Enoch goes on to explain that the present demons on earth are the descendants of angels who have impregnated earthly women (1 Enoch 18:13ff; 21:6ff; 86–88; 90:21).

By and large, as a systematic satanology, Enoch displays little internal consistency. The prince or leader of the evil spirits is sometimes called "Semyala" (1 Enoch 6:3; 9:7; 10:11; 69:2), but he is also called "Azezel" (8:1ff; 10:4–8; 13:1). The sin of the angels, the cause of their fall, was sometimes their consorting with earthly women, but as this became difficult to explain (angels were perceived as asexual beings), their sin became the betrayal of heavenly astral secrets and heavenly knowledge to men (1 Enoch 9:6; 16:3; the myth of Prometheus in Aeschylus is a similar type of story). Finally, Enoch contradicts itself by acknowledging that there were demons even before there were fallen angels (19:1). Chapters 37–71 of 1 Enoch speak of one or more satanic figures. These internal inconsistencies make any systematic portrayal of the devil or the demons impossible to ascertain.

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[5] Sometimes referred to as the "lost Books of the Bible."

In the Book of Jubilees, the prince of the evil spirits is called "Mastema," which means the "prince of enmity." In this book Adam's sin has no consequences for humankind. So-called "original sin" only occurs among the angels. For the first time we have a legend—based on the exegesis of Genesis 1:2ff—where humankind is called the "image of God." According to the legend, man was made even more beautiful than the angels. Therefore, even the angels must reverence humankind, the crown jewel of creation, as God's image.

Michael and his followers obey God's command, but Satan and his followers refuse to revere humankind. As a result, Satan and his followers are punished and expelled from heaven to earth. But Satan, still envious, is jealous of Adam and Eve's happiness in Eden, and therefore he plots to make them sin so they will likewise be expelled from Eden, equivalent to the paradise from which Satan has been expelled. Hence the serpent in Genesis 3:1–7 is clearly identified with Satan in this legend. As a punishment from God, Satan, already expelled from heaven, is further expelled from the earth to hell.

This legend provides an important element in the Devil's biography, for it is in this story that we see the Devil's identity consciously linked to the serpent in Genesis 3. We clearly see a pre-Christian interpretation of the serpent in Genesis as identified with the Devil. We also see an explanation for the existence of rebellion against God in the world before the sin of Adam and Eve. In this sense, the possibility of temptation is established as a precondition of human existence, even if God did not create mankind knowing Adam would fall. Thus, this legend goes a long way to describe in story form what many felt: though God's world is intended for good, there is some form of objective reality exterior to us that intends to torment humanity.

In summary to this point, we observe that the Old Testament provides us with little information on which to build an understanding of the Devil or Satan in Israel's history apart from an angelic prosecutor. Using our analogy, Satan seems to have an innocent childhood. Yet interest in Satan, the Devil, and the demons became a major concern of popular Jewish Palestinian communities and diaspora Judaism in the pre-Christian, intertestamental times, as evidenced by the number of legends attempting to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures. From a biographical perspective, the identity of Satan as a powerful symbolic force for the expression of the supremacy of evil in the world seemed to emerge during the intertestamental period. As adolescence is sometimes understood as turbulent years, so also Satan emerged as a rebellious being, jealous of humanity, and as an important foe for both humanity and God. Satan became a useful way to explain inordinate suffering.[6]

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[6] See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), for further discussion of the intertestamental period.

Satan Maturing

The New Testament. When compared with this extra biblical material, the New Testament remains very matter-of-fact concerning its demonology and satanology. "Satan," the prince of this world, is simply taken for granted in the New Testament (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 5:19; 2:13). There is no longer a need to explain where a personification of evil came from—the New Testament simply assumes that he is. The devil and the demons are an element of the cultural and religious consciousness of all the New Testament authors. When we list the texts that speak of the Devil, we may be amazed by how many there are.[7]

Likewise, the New Testament takes for granted that the Devil and all the demons have been conquered by Christ. Their power has been broken even at the coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus (Luke 10:18; 11:20). After their return from their first missionary journey, the disciples say to Jesus, "Even the devils were subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17), but Jesus answers that he has seen Satan falling like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). Above all, the

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[7] New Testament References to the Devil or Satan: General References: Matt 12:26; 13:39; Luke 8:12; Acts 5:3; 10:38; Mark 1:13; 3:23, 26; 4:15; Luke 10:18; 13:16; 22:3; 22:31; Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thes 2:18; 2 Thes 2:9; Eph 4:27; 6:11; John 13:27; 6:70; 13:2; 1 John 3:8, 10; 1 Tim 1:20; 3:6f.; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:26; James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8; Heb 2:14; Jude 9; Rev 2:9, 13, 24; 12:9; 20:7.

Beelzubub (or Beelzebul): Matt 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18ff.

The Enemy: Matt 13:39; Luke 10:19.

The Prince (Ruler—*archon*) of this world: John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 5:19.

God of this age: 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2.

Belial (Beliar): 2 Cor 6:15.

The Tempter: 1 Thes 3:5.

The main cause of sin in the world: 1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; Eph 4:26ff; 1 Tim 3:6ff, John 3:19; 7:7.

The evil one: 1 John 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:19.

A murderer and a liar from the very beginning: John 8:44; 1 John 3:8.

Anyone who does evil is therefore a child of the Devil: 1 John 3:12; John 6:70; 13:2, 27; 8:44.

Anyone who fails to love his neighbor: 1 John 3:11–18.

He is one who leads the believers astray: 2 Thes 2:9; 1 Tim 3:6ff; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:26; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8.

The devil of death: death as a sphere of the devil's influence: Heb 2:14.

The cause of demonic possession: Mark 3:23–30; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38; Heb 2:14; Rev 2:9, 10–13; 3:9, 12:9, 12ff.;

He is the dragon, who stands behind the beast which persecutes Christians: Rev 12:3ff, 9, 13, 16f.f; 16:13; 20:2; 11:7; 13:1, 4–7, 11, 12, 16f.

The fall of the angels: Only in Jude 6 (with an implicit reference to 1 Enoch).

In the New Testament, Jesus' saving activity is depicted as a fight against the demonic powers of evil: Mark 1:23–25, 39; 4:39; Luke 13:16.

Jesus himself is portrayed as being tempted by Satan in person three times, though these attempts fail completely: Matt 4:1–11; Luke 22:3; 1 Cor 2:8ff; 15:55; Rev 12:13ff; and implicitly in Heb. 4:15.

resurrection and exaltation of Jesus are seen as a complete victory over all heavenly beings.[8]

Paul sees this cosmic victory over Satan as an eschatological event still to be completed (1 Cor 15:24). In the Pauline letters the depowering of all devils is both something that has already begun because Jesus has defeated the power of the Devil by his resurrection, and a task still to be fulfilled at the end of time, when the Devil will be restrained and destroyed.

Jesus' victory (Eph 1:21; 4:8–10) does not do away with the need for Christians to fight against all the spiritual evil powers in their midst (Eph 6:11–17). In John's theology, "We know that we are from God [born of God], whereas the whole world lies under [the power of] the evil one" (1 John 2:13). In other words, the Devil is still at work in the world, but the community of faith, the church, is the place where he has already been conquered. The Devil now no longer dares to attack Christians who are born of God (1 John 5:18). There are particular persons, so-called Christians, who destroy the true Christian understanding of Jesus and who are called the Antichrist (1 John 2:18–22); however, "do not fear, since this enemy too will be overcome" (1 John 2:13ff)

In John's theology, the whole of popular belief in the Devil and demons stands under the *nenikeka* (conquest) of Christ: "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33; 1 John 2:13; 4:4; 5:4). The same is true of 1 John 5:5: the believer conquers the world of the Devil. In Revelation, the believer who overcomes is often called "the victor" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:70). Jesus, the Lion of Judah, is also "the Lamb" (*nikesei*) who "will conquer" (Rev 17:14). Thus, the concept of *nike* is an essential element in John's theology.

The early Christian story preserved God's goodness by affirming that God recognized the condition of humankind caught in the clutches of an evil world. God entered the arena of this evil and suffering world through his Son and directly challenged the kingdom of darkness in order to establish the Kingdom of God. Christians maintain that in participation with humanity, his goodness remains intact. God's power is preserved in the act of resurrection. Resurrection is the symbol of the defeat of death, the destruction of the greatest weapon of the kingdom of darkness. When God defeats the power of death in the resurrection, he also announces the end of Satan's hold on the earth. Thus, the sting of death, the power of Satan, has been undermined. Because humankind is free to choose either the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of God, the consequences of an evil world continue to exist. This is, however, only temporary.[9] It is only a matter of time before the consummation of history takes place and the Devil and his demons will be finally destroyed. Meanwhile, Christians now find meaning and adventure in life by following in the steps of their risen Lord, proclaiming the

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[8] 1 Cor 15:24; Rom 8:8; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:10; Col 2:10, 15; 1 Pet 3:22; Heb 1:5–14; 2:8ff; and the book of Revelation.

[9] See Walter Wink's series, *Naming the Powers: Unmasking the Powers and Engaging the Powers*, where he examines in depth the biblical understanding.

in-breaking of the kingdom of God, and proclaiming the defeat of the kingdom of darkness. With this theology in mind, the early Christian found new meaning in life in the midst of suffering.

As for the Devil's character development in the New Testament, he is a worthy opponent of humanity, but he is essentially an opponent defeated by the power of God. He continues to be the source of human frustration and temptation, but his end has been sealed by the divine drama of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. Humanity continues to struggle against the Devil, yet in this struggle, Christians are now empowered by the Holy Spirit and are no longer at the mercy of the Devil's kingdom of darkness.

The Early Christian Tradition. The New Testament announces that the Devil has been and is being overcome. But with the delay of the second coming of Christ, the early church found itself on the battlefield between the forces of light and darkness. It followed that if Christ had led forth into battle, then Christians should be willing to follow. The apostolic fathers did not carry this doctrine of war to its logical conclusion in violence, however. Instead, they fought the forces of evil through passive resistance and martyrdom. Later in history, though, others employed the "battle against evil" theme as a tool to justify harsh measures against heretics, Jews, pagans, Muslims, witches, and separatists. The misuse of this "battle" imagery has plagued Christianity throughout history, and thus the spirit of discernment is prized wherever this language is employed.[10]

As Christianity began to spread outside the strictly Jewish regions, the church was influenced more and more by Greek thought. The Platonists defined "daimons" as intermediary beings between the gods and human beings. Such beings were easily assimilated into what Christians and Jews had called angels. For the Platonists, demons were a mixture of good and evil, depending on the degree to which the irrational dominated their souls. In Homeric and early Greek thought, the distinction between a "daimon" and a "theos" (a god) was unclear: "daimons," unlike "gods," were manifestations of the divine principle itself and were considered a mixture of good and evil. Socrates' famous personal daimon was a guardian spirit whose influence was apparently good for him. By the time of the Christian era, the term daimon was frequently replaced by "daimonion," which had more negative connotations, and the Christians connected the "daimonia" with the evil angels.

Philo of Alexandria (30 BC–AD 45), the greatest of the Hellenistic Jewish thinkers, influenced the Christians more than he did his fellow rabbis. Philo equated the demons of the Greeks with the angels of the Jews. These angels/demons lived in the air, probably in the ether—the upper air heaven—but they moved back and forth between heaven and earth as intermediaries between

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[10] Kai Erikson elaborates the roles of "scapegoating" as a sociological pattern for forming *Wayward Puritans* (New York: Macmillan, 1966). In this study he exposes the sociological uses of evil and demonizing people.

God and humanity. He taught that the angels/demons are arranged in twelve companies. Some are benevolent: they help and guide individuals and nations. Others are "employed by God to inflict punishment upon all who deserve it." But Philo also indicated the existence of a third class, which he called evil angels. It is not clear whether he meant these beings existed allegorically or literally, but apparently he identified them with the Watchers who fell because of their lust for mortal women.

Justin Martyr was one of the earliest Christian theologians to discuss the problem of evil. Thus, he has had enormous influence through the centuries. According to Justin, God created and appointed a number of angels to rule the world for him, assigning each a nation, region, or person. The angels are duty bound to do God's will: if they fail, they sin. Justin was original in combining this largely Jewish doctrine of angels of the nations with the idea of the Watcher angels who sinned through lust. For him the sinful Watchers were the angels of the nations who were derelict in their duty.[11]

God created angels with wills free to choose between good and evil. Some of them fell from grace as a result of misusing their free will. Apparently, Satan tempted the angels to fall, and as a result they followed Satan's example, and their fall brought them into Satan's kingdom. According to Justin, there are at least two categories of evil spirits other than Satan himself: the fallen angels themselves and the children they engendered with earthly women. Justin treated Satan differently from the rest of the fallen angels, for Satan sinned at a different time than these other angels and Satan is significantly more powerful. Whereas the Watchers sinned with women at the time of Noah, Satan sinned at least as early as, if not before, the time of Adam and Eve.

In this regard, Justin was the first Christian theologian to identify the serpent with Satan. Justin was also the first Christian theologian to identify the "dragon and old serpent, called the Devil" of Rev 12:7–9 with the serpent in the Gen 3 account.[12]

According to Justin, Satan knew from the moment of Christ's passion on the cross that his doom was sure, but he still strives against that fate by trying to undermine Christ's saving work in the church, the Christian community. His work is unremitting, for he is incapable of repentance. The Devil's punishment is as certain as his defeat. He and his angels have already been cast down from heaven and doomed to final ruin, yet at present they still roam the world, and their suffering in the flames of hell is reserved for the end of time.

The Devil tempted Christ but failed to corrupt him, so his present plan is to obstruct his work by disrupting the Christian community and leading Christians into sin. The Devil plays upon our weaknesses, our irrational living, and our

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[11] See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1981), for a discussion of the early Christian tradition's understanding of Satan.

[12] The reference to the Devil in John 8:44 does not clearly associate the Devil with the serpent, but Justin clearly makes this connection in his Apology 5.

attachment to worldly things. The chief ploy of the demons is to persuade people that the demons are gods. Justin insisted that the demons dwelt in idols and that they consumed the offerings of sacrifices offered to idols. The pagan gods were not mere illusions but actual demons, servants of the Devil devoted to blocking Christ's work on earth.

One of the chief means for continuing Christ's war against the powers of darkness in the early church was through the weapon of exorcism. The meaning of the term exorcism has never been closely defined. The word is derived from the Greek *exorkizo*, "to secure by oath" or "to ask or pray deeply," from *borkos*, "oath." In its root meaning it is a solemn, intense address to someone or something and is by no means necessarily connected with demons. Among the pagan Greeks and even the early Christians, an exorcism could be addressed to good as well as to evil powers.

By the third century the meaning of exorcism had become more precise: it was the ritual of expulsion of harmful spirits from affected persons or objects with the help of superior spiritual powers. Three kinds of exorcisms were common in early Christianity: exorcism of objects, exorcism of initiates during the scrutinies of baptism, and exorcism of demoniacs.

Underlying exorcism is the assumption that Satan retains some power over the material world as well as over the souls of fallen humans. On this point Christianity has never been consistent. The Bible states that Satan's power has been defeated, yet tradition has assumed a residue of control of the material world by Satan. For some, Satan's lordship over this world extends only to humans. For others, it affects the lower order of creatures as well, and among these are some who argue that his dominion is the result of original sin, and others who maintain that God grants Satan the power to use material objects to tempt and test fallen humanity.

A typical exorcism pattern involved the following elements: the demon was sternly admonished to acknowledge the justice of the sentence of doom passed on him, to do homage to the Trinity, and finally to depart from the person.[13]

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[13] An ancient example: "I accost you, damned and most impure spirit, cause of malice, essence of crimes, origin of sins, you who revel in deceit, sacrilege, adultery, and murder! I adjure you in Christ's name that, in whatsoever part of the body you are hiding, you declare yourself, that you flee the body that you are occupying and from which we drive you with spiritual whips and invisible torments. I demand that you leave this body, which has been cleansed by the Lord. Let it be enough for you that in earlier ages you dominated almost the entire world through your action on the hearts of human beings. Now day by day your kingdom is being destroyed, your arms weakening. Your punishment has been figured as of old. For you were stricken down in the plagues of Egypt, drowned with Pharaoh's warriors, torn down with Jericho, laid low with the seven tribes of Canaan, subjugated with the gentiles by Samson, slain by David in Goliath, hanged by Mordecai in the person of Haman, cast down in Bel by Daniel and punished in the person of the dragon, beheaded in Holofernes by Judith, subjugated in sinners, burned in the viper, blinded in the seer, and discountenanced by Peter in Simon Magus. Through the power of all the saints you are tormented, crushed, and sent down to eternal flames and the underworld of shadows . . . Depart, depart, wheresoever you lurk,

By the time of Martin Luther, the story of the Devil's role in history had been distilled to a succinct plot. Lucifer was created by God as the highest of the angels, but he chose to betray the Creator. His motive was pride, which led him to presume to imitate God, claiming for himself some of God's power. It also led him to envy humankind because God chose to create man in his image rather than an angel, thus setting human nature over angelic nature. The Devil was thrust out of heaven; eager for revenge, he corrupted Adam and Eve; as a result of their original sin, God gave humanity over to him and made him lord of this world. Having humanity in his power, he daily afflicts them. He is constantly tempting humanity to sin. The first cause of evil, he is the cause of every individual sin as well, encouraging individuals to despair and nations to warfare. He assigns an individual demon to encourage each individual vice, and he and his demons can appear anywhere and in whatever form they choose, even that of Christ himself. All human sinners are servants of the Devil.

Satan's power, however, is shattered by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Before Christ's advent, Satan had been sure of his power, and when Christ came he was enraged, because he knew that Jesus Christ would destroy him. The Devil tried to stop Christ from the very beginning of his ministry, tempting him as soon as he went out into the desert after his baptism. But God made Christ an Obstructer against the Great Obstructer, and Christ struck Satan blow after telling blow: in his incarnation, in his miracles, in his preaching, and in his passion. The Devil plotted Christ's passion on the cross in unthinking rage against Christ, and God used it to overthrow the Devil, the proof being Christ's resurrection. The world, the flesh, and the Devil still remain to tempt humanity, but they have no more power. One little word—the name of the Saviour—can fell them. Christ's defeat of the Devil is renewed again and again and culminates at the last judgment. Until then, the kingdom of God consists of those who follow Christ; it is characterized by grace, revelation, devotion to the Bible, and faith. The kingdom of this world is characterized by sin, reliance upon law, and trust in reason. The invisible church, the Christian community with Christ as its head, is in the kingdom of heaven; but the visible church, with its corruptions, is in the kingdom of this world. There is no neutral ground; everyone lives in one kingdom or the other.

The Devil still has power in the world because so many choose to follow him. Some make deliberate pacts with him. Luther's best-known contribution to popular diabology and satanology is his famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," whose main point is Christ's defeat of Satan.

In the satanology of the Middle Ages, the Devil operates in the role of the Antichrist. Folklore illustrates this best. According to popular legends in this

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and never more seek out bodies dedicated to God; let them be forbidden you for ever, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen" (Neale and Forbes, *The Ancient Liturgies of the Gallican Church*, London, 1855).

period, heretics, Jews, and witches are among the most prominent of Satan's human helpers. Jews and heretics may at least sometimes be unaware that they are serving the Devil, but the witches enlist knowingly in his ranks, worshipping him openly and offering him sacrifices. One can summon the Devil in many ways: by whistling in the dark, by running widdershins around a church three times after dark, by writing him a note in Jew's blood and throwing it into the fire, by painting his picture, by looking into a mirror at night, or by reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards.

The most serious summoning of Satan is for the purpose of making a formal pact. The idea of the formal pact comes from the legend of Theophilus. This legend was repeated hundreds of times in a variety of forms in virtually every European language over the span of a millennium, fathering the Faust legend and indirectly influencing the Renaissance witch craze. This legend alleged that there were those who in order to seek their own power on earth now would make pacts or covenants with the Devil in exchange for their souls at death.

In Europe a decline in the belief in the Devil emerged due to a number of developments in the early modern period, including the rise of science after 1660, disgust with the religious wars of 1618–1648 on the European Continent and 1640–1660 in England, and a longing for a calm, rational view of the cosmos. Another important reason for the decline of concern over Satan was the decline of the witch craze. Witchcraft took a steep downturn in the mid-seventeenth century as people wearied of being terrified—terrified of the threatening presence of hostile spirits and terrified of prosecution. Also, the rise of medical sciences began to explain things like the black plague without resort to the Devil or the demons.

It was the philosopher David Hume, however, who turned skepticism against religion with devastating effect. He taught that the path to truth could only travel through doubt. Therefore, all claims to authority that lean upon faith and the spirit world are rendered null and void. Doubt became the new ideal in the Western scientific world. The Devil seemed to Hume quite beneath his notice. Hume thought that if the existence of God and of miracles were removed, the subsidiary teachings of Christianity would evaporate. In dismissing the likelihood of Christianity, Hume dismissed the likelihood of the Devil. His views provided a clear, rational basis for the Enlightenment's attack on Christianity and for modern skepticism and atheistic relativism.

Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), lent his name to sadism (pleasure caused through inflicting pain and humiliation on another). De Sade's practices took the principles of atheistic relativism established by Hume to their logical conclusion. According to de Sade, God is merely a phantom of the human imagination. The supernatural in any event only diverts humanity from its true calling: plumbing the depths of human vice and evil. For de Sade, violations of so-called moral laws are both permissible and actually laudable, because these restraints impede the only demonstrable good: personal

pleasure. According to de Sade, virtues and laws are fantasies; mercy, love, and kindness are perversions that impede the natural pursuit of pleasure. The greater the pleasure, the greater the value of the act.

The Marquis de Sade forces us to face the dilemma at the core of his doctrine of pleasure; that is, he pays absolutely no attention at all to other people's choices, especially those of his victims. Either there is real evil, or not. Either there are grounds of ultimate concern that judge our actions, or not. Either the cosmos has meaning, or not. De Sade's arrogance, pride, and lust for power and domination is evidence for what the pre-modern period called evil and the demonic, but in the post-Enlightenment few dared to call it the demonic. Evidently, the principles of evil usually associated with the Devil continued and flourished during the modern period, yet no one was willing to use that language, since the scientific world had supposedly eliminated the world of the spirits. No one "really believed this stuff" about the Devil during the Enlightenment period, yet all the evidence of personal evil was still there. Evil still existed, yet society found it difficult to name the Devil.

The Devil's Shadow: He Just Won't Disappear. The blows to Christian beliefs in the supernatural and the Devil by the modern philosophers were matched by that dealt by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Freud denied that religious experience might correspond to any reality whatever. Although Freud did not believe in metaphysical evil, he early became fascinated with the Devil as a symbol of the dark repressed depths of the unconscious.

One of the most important discoveries of depth psychology for the study of satanology is the power of negative projection. When people are unaware of the process of repression, they project the negative elements that they refuse to recognize within themselves onto others, especially onto individuals and groups that they identify as enemies or potential enemies. Since individuals cannot see themselves as cruel or greedy, the source of the cruel and greedy feelings that they sense within themselves must be other people whom they dislike. This now justifies their hostility toward others. The more powerful their repressed cruelty, the more cruel and evil they imagine the others to be. If the feelings are powerful enough, they may self-righteously judge that such cruel people are a menace to society and ought to be removed—by force, if necessary. Thus, the psychoanalyst believed he had discovered the real source of the Devil—in projection.

Among Freud's associates, the most independent and original in his approach to religion was Carl G. Jung (1875–1961). Jung took religion far more seriously and more positively than the Freudians.

Jung accepted the Devil as a symbol rather than as a metaphysical entity in the Christian sense. His term "Shadow" is not entirely congruent with the Christian Devil. The shadow is a force of the unconscious, a primitive psychological element lacking moral control. It is primarily part of the personal unconscious, consisting of repressed material. Since what is repressed varies with the individual, the individual shadow does not necessarily correspond with the social, the

collective, or the metaphysical view of evil. However, the more the Shadow is repressed and isolated, the more violent and destructive it becomes, often expressing itself in negative projections.

Many psychologists in the modern period have dismissed the concept of evil as an abstraction, preferring to work with other abstractions, such as the social concept of violence or the more strictly psychological view of aggression.

Recently, however, some psychologists have begun to think that a concept akin to the concept of evil is necessary in order to describe the phenomena they encounter. In their long psychiatric practice with criminals, Yochelson and Samenow observed that certain personalities are so completely founded upon lies and self-deception that traditional sociological and psychological remedies have no effect. A substantial number of criminals are people who freely choose a life of crime, and the criminal's behavior is "caused" by the way he or she thinks and not by his or her environmental circumstances, such as family, peers, or neighborhood. The criminal is a "victimizer, a molder of his environment, rather than a mere product of that mold."[14]

Conclusion

A biography should show development and consistency of character in a person's life. In the case of the Devil, we observe that the biblical discussion of the Devil begins with the problem of suffering. This appears to be the dominant chord that resounds over and over again throughout the Devil's story. Wherever inordinate suffering exists, that is, suffering that appears to be beyond the necessary level of punishment by God, the Devil appears as its author. For Israel and the Old Testament, the problem of evil, suffering, and divine justice has plagued the tradition since the Babylonian exile.

In early Israel it was assumed that evil was a punishment for sin, and it was in this light that the prophets explained the downfall of the nation. This formula was known as "divine earthly retribution." But this neat orthodoxy was simply not adequate to cover the extent to which the Israelites suffered. The Book of Job makes this point perfectly clear.

As the Jews wrestled with the problem, responsibility was laid at the feet of Satan and his legions. By the first century BC the Jews began to accept a view of the Devil as the source of inordinate evil and suffering.

During the early Christian period the world appeared to be engulfed in a fear of evil spirits. People seemed to be at the mercy of powers and principalities oppressing them without logical reason. In the absence of a clear explanation, many deduced that it was the work of evil spirits. Into this environment Jesus

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[14] Samuel Yochelson & Stanton E. Samenow, *The Criminal Personality: A Profile for Change* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1995), 1:104; Stanton E. Samenow, *Inside the Criminal Mind* (New York: Times Books, 1984). Along these same lines see M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983); Dorothy Rowe, *The Construction of Life and Death*, (Somerset, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1982).

Christ as the Son of God entered and destroyed the power of those spirits that plague the earth, especially the power of the Devil. Death itself is vanquished by the resurrection. Jesus Christ released a new power in the world, the power of resurrection that conquers the fear of death.

In the post-resurrection Christian community, while waiting for Christ's second coming, the work of the Devil and his legions was constantly acknowledged wherever inordinate suffering appeared, even throughout the Middle Ages, as evidenced by sickness and wars. Christians, following the path of their master, fought the Devil through exorcisms and prayer. But with the rise of the modern period and the medical sciences, much discussion of the Devil was abandoned and replaced by the scientific method. Discussion of the Devil seemed to vanish, yet the modern world's atheistic relativism seemed to pave the way for a hellish abandonment of morals like those of the Marquis de Sade and Adolf Hitler. Only in recent times have even the social scientists begun re-examining the need for taking the concept of evil seriously again. And wherever a discussion of personal evil emerges, there follows a discussion of the Devil.

The irony of a biography of the Devil is that in studying the Devil we come to know more about ourselves, for the study of the Devil reveals the complexities of our human will and our bondage to sin. In the early Christian debate between Pelagius and Augustine, Pelagius said "God grants grace to those who help themselves by resisting sin and the Devil." On the other hand, Augustine said the opposite, claiming that God helps those out of sin who "cannot help themselves and admit their bondage by confessing their sin and repenting." In both cases, Pelagius and Augustine tried to come to terms with a human dilemma: that sin is like an addiction. Addicts may freely choose to take their drugs, but it does not follow that they have the power to stop. Thus, the history of the Devil reveals two poles in his character that must be held in tension. The first pole reveals that the Devil is foremost the "tempter" who entices us to sin, but the actual sinning is ours alone. Thus, we are responsible for our actions. From the other pole, the Devil is the "master and slaveholder" of the sinner. Once we give adherence to the ways of sin, we are the Devil's slaves, apart from the grace of God. It is only by the grace of God through Jesus Christ that sinners may begin again. If this tension is acknowledged, then we will be better able to engage in spiritual warfare with our most ancient of foes.

Nestor C. Rilloma currently serves as the Acting Editor of Philippine Publishing House. Prior to this he was Academic Dean and head of the Theology Department of Northern Luzon Adventist College in Artacho, Sison, Pangasinan, Philippines. He holds a Th.D. degree from the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines. email: ncrilloma@hotmail.com and ppheditor@edsamail.com.ph

Evangelical Theology and Open Theism: Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Macro Hermeneutical Principles of Theology?

Fernando Canale
S.D.A. Theological Seminary, Andrews University

The adoption by a number of evangelical theologians of the so-called "open theism" as a viable theological option alongside the traditionally adopted tenets of classical theism not only involves obvious theological disagreements but raises the question of its implications for evangelical theology as a whole. Is the disagreement between the open view of God and classical theism a minor theological issue, or does it affect the hermeneutical core of the evangelical understanding of Scripture and the Gospel? This paper attempts to evaluate the disagreement between the open view of God and classical theism from a hermeneutical perspective in order to understand its causes, adumbrate its consequences, and assess its promises for the future of evangelical theology.

I will start by (1) introducing the controversy as perceived by active players in the conversation. Then, I will briefly describe (2) the hermeneutical perspective from which I will analyze and evaluate what this controversy holds for the future of evangelical theology. Next, I will deal with the issue of the (3) nature and extent of the controversy by looking at its subject matter. After this, I will take a brief look at (4) the biblical evidence on which each party builds its proposal. Then, I will consider the (5) realm of presuppositions or fore-conceptions conditioning each interpretation involved in the disagreement. Following this point further, I will turn my attention to (6) the cause of the controversy. Moving ahead, I will evaluate (7) the open view claim to the status of "new theological paradigm." This point opens the question about (8) whether or not evangelical theology requires an ontology. Finally, I will survey the sources from which evangelical scholars consciously or unconsciously derive their understanding of the macro hermeneutical principles of Christian theology. Due to the complexity

of the issues and their interpretations, I will limit the analysis to the main issues involved in the conversation between classical and open theisms.

1. Introducing the Controversy

Even though evangelical theologies differ in many ways, they have always assumed a common understanding of God's nature and acts. The so-called "open view" of God (also called "open theism," "new theism," and "free-will theism") has disrupted this consensus. Not surprisingly, some leading evangelical theologians have strongly opposed the new view and defended the traditional evangelical consensus on God's nature and acts.[1]

The open view of God has been around for some time now. Evangelical theologians could easily dismiss earlier expositions of the open view of God with the pretext that they were based on the ideas of process philosophy. However, six years ago a group of evangelical theologians, spearheaded by Clark Pinnock, radically challenged this perception by arguing for the open view of God from a biblical basis.[2] More recently, also arguing from a biblical basis, John Sanders[3] and Gregory Boyd[4] have made a case for the open view of God very attractive to evangelical minds.

A cursory overview reveals that the controversy between the classical and open views of God revolves around the way each camp understands the interface between divine activity and human freedom. On one hand, open theists are convinced that the classical view of God is incompatible with true human freedom (libertarian freedom). On the other hand, classical theists not only are persuaded that their view allows ample room for human freedom (compatibilistic freedom), but also consider the open view alternative as falling short of the biblical notion of God. Arguably, both parties understand the nature and acts of God in very different, even contradictory ways. But what is the controversy about? Not surprisingly, there is no agreement on this point. Rather, one gets the impression that open theists try to minimize the scope of their disagreement with classical theism as much as possible.

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[1] Notably, Norman Geisler has criticized the open view in some detail in two books: *Creating God in the Image of Man? The New "Open" View of God—Neotheism's Dangerous Drift* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1997), and *Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1999). Geisler, however, approaches the issue philosophically rather than biblically.

[2] Clark Pinnock, et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994). These ideas were already in the making at least from the late seventies. See, for instance, Richard Rice, *The Openness of God: The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will* (Nashville: Review and Herald, c1980), and Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1989).

[3] John E. Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

[4] Gregory A. Boyd, *The God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

The subtitle of Sanders's book, "A Theology of Providence," clearly shows that the open view of God is about divine providence, that is, about the way the Christian God relates to the world. Open theists challenge traditional theism's view on divine sovereignty-providence because it does not allow for "real" open historical relations between God and human beings. To them, classical theism has no place for true human freedom. Under fire from his own denomination, however, Gregory Boyd seeks to minimize as much as possible the extent and importance of the controversy generated by the open view of God within evangelicalism. He suggests that the debate, when properly understood, is not about God or His nature, but about "the nature of the future."[5] Moreover, he is convinced that "next to the central doctrines of the Christian faith, the issue of whether the future is exhaustively settled or partially open is relatively unimportant. It certainly is not a doctrine Christians should ever divide over."[6]

From the classical theistic perspective, Norman Geisler has a different evaluation about the extent and importance of the controversy. He sees the challenge brought about by open theism revolving around the most fundamental question of theology, namely, the nature of God.[7] "A person's view of God," Geisler explains, "is the most important thing about which he thinks. A true view of God has good consequences. And a false view of God has disastrous consequences."[8] Consequently, open theism "is a serious challenge to classical theism and with it, a serious threat to many important doctrines and practices built on that view."[9] Geisler summarizes some of the systematic consequences that follow from the open view of God as including "a denial of the infallibility of the Bible, the full omniscience of God, the apologetic value of prophecy, and a biblical test for false prophets. It also undermines confidence in the promises of God, his ability to answer prayer, and any ultimate victory over sin. Indeed, it leads logically to universalism and/or annihilationism."[10]

However, due to the recent publications by the open theologians mentioned above, classical theologians can no longer brush off on philosophical grounds the open view of God as an obviously heretical position. In a recent editorial, *Christianity Today* has recognized the importance of this debate and called theologians on both sides of the issue to do their "homework" and work hard "at checking and, if need be, adjusting the conceptual formulations of yesteryear."[11]

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[5] Boyd, 15.

[6] Ibid., 8.

[7] *Creating God in the Image of Man?, 73.*

[8] Ibid., 145.

[9] Ibid., 74.

[10] Ibid., 145.

[11] Editorial, "God vs. God: Two Competing Theologies Vie for the Future of Evangelicalism," *Christianity Today* (7 February 2000): 34-35. See also, Roger Olson, Douglas F. Kelly, Timothy George, and Alister E. McGrath, "Has God Been Held Hostage by Philosophy? [a discussion of *The Openness of God*], *Christianity Today* (9 January 1995). Most recently, *Christianity Today* has published, over two months, a series of e-mails between John Sanders and Christopher A. Hall in which

Agreeing with *Christianity Today* on the need to use the controversy as an opportunity to grow theologically, my goal in this article is not to take sides, but to explore the nature of the issue at stake, the extent of the "conceptual adjusting" required, and the "homework" needed to clarify the issues within the evangelical theological community.

2. Hermeneutical Analysis

We must start by recognizing the hermeneutical nature of the debate. Clearly, classical and open theists differ in their interpretation of the same issue. Be it the "nature of the future," as Boyd claims, or the "nature of God," as Geisler sees it, open theism has disrupted the inertia of traditional thinking on these issues. A conflict of interpretations calls for a hermeneutical analysis. The hermeneutical approach allows us to see the reasons behind conflicting interpretations. In other words, it helps us become aware of the basis from which each interpretation is made. This procedure not only helps us understand each position better, but also helps us make up our minds on controverted issues. We may decide for one of the two views under evaluation here, or we may decide there is a need to develop a new understanding.

Let us consider, first, the notion of hermeneutics as I will use it here. Traditionally, evangelical theologians have associated hermeneutics with biblical interpretation.[12] However, the act of understanding involved in theological thinking goes beyond the interpretation of texts to include the cognitive process through which theologians reach their conclusions and formulate their views.[13] In this broad sense, then, hermeneutics is the technical name philosophers give to the study of the human process through which we understand each other.[14] Of

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they debate God's openness ["Does God Know Your Next Move?" (21 May and 18 June 2001)]. The fact that this is the cover story ["An Openness Debate"] indicates the topic's importance to evangelical scholars and pastors.

[12] See, for instance, David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); Henry Al Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991); and Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

[13] Hans-Georg Gadamer, however, has underlined the universality of hermeneutics as present in all human understanding. Hermeneutics, in this general sense, considers the way in which human beings think ("The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge [Berkeley: U of California P, 1976], 1-17; and idem., *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989).

[14] For an introduction to hermeneutics as the general theory of interpretation see Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan, 1980); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*; F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, trans. James Duke and

course this broad notion does not deny the hermeneutics of the text, but includes it in its universality.[15]

The study of the human act of understanding reveals the presence of a few necessary components. Human understanding moves from the subject that interprets to the issue or thing that is interpreted. The human act of interpretation, then, has a beginning, a movement, and an end (*telos*). The end is the issue (objective) interpretation seeks to understand.[16] The movement is the process through which we interpret the issues.[17] The beginning includes the thing (reality)[18] and the perspective (presuppositions)[19] from which we start the interpretive act.

To facilitate our analysis I am going to borrow from the language of Hans Küng and speak of three hermeneutical levels, namely, macro, meso, and micro hermeneutics.[20] While micro hermeneutics refers to textual interpretation and meso hermeneutics to issue or doctrinal interpretation, macro hermeneutics deals with the interpretation of the first principles from within which doctrinal and

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Jack Forstman (Atlanta: Scholars, 1977). From a theological perspective see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); idem., *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); and idem., "Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 520-537.

[15] For an introduction to the development of philosophical hermeneutics see Raúl Kerbs, "Sobre el desarrollo de la hermenéutica," *Analogía Filosófica*, (1999): 3-33.

[16] Gadamer describes the objective to which the act of interpretation aims in various ways, including, for instance, "meaning," "content," and "subject-matter." Gadamer sees that the task of all hermeneutics is "to bring agreement *in content*" (*Truth and Method*, 293; see also 270 and 324, emphasis supplied).

[17] "[I]nterpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes *the movement of understanding and interpretations*. A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings that are not borne out by the things themselves. Working out appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed 'by the things' themselves, is *the constant task of understanding*" (*Truth and Method*, 267, emphasis supplied).

[18] "All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought, and it must direct its gaze '*on the things themselves*' (which, in the case of the literary critic, are meaningful texts, which themselves are again concerned with objects). For the interpreter to let himself be guided by *the things themselves* is obviously not a matter of a single, 'conscientious' decision, but is 'the first, last, and constant task'" (*Truth and Method*, 266-267, emphasis supplied).

[19] "A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the texts with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there" (*Truth and Method*, 267).

[20] Hans Küng uses the "macro, meso and micro" categorization to speak about the scientific paradigm in theology (*Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, trans. Peter Heinegg [New York: Doubleday, 1988], 134).

textual hermeneutics operate. Macro hermeneutics is related to the study and clarification of philosophical issues directly or indirectly related to the criticism and formulation of concrete heuristic principles of interpretation. Meso hermeneutics deals with the interpretation of theological issues and, therefore, belongs properly to the area of systematic theology. Micro hermeneutics approaches the interpretation of texts and, consequently, proceeds within the realm of biblical exegesis. Let us analyze the controversy between the classical and open views of God from the hermeneutical perspective.

3. Meso Hermeneutics: Identifying the Issues

The existence of an interpretive process becomes obvious when two parties interpret something in different ways. In order to understand and eventually overcome a disagreement, we need to become aware of what the quarrel is about.

In section 1 above we identified some issues. We may classify them according to their scope and influence, beginning with the narrower issues and moving to the broader and more influential ones. We have, from the open view perspective, Gregory Boyd emphasizing (1) "the nature of the future" and John Sanders addressing the broader issue of (2) divine providence. From a classical perspective, Norman Geisler suggests the controversy revolves around the even broader and more influential topic of (3) the nature of God.[21] The central controverted issues, then, are very broad and influential: the nature of God and the way in which He relates to His creatures.

So far, however, open theists have shown more interest in reflecting on the concrete relation of God with creatures than in the somehow more theoretical question of the nature of God. Still, as they explore the doctrine of divine providence from the nonnegotiable conviction that God enters into "a give-and-take-real-open relationship" with his creatures,[22] other issues are unavoidably included. Due to their systematic links with the question of providence, open theologians address issues such as divine activity, foreknowledge, predestination, and human freedom.

These issues are important not only because of their broadness, but also because of the central systematic role they play in the task of conceiving and formulating the entire edifice of Christian theology. Few theologians would deny

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[21] Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger clearly affirm that the open view of God advances a new understanding of "God's nature and relationship with his creatures" (Clark Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God*, 8). They also understand the issue under discussion is the nature of God: "[N]o doctrine is more central than the nature of God. It deeply affects our understanding of the incarnation, grace, creation, election, sovereignty and salvation. Moreover, the doctrine of God is full of implications for daily living. One's view of God has direct impact on practices such as prayer, evangelism, seeking divine guidance and responding to suffering," ibid.

[22] Ibid.

that "Christian doctrine is systematically presented by the relating of all individual themes to the reality of God."[23] This controversy, then, has the potential to affect the whole range of Christian teachings and interpretations of Scripture. Boyd's attempt to reduce the importance and systematic effect of the controversy does not match the systematic role built into the issues themselves.

4. Micro Hermeneutics: The Biblical Evidence

In solving theological questions, evangelical theologians are supposed to give primacy to biblical data. Consequently, open view theologians argue their case for a new notion of divine providence from scriptural evidence. Not surprisingly, classical theists attempt to refute their opponents on the same basis and to build a biblical foundation of their own. There is no doubt that both parties understand biblical evidence in different and mutually exclusive ways.

Open theologians challenge classical theism on account of their interpretation of selected biblical texts that seem to imply that God enters in a "give-and-take-real-open" relation with human beings. Before analyzing the biblical evidence in favor of the open view of God, Richard Rice correctly reminds us that "it is not difficult to surround an idea with biblical quotations."[24] The crucial test to say that a notion is biblical, Rice argues, is whether or not "the idea is faithful to the overall biblical portrait of God."[25] On this basis, Rice contends that classical theism "does not reflect faithfully the spirit of the biblical message, in spite of the fact that it appeals to various biblical statements."[26]

Open view theologians survey biblical evidence thematically. Rice organizes his analysis of biblical data in favor of the open view around the concept of God. He starts by underlining that, according to the Bible, we should think of God from the perspective of love rather than power. "To be faithful to the Bible we must put love at the head of the list."[27] Sanders, who so far has provided the most detailed analysis of biblical evidence supporting the open view of God, organizes his study around the notion of divine providence.[28] More recently,

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[23] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), I: 59.

[24] Richard Rice, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 15.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 21. Rice also deals with divine feelings, intentions, actions, the incarnation and death of Jesus, and passages that seem to support the classical view (divine changelessness, prophecy, foreknowledge, and predestination), ibid., 21-58.

[28] Sanders, 39-139, surveys the biblical evidence following a chronological order beginning with creation and following with issues like the fall, divine suffering (God regretting previous decisions and changing his mind), God testing Abraham's faith, human beings prevailing upon God, Joseph's story involving risk, divine human relations within the covenant, intercessory prayer, divine repentance, the presence and absence of God, the potter and the clay texts, divine life and humiliation, Jesus' birth and the Bethlehem massacre, his baptism, temptation, confession, transfiguration,

Boyd organizes his analysis of biblical evidence around the issue of divine fore-knowledge. Centering on this issue, he argues that the biblical evidence favors the open view of divine providence and lends no support for the classical view.[29]

From the classical theistic perspective, Norman Geisler deals with biblical evidence in order to show the inadequate biblical basis on which open theism builds. He organizes his survey thematically around the notion of the being and actions of God.[30]

Why do open theists dismiss the classical view's appeal to biblical evidence as invalid? According to Rice, because it is not based on the "broad sweep of biblical testimony."[31] Geisler, recognizing that in this controversy "the biblical arguments are fundamental,"[32] concludes that open theism "fails to establish a biblical basis for its beliefs."[33]

Would a more complete analysis of the biblical evidence help evangelical theologians overcome this controversy? I personally do not think so. Our brief reference to the way each party deals with the biblical evidence suggests that the cause for disagreement lies somewhere else. Both parties use the same biblical evidence (micro hermeneutics) to provide different views of the same theological issues (meso hermeneutics). My conviction is that more biblical evidence will not move the parties to accept each other's point of view or lead to a new theological position that is grounded on the hermeneutical nature of the process through which the evidence is handled. Our analysis of biblical evidence is never a "neutral" process of discovery yielding the "objective" meaning that everyone will understand in the same way. On the contrary, the interpretive process is always conditioned by hermeneutical presuppositions that may be

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compassion, dialogue and healing grace, Gethsemane, the cross, the resurrection, the church, Rom 9-11, eschatology and providence, predictions and foreknowledge.

[29] Boyd, 24-87, shows that the classical view which revolves around the notion of exhaustive divine foreknowledge has no real biblical foundation. To that end he deal with texts on divine Sovereignty of history, foreknowledge of chosen people, of individuals, of Christ's ministry, of elects, of end times, in Isaiah 46, and 48, of Israel future, in individual prophecies, of Peter's denial, of Judas' betrayal, implied in the divine setting apart from the womb, in our days being recorded in God's book, in prophecies of kingdoms, in divine ordaining of national boundaries, in the predestination of the Messiah and the church. In favor of an open future (against foreknowledge) Boyd deals with texts on divine regret of previous decisions, on God asking questions about the future, on God confronting the unexpected, on God getting frustrated, on God testing people to know their character, on God speaking in terms of what may or may not be, on believers hastening the Lord's return, on the potter and the clay, and on reversed divine intentions.

[30] Geisler deals with texts on divine aseity, eternality (timelessness), simplicity, immutability, on divine changeability, on petitionary prayer, on divine repentance, the allegation that divine repentance implies God ignorance of the future, and the question of anthropomorphisms (*Creating God in the Image of Man?,* 75-91).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 75.

[33] Ibid., 90. See also Geisler's argument, 75-91, against the proper biblical foundation of open theism.

defined in various ways. Thus, the micro and meso hermeneutical levels where the controversy between classical and open theisms takes place is conditioned by the deeper and foundational macro hermeneutical level.

5. Macro Hermeneutics: Causes of Theological Disagreement

Theological controversy takes place when various parties understand the same issues in different, even mutually exclusive, ways. This seems to be the case in the classical theism-open view of God controversy we are analyzing. We should ask, where do diversity of interpretations come from? Are they always the result of faulty evidence or reasoning? Or do they follow from the normal exercise of our rational faculties?

Obviously many, but not all, disagreements result from faulty evidence and/or reasoning. When this is the case, overcoming disagreement requires a careful review of all the relevant evidence and the rational processes through which we arrived at our conclusions. However, more serious disagreement takes place when the controversy is grounded in different perspectives (fore-conceptions or presuppositions) that involved parties bring to the table.

Human understanding operates by projecting pre-understandings on its objects. As different persons attempt to understand the *same issue* (in our case, the nature and relation of God to the world), they project different perspectives on the *same evidence*. From this unavoidable rational procedure a variety of interpretations come forth. Yet variety of interpretations reached from a variety of perspectives do not necessarily lead to controversy or debate. A variety of interpretations may be complementary or contradictory. Serious theological controversy takes place when the parties realize that their views are not complementary but contradictory. Perceived nonreconcilable interpretations often originate from mutually exclusive pre-understandings.

Controversy is not necessarily a bad thing. Controversy can lead the entire community of faith to improve its understanding of the controverted issues. One way to deal constructively with controversial issues is to overcome them hermeneutically. This requires an open conversation in which both parties take a closer look at their own pre-understandings in hope of eventually overcoming the controversy. However, in changing some pre-understanding the parties could develop their thinking on the issues, mostly by uncovering, evaluating, and explicitly deciding on the various levels of pre-understanding operative in the debate. As the parties move their attention away from the results to the causes of their controverted theological positions, they might find a way of modifying their views and coming to an agreement. Unfortunately, the same process may draw them further apart. All depends on whether the parties evaluate and formulate their pre-understandings from the same or different sets of evidence.

6. Macro Hermeneutics:
The Philosophical Ground of the Controversy

The source of the controversy between the open and classical views centers on the understanding at the macro hermeneutical level. Traditionally, Christian theology in general and evangelical theology in particular have defined the macro hermeneutical principles of interpretation from philosophical interpretations of being. Philosophical interpretations about ontology and epistemology have directly conditioned the way in which evangelical theologians have understood God.

Of course we want to believe our views are at the same time objective and biblical. Yet this is a point in which both parties agree: Traditionally, evangelical understandings of biblical evidence (micro hermeneutics) and theological issues (meso hermeneutics) have been directly conditioned by philosophy.

Geisler probably represents most theologians on both sides of the debate when he unambiguously states, "There is nothing wrong as such with having a philosophical influence on biblical and theological studies. Again, philosophy is necessary to do both exegesis and systematic theology. One need only be sure that he is utilizing good philosophy. Whether it is 'platonic' or 'process' is not the question, but rather whether it is *true*."[34] Theologians, however, disagree regarding what philosophy is "true" and what should inform the macro hermeneutical principles of Christian theology.

Geisler maintains that classical theism and evangelical theology build their view of God on the basis of Plato's and Aristotle's ontological views rather than Whitehead and Hartshorne.[35] According to him evangelical theologians should not only recognize this dependence but embrace and defend it as a foundational component of the evangelical system of theological truth.

Open theologians recognize Geisler's point: Classical theism builds on Greek philosophical insights. However, they do not see this as the correct basis on which to build, but as "a certain theological virus that infected the Christian doctrine of God."[36] They have also recognized that assumed ontological and epistemological ideas (macro hermeneutics) determine the classical interpreta-

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[34] Ibid., 96-97.

[35] Geisler is among the "silent minority" among evangelical authors that recognize the formative influence of classical philosophy in evangelical theology. With the disclaimer that he does not agree with everything that Aquinas ever wrote, Geisler tells us that he agrees, among others, with Aquinas' views on the nature and interpretation of Scripture, apologetics, ontology, epistemology, doctrine of analogy, reason and revelation, faith and reason, and human freedom and divine sovereignty (*Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991], 21-22). Regarding God's being, he affirms: "Aquinas can provide a philosophical answer to the growing influence of the finite god of process theology. There is no better philosophical system capable of answering the threat raised by process theology and defending the traditional theistic and biblical view of God as an eternal, unchanging, and absolutely perfect Being" (ibid., 21). Obviously, Aquinas built his views on Aristotelian and Platonic philosophical ideas.

[36] Pinnock, et al, 9.

tion of controversial biblical texts (micro hermeneutics), particularly in relation to the question of analogy and biblical anthropomorphisms. Unfortunately, they seem to believe that the biblical view of God is free from ontological preconceptions.[37]

Open theism, consequently, claims to reject not only classical, but also process philosophical approaches on the ground that they do not match Scripture's views on God. Clark Pinnock boldly claims that "classical theists and process theologians, both sometimes speak as though they have the only two models of God. . . . We claim, however, that the open view is a superior paradigm in the light of the relevant biblical, theological, philosophical, and practical material."[38] This opens up the notion and function of theological paradigms.

7. A Paradigm Change?

Thomas Kuhn has described and analyzed the notion and function of paradigms in the area of contemporary science.[39] German theologian Hans Küng has argued correctly that paradigms also play a significant and analogous role in the area of theological research. According to Kuhn, a paradigm is the "entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community."[40] Paradigms help us understand new phenomena and solve new problems.[41] "As in natural science," explains Küng, "there is a 'normal science,' with its classical authors, text books, and teachers, that is characterized by a cumulative growth of knowledge, a solving of remaining problems ('puzzles'), and resistance to everything that might lead to the alteration or replacement of the established model of understanding or paradigm."[42] Yet when the operative paradigm in normal science cannot deal with significant phenomena and puzzles, the need for a paradigm change becomes apparent.[43] A paradigm shift takes place when a new one is produced and accepted by the community.[44]

In our case classical theism plays the role of "normal science," which tries to solve remaining problems from its assumed paradigm and resists its alteration or replacement. Open view theists play the role of challengers uncovering facts and puzzles the reigning paradigm leaves unresolved. Simultaneously, Geisler as

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[37] Commenting on the interpretation of biblical texts, Boyd, 119-120, remarks that passages speaking about God changing his mind "strike some [classical theists] as ridiculous because these readers bring to the text a preconception of what God must be like. Once one is free from this preconception, these passages contribute to the exalted portrait of the longingly sovereign God in the Bible."

[38] Ibid.

[39] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d. ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970).

[40] Ibid., 175.

[41] Ibid., 23.

[42] Küng, 138.

[43] Kuhn, 66-91.

[44] Küng, 147.

defender of "normal science" (classical theism) tries to show there is no need for a paradigm shift because the classical paradigm is able to include all the facts and solve all the puzzles.[45]

The burden of proof obviously fall on those who dare to challenge the reigning paradigm. Sanders and Boyd are conspicuously aware of the tall order before them. They read the Bible in an apologetic mode in order to show that the classical paradigm cannot possibly account for the biblical facts. They know that in so doing their views run against centuries of reading Scripture from the classical philosophical-theological perspective.

So far, however, open view theologians are far from having produced a new alternative paradigm. In spite of their claim to provide a "superior paradigm" for the doctrine of God, they still work by assuming, at least partially, the old paradigm.[46] This takes place, probably, because so far open theists have not seriously dealt with the philosophical ground of the classical paradigm and its macro hermeneutical role.[47]

8. Theology without Ontology?

The controversy between open view and classical theologians makes the question of philosophy [macro hermeneutics] and its role in the interpretation of biblical texts [micro hermeneutics] and doctrines [meso hermeneutics] unavoidable for evangelical theologians. A close look at the controversy reveals the subtle, but pervasive way in which nonbiblical hermeneutical principles have shaped evangelical exegesis and theology.

The vortex of the controversy, thus, revolves around the way in which the parties conceive the ground and role of philosophy in theology. So far, however, both sides have fought the battle mostly within the meso and micro hermeneutic level. Consequently, open view theologians have not yet grounded their challenge to the classical and process views of God at the foundational philosophical level. Thus, their claim to provide a "superior paradigm" remains incomplete and truncated.

It is true that by arguing from a "literal," "face value" reading of Scripture, open view theologians make ontological claims such as the temporality of God, the relatedness of God to human freedom within the flux of historical causality, the rejection of divine foreknowledge, and the grounding of divine omniscience on present knowledge. However, they fall short of explicitly replacing the on-

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[45] Geisler's role as defender of "normal science" comes across clearly when we notice that he is not just against the open view of God, but also against process theology, which also challenges the classical paradigm.

[46] When open theists deal with the biblical motive of partial predetermination of the future, they build, by default, on the classical view of God and, therefore, on its macro hermeneutical ontological principles.

[47] I have dealt partially with the relationship between philosophy and paradigm in "Paradigm, System and Theological Pluralism," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 70 (1998): 195-218.

tologies they dismiss. Thus, they attempt the impossible—namely, to work without ontological presuppositions.[48] A new paradigm requires a new ontology as its macro hermeneutical ground.

Open view theologians do not seem to realize yet that their claim on divine providence requires a consistent ontological doctrine. One gets the impression that they see their claim as required by "neutral-objective" exegesis of the biblical texts (micro hermeneutics) and believe the ensuing doctrinal modifications (meso hermeneutics) can be integrated back into classical ontological teaching (macro hermeneutics). Yet that is not philosophically possible. For instance, classical ontology does not make room for a divine being who is simultaneously temporal and timeless. Process philosophy, however, has developed a bipolar ontology according to which God is simultaneously timeless and temporal. In the absence of an ontology built from biblical thought, process ontology appears as a logical candidate to ground the open view of God.

The suspicion that open view theologians assume a modified version of process philosophical thought increases, for instance, when we see them consistently replacing divine foreknowledge with present knowledge. One has the impression that the whole case for the open view of God hinges around the affirmation or denial of exhaustive divine foreknowledge of human free actions.[49] In the mind of open view theologians the affirmation of divine foreknowledge automatically grounds the classical view of God and makes the open view of God impossible. Not surprisingly, then, the denial of divine foreknowledge becomes a necessary condition for the open view of God. The denial of divine foreknowledge, thus understood, finds its ontological pre-understanding in the temporality of God, as taught by process philosophy. When we understand the temporality of God's being from process philosophical teachings, it becomes clear that God cannot know the future simply because it does not yet exist. This ontological presupposition is so strong that it requires evangelical open view theologians to engage in exegetical gymnastics to explain away the biblical affirmation of divine foreknowledge of future free acts.[50]

Arguably, open view theologians implicitly assume a dipolar ontology. They do not say it in so many words, but their view of providence requires it. Gregory Boyd's rendering of the open view of God seems to require a bipolar divine ontology. In Scripture, he argues, we find two types of texts, one speaking about future determinism and the other speaking about future openness.[51]

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[48] Kuhn, 79, states: "To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substituting another is to reject science itself. That act reflects not on the paradigm but on the man. Inevitably he will be seen by his colleagues as 'as the carpenter who blames his tools.'"

[49] From now on I will use the word "foreknowledge" to mean "exhaustive foreknowledge of human free decisions."

[50] See, for instance Boyd, 47-48, who assures us that when Paul uses the word foreknowledge (*proegnō*) in Rom 8:29, he in reality means "forelove."

[51] Ibid., 14.

The two sets of texts, he argues, must be understood literally; in other words, as describing things as they really are (ontological import of Scripture).[52] One group of texts (pole) has God determining history in the same way the classical God does—namely, by his powerful will which from eternity settles history and gives direction to the divine plan. The other group (pole) has God relating with human beings in space and time and, therefore, is unsettled. The first pole, according to Boyd, requires the notions of limited predestination and foreknowledge, while the second pole accounts for relational biblical passages.[53] Boyd does not speak of or recognize an ontological bipolarity in God, yet, arguably, his view of God assumes or may lead to a bipolar ontology.

Geisler has clearly perceived this striking blind spot in theologians claiming to advance a "superior paradigm." In spite of their express rejection of process philosophy as their ontological basis, Geisler finds open view theologians implicitly assuming what they explicitly deny—that is, dependence on the process philosophy paradigm. He concludes his philosophical evaluation of open view theism by remarking that:

> There are serious logical flaws within neotheism. On the one hand, it affirms in common with classical theism certain attributes and activities of God (such as transcendence, uncausality, necessity, and creation *ex nihilo*). But each of these logically entails some attribute of God that neotheism rejects. In point of fact, they lead to classical theism. Which neotheism labors to avoid. On the other hand, neotheism denies certain attributes of God (such as nontemporality, unchangeability, and pure actuality). Significantly, the affirmation of temporality, changeability, and potentiality in God lead logically to a process, bipolar theism, which neotheists claim they wish to avoid. But logically they cannot have it both ways. Both classical theism and panentheism are self-contained models in which the basic attributes stand or fall together. Therefore, if one accepts some of them, the rest come with the package, whether they are wanted or not.[54]

Yet open theism explicitly denies building on process philosophy's ontology.[55] William Hasker explains that open view theologians cannot adopt process philosophy because it advances the notion that God and the world are interde-

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[52] Boyd's emphasis on the reality of things as described in Scripture betrays an ontological level that is not technically addressed by open view theologians.

[53] Boyd, 14-15, 31, characterizes his view of providence and foreknowledge as "limited." However, I find this characterization does not fit the general tenor of his argument.

[54] Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man*, 125-126. He states further: "One things seems certain. If the logical consequences of neo-theists' unorthodox beliefs about God are drawn out, they will be pushed more and more in the direction of process theology and the liberal beliefs entailed therein. Only time and logic will tell in which direction neotheism will go" (ibid., 12; see also pg. 72).

[55] William Hasker, "A Philosophical Perspective," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, ed. et al Clark Pinnock (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 138-141.

pendent, thus limiting divine omnipotence and unilateral actions in history.[56] However, this argument only bans a wholesale adoption of process philosophical thought. It does not eliminate the fact that the general bipolar pattern of process ontology can still help to ground the open view of God, while the Greek ontology assumed in the classical view cannot.

Open view theologians seem to forget that theologians usually modify the philosophical thought on which they build. For instance, classical theologians adjusted the general ontological patterns suggested by Plato and Aristotle for their theological purposes. In other words, they took Greek ontology as their basis and adjusted it to fit Christian revelation. Describing how classical theism began, Jack Bonsor remarks that biblical and philosophical thought changed. "Neither lost its soul. Something new emerged."[57] Theologians engage, then, in creative philosophical reflection, which produces the macro hermeneutical principles they will explicitly or implicitly assume when interpreting Scripture and formulating the doctrines of the church.

David Basinger, one of the leading philosophers of the open view of God, recognizes three major theological paradigms on divine providence: classical, process, and the open view.[58] Thus the open view of God seemingly appears as a "free standing" proposal with no ontological assumptions.[59] At the foundational ontological level open view theologians are, so far, noncommittal. Do they mean to say that Scripture's view of God is "nonontological"? Moreover, is a theology without ontology possible? Obviously, open theism needs to deal seriously with the philosophical question of ontology, both divine and human.

But how do we decide among competing philosophical ontologies? More importantly, how can we gain knowledge about the being and acts of God? This brings us to the question of the sources from which evangelical theologians decide their understanding of God's being and actions.

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[56] Ibid., 138-141.

[57] Jack Bonsor, *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 26.

[58] David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 11-14.

[59] Open view theologians do engage with philosophy, but only at the level of analyzing the inner consistency and outer coherence of the classical and open view theologies. Thus long and complicated rational arguments are analyzed to decide which proposal is more "rational." Introducing his brief comments on the philosophical side of his proposal, Boyd, 120, remarks that "[i]f one wants to add philosophical proof on top of this [the open view of God], things get a bit more complicated (to no one's surprise). There are plenty of brilliant philosophers defending the view that God *can*, in principle, foreknow future free actions and plenty who argue that he cannot, since this constitutes a logical contradiction. I personally am convinced that the best arguments lie in the second camp, but I'm also aware that this isn't an open-and-shut case." Thus, in addressing the philosophical question, open view theologians do not make their ontological presuppositions explicit. Eventually, unless they make their ontological views explicit from Scripture, the inner logic of the open view will decide this issue by default.

9. The Sources of Macro Hermeneutics and Evangelical Futures

Is the open view of God fully scriptural? Do open view theologians ground their new paradigm squarely on the full extent of scriptural evidence? Or does the open view of God also involve a nonbiblical macro hermeneutics? The following tentative answer to these methodological questions are intended to foster reflection on the important theological issues within the evangelical community.

In my opinion the open view of God rises from the classical paradigm's failure to account for human freedom (understood in a libertarian sense), both in Scripture and experience. The rise of historical consciousness during the twentieth century has made compatibilistic solutions to the predestination-free will debate increasingly unsatisfactory. Simultaneously, Alfred Whitehead readjusted classical ontology to the new historical and scientific consciousness.[60] His proposal, known as process philosophy, presents a bipolar god who is both eternal and "open" to the temporal process of the world.[61] Not surprisingly, by the end of the twentieth century liberal theologians began to explore the hermeneutical possibilities of the new ontological framework. Of course, evangelical theologians could not justify a change in the classical view of God from the starting point of process philosophy because it includes several features incompatible with the biblical notion of God.[62]

Fully aware of these developments, some evangelical theologians noticed that the classical view of God did not satisfactorily square with biblical evidence about God's acts in history. They also noticed the existence of biblical support for the classical view. Claiming faithfulness to Scripture, open view theologians seem to work within the same methodological paradigm used by classical theology. Accordingly, philosophy can help evangelical theologians define the macro hermeneutical principles of interpretation. The key here, as Geisler says, is to find the "true" philosophy.

Classical and open view theologians use different biblical texts to justify different ontological teachings as "true" and, therefore, as useful for evangelical theology. Thus classical theism uses texts that seem to require a timeless ontology of God over texts that point to divine change. Conversely, open theism gives primacy to biblical texts that point to divine temporality, change, and relatedness over texts that point to divine foreknowledge.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, neither side in the controversy justifies its unilateral choice of biblical data. This unilateral choice becomes the pretext each side uses as a biblical mandate to develop its distinctive "view of God" and its implied ontological patterns. From these pre-understandings each

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[60] Alfred Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

[61] For a brief introduction to the notion of a bipolar god see Geisler's *Creating God in the Image of Man?* 49-51.

[62] For a detailed comparison between the views of God according to theism, the open view of God, and process philosophy see ibid., 76-77.

party interprets the set of biblical data on which the opposite view builds its case.

In the case of open view theologians, their implicit temporal ontology (macro hermeneutics) affirms that God cannot know future things because they are not yet in existence. Moreover, God cannot know humans' future, free-will decisions because they are by definition unpredictable.[63] This ontological conviction requires a reinterpretation of the traditional understanding of divine foreknowledge (meso hermeneuitcs) and biblical evidence affirming the existence of divine foreknowledge (micro hermeneutics).[64] In addition, they reinterpret the meaning and function of biblical prophecy[65] and even feel the need to rewrite at least one key biblical passage.[66] These reinterpretations may very well be only the beginning of what most probably will entail a wholesale reinterpretation of biblical Christianity.

From what we have said so far, it becomes apparent that both classical and open view theologians use biblical evidence selectively. As classical theism interprets freedom in a way that does not fit the face-value meaning of relevant texts, so does open theism's interpretation of divine foreknowledge. Clearly neither classical nor open theisms build their views of God on an ontological basis equally responsive to the full extent of biblical evidence. Moreover, the principles guiding the selection and interpretation of biblical evidence are, in both cases, derived from ontological philosophies.

Can evangelical theology overcome the disagreement between the classical and open view paradigms? To devise another paradigm will only increase our theological fragmentation. Yet there may be another way. Perhaps evangelical thinkers may want to consider the possibility of doing theology within a new methodological matrix. Briefly put, instead of following the traditionally unchallenged methodological paradigm according to which theologians define their macro hermeneutical principles from philosophical and scientific teachings, we may try something different: Why not define our macro hermeneutics from Scripture? Instead of choosing our macro hermeneutical preunderstandings from the ontological teachings of some school of philosophy, why don't we attempt to build them from the ontological teachings explicitly or implicitly present in the full range of biblical evidence?

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[63] Richard Rice, "Divine Foreknowledge and Free-will Theism," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 129.

[64] For a synthesis of the open-view reinterpretation of divine foreknowledge see ibid., 134.

[65] For a summary of the reinterpretation of the notion of biblical prophecy advanced by open view theologians, see ibid., 134-136.

[66] I am referring to Boyd's suggestion, 47-48, that in Rom 8:29 Paul did not mean foreknowledge, but forelove.

10. Conclusion

The controversy between classical and open theisms does not revolve around minor exegetical or doctrinal issues, but relates to the hermeneutical core from which evangelical theologians understand Scripture, the Gospel, and the entire sweep of Christian theology and practice.

The clash between the classical and open views of God are not caused by the introduction of new evidence from Scripture, but rather from the introduction of new macro hermeneutical principles of interpretation. On one side, classical theism builds its view of God on the basis of classical Greek ontological understanding. On the other side, open theism explicitly rejects classical Greek ontological patterns and implicitly, perhaps by default, builds its alternate view of God from modern process ontological patterns.

Perhaps classical and open view theologians may continue to build and clarify their theological proposals without scrutinizing their assumed macro hermeneutical presuppositions. On this basis, further discussion of biblical data will never lead to theological agreement because both sides will continue to interpret the same data and theological issues from different macro hermeneutical perspectives.

Our analysis reveals that the ongoing debate between classical and open theisms has at least two important consequences for the future of evangelical theology. First, the debate helps us realize that evangelical theology builds its interpretation of Scripture and doctrines on the basis of Greek ontological patterns. For evangelical thinkers doing theology from a high view of Scripture this may be a very upsetting realization. After all, we implicitly assume our theology stands on a "neutral" or "objective" understanding of Scripture (micro hermeneutics). At least I remember how upset I was when I discovered this fact in my own theological understanding. We may try to deny this fact. But denial will not exorcize its presence nor its leading influence in the formulation of evangelical theology.[67]

Open theology also works within the same methodological paradigm. However, open view theologians explicitly deny any indebtedness to process philosophical patterns. Will they back up their alleged independence from Greek and process philosophies with an independent overall biblical ontology? Only time will tell. In the long run, however, the most significative contribution of open view theologians may reside not so much in their alternate interpretation of divine foreknowledge and sovereignty, but in their attempt to develop evangelical theology in faithfulness to biblical thought.

This brings us to the second consequence that this debate may have on the future of evangelical theology. As open theologians argue their views of God and the future from Scripture, they have implicitly uncovered the ontological

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[67] This point is forcefully argued by Norman Geisler (*Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991]).

import of biblical thinking. If biblical thought can be taken seriously to define some points regarding God's being, why couldn't we build our entire ontological thinking from Scripture? As both parties in this debate continue to strengthen their cases by going back to the Old and New Testaments, the long forgotten philosophical import of Scripture may become increasingly clearer to us.

Some among us argue that if evangelical theology is to survive and become relevant in our postmodern, post-denominational, post-theological, and post-Christian times, we should accommodate the macro hermeneutical principles of theology to tradition and to contemporary trends in philosophy, science, and culture.[68] However, why should we continue to define our macro hermeneutical principles from forever—evolving extrabiblical, philosophical, scientific, and cultural patterns of thought? Why should we insist on building on the same methodological paradigm that is a root cause of our present theological crisis? Could there not be a better way?

By arguing for the relatedness of God in human history, open view theologians have uncovered the ontological import of biblical thinking, thereby stumbling upon an idea that suggests the possibility of a better path. Macro hermeneutical principles for biblical theological interpretation may be defined also from biblical thinking. Though so far open view theologians seem unaware of the hermeneutical revolution adumbrated in their argumentation, we may want to give biblical thought a chance to shape the macro hermeneutical principles of evangelical theology. This paradigmatical move will not only help us overcome the classical-open view controversy on divine interaction with the world, but to rethink the entire scope of evangelical theology for the third millennium. Perhaps this is the time to think in the light of Scripture.

Fernando Canale is Professor of Systematic Theology at the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University. canale@andrews.edu

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[68] See, for instance, Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).