

## **Editor's Page**

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This is the second issue for 2012, completing *JATS* for 2012. We are already working on 2013 with articles in hand, and hope to have these out to you soon as well. As for the contents of this issue, we are again pleased to have a line-up of interesting, stimulating, and (we hope) spiritually enriching and edifying articles for you. They include a range of topics from biblical studies in Genesis and Revelation, to a theological look at the role of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives, and include some new insights into hermeneutics as well as contemporary issues such as the problem of racial segregation, and current religious movements.

Continuing our exploration of the doctrine of Creation (a topic that continues to command the interest of church leaders and laity alike) is Eliezer Gonzalez' review of the role that the creation account in Genesis played in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Laszlo Gallusz leads us into the first part of a study of the meaning of the term "thrones" in the book of Revelation; theologian Larry Lichtenwalter explores the person and work of the Holy Spirit in both the general epistles and the book of Hebrews. Cleran Hollancid, who is doing research in the area of religion and society, shows how racial segregation is not merely a problem "out there" in secular society, but even occurs within a religious context. Church historian Trevor O'Reggio describes the rise of the New Apostolic Reformation and what this means for our Adventist view of eschatology. In a similar vein, theologian Fernando Canale continues with part four of his series on the rise of the Emerging Church and what it means for us today. Finally, Michael Younker examines recent trends in Adventism concerning how our traditional eschatological perspective relates to current

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events, with an aim toward improving how we understand and relate to others. We hope and pray that you both enjoy and are blessed by these fine articles.

## **The Role of the Genesis Creation in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers**

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### **1. Introduction**

Earliest Christianity continued to affirm the doctrine of creation as a fundamental tenet in its beliefs after the closing of the canon. This is evident in those writings that have been traditionally classed as the “Apostolic Fathers” of the late first century and second century.<sup>1</sup> However, a problem exists in the contemporary understanding of the way the “Apostolic Fathers” interpreted the account of the Genesis creation, concerning whether the Fathers interpreted the Genesis creation account literally or fundamentally in some other fashion. Misunderstandings of the hermeneutic method of the Fathers can lead to the perception that they simply “spiritualize away” creation. The purpose of this essay is to seek to help solve this problem by discovering, through a close reading of the texts of the “Apostolic Fathers,” the way in which these Fathers understood the factual and temporal aspects of the Genesis creation account.

A study of these earliest extant, post-canonical Christian writings shows that not only did the Apostolic Fathers assume, but they also explicitly uphold, the Genesis account of a literal, six-day creation. In doing so, these authors do more than merely echo New Testament

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<sup>1</sup> This essay deals with those writers traditionally included among the “Apostolic Fathers,” whilst acknowledging that the classification leads to arbitrary boundaries. For example, the works of Irenaeus are not considered here; neither are other second-century apologists, nor the Alexandrians Clement and Origen.

emphases; they indeed develop them further, making the doctrine of creation a fundamental part of the foundation of their theologies. These writings have not received the attention that they should, in terms of their understanding of the creation account. As an illustration of this, it is noteworthy that in Peter Bouteneff's monograph on the patristic readings of the creation narratives, as well as Stanley Jaki's study of the history of the interpretation of Genesis 1, the "Apostolic Fathers" are largely absent from both discussions. These recent studies skip from the New Testament and Jewish materials respectively to those of the second-century apologists.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. General Remarks on the "Apostolic Fathers"**

The texts traditionally denominated as belonging to the "Apostolic Fathers," are by no means a homogenous group of texts; nor are they merely a continuation of the New Testament message; with, "various degrees of approximity to the apostolic preaching. . . none of these writings is ultimately a repetition of the apostolic New Testament message."<sup>3</sup> What allows this group of texts to be considered together is that, as Brox again notes, they encompass, "over and beyond all differences. . . the written documents of the post-apostolic era," standing "on the threshold of the transition from the first generation to the later age of the Church."<sup>4</sup> However, the selection of texts that have traditionally been called the "Apostolic Fathers" is arbitrarily based on tradition, since the corpus excludes some pseudepigraphic and apocalyptic Christian texts that may have been produced earlier than the included texts. Therefore, the term "Apostolic Fathers" is essentially best

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<sup>2</sup> Peter C Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 55-88; Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 Through the Ages* (London: Thomas More Press, 1992), 70-108.

<sup>3</sup> Norbert Brox. "Apostolic Fathers," in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. Ed. Karl Rahner (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), 33-36, 34. It is nevertheless noteworthy that many of these texts were treated as Scripture by some churches in the second century. See Roger E. Olson. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*. (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Brox, "Apostolic Fathers," 34.

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understood an anachronistic denominator for a group of texts that have been popularly, if not altogether logically, categorised together.<sup>5</sup>

Olsen describes the role of the Apostolic Fathers in the history of Christian theology as “ambiguous.”<sup>6</sup> Protestant Christianity has been particularly ambivalent towards their contribution.<sup>7</sup> It is nevertheless undeniable that the “Apostolic Fathers” provide a bridge between apostolic and later Christianity,<sup>8</sup> they provide us with an important window into how the teachings of the apostles were interpreted in the immediately succeeding generations, and it is in this that they have their principal value. The focus of this paper is on how these earliest interpreters of the canonical apostles understood the Old Testament story of creation, both in terms of its nature and its meaning.

### **3. The Hermeneutics of the “Apostolic Fathers”**

Some observations are relevant concerning the hermeneutic approaches used by the “Apostolic Fathers.” First, it is important to note that, “[t]he so-called ‘patristic exegesis’ is deeply rooted in New Testament writings. The exegetes of the patristic period applied and developed methods already used in writings produced during the apostolic period.”<sup>9</sup> However, Broz also observes that, “[t]he acceptance of New Testament methods did not mean mere repetition,”<sup>10</sup> so that the Church Fathers continued to develop “an ever more sophisticated exegetical methodology.”<sup>11</sup>

The church fathers were largely uninterested in the “objective” meaning of the text. This does not mean that they believed the text did not have a literal sense, but they were convinced that Scripture had an

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<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this paper, I have used the collection found in Michael E. Holmes, ed. & tr. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.) This excludes Irenaeus, who is also often classified with the “Apostolic Fathers.”

<sup>6</sup> Olson, “Christian Theology,” 52.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 53. See also Gonzalez, *Christian Thought*, 96.

<sup>8</sup> Olson, “Christian Theology,” 52-53.

<sup>9</sup> Jaroslav Broz. “From Allegory to the Four Senses of Scripture: Hermeneutics of the Church Fathers and of the Christian Middle Ages.” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*. Ed. Petr Pokorny and Jan Roskovec. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, (2002) 301-309, 302.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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aspect that lay beyond the strictly literal sense, and they always sought this non-literal meaning. Broz explains that, “[t]hey searched for the meaning that a particular text might have for the historical, theological, or spiritual context (i.e. for the ‘today’) in which it was being read.”<sup>12</sup> This hermeneutic “was always closely related to the problems of apology, theology, or spirituality that characterized specific historical-existential circumstances of life.”<sup>13</sup>

The Church Fathers were convinced that “Scripture operates on a number of levels and that it contains implicit spiritual meanings.”<sup>14</sup> The allegorical method of the Church Fathers rather affirms these different levels at which Scripture operates, instead of denying them. Therefore, in using an allegorical interpretation, the Fathers did not deny the literal account of creation; as Bouteneff points out, there are two ways of using allegory, either to supersede the literal meaning or to retain it.<sup>15</sup> However, referring specifically to the works of the Fathers, Jaki states as a fundamental epistemological principle that, “[t]he allegorical sense makes sense only insofar as it rests on a clear understanding of the text, which in turn makes no sense if severed from that external reality to which it refers in countless cases.”<sup>16</sup> However, even if allegory is used to supersede literal meaning, there must be a literal meaning from which interpretation must begin.<sup>17</sup>

It is also notable that the exegesis of the “Apostolic Fathers” was highly christocentric, as well as being focused on the church.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, in reading the creation narratives through the eyes of the Fathers, “[h]owever we might reckon the narratives’ relationship to the unfolding of events in historical time, our gaze will be fixed decidedly on the New Adam.”<sup>19</sup> For the earliest church, although the oral message of Christ

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Broz further explains here that, “[t]hat is the reason we must carefully identify the historical, theological, and spiritual context in which particular exegeses were produced.”

<sup>14</sup> Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 177-178.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>16</sup> Jaki, *Genesis 1*, 271.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., points out that typology raises similar issues.

<sup>18</sup> Broz, “Hermeneutics,” 303-304.

<sup>19</sup> Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 183. This aspect of the hermeneutic of the “Apostolic Fathers” is somewhat reflected in the call of Paul H. Santmire. “The Genesis Creation Narratives Revisited: Themes for a Global Age,” *Interpretation* 45.4 (1991): 366-379.

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received priority, the Bible continued to be principally the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> The Old Testament is “Scripture,” and it is normative; however thoroughly christological its interpretation may have been.<sup>21</sup>

In this way, the exegesis of the “Apostolic Fathers” is founded on the strong conviction that the Old and New Testaments represent “an inseparable unity.”<sup>22</sup> In terms of the use that the “Apostolic Fathers” made of the Old Testament, Scarsaune has noted that, “[i]n many respects, Christian literature of the period 30–250 C. E. may be said to be one single large commentary on. . . the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. General Remarks on Creation in the “Apostolic Fathers”

The scholarly work that seems to have most closely examined the topic of creation in the “Apostolic Fathers” was Angelo O’Hagan’s monograph on *Material Re-creation in the Apostolic Fathers*, published in 1968. O’Hagan set out to discover where the “Apostolic Fathers” stood on that polarity that is represented on the one extreme by the Gnostic-Origenist tradition which reduces to a minimum the significance of God’s creation of matter, and on the other extreme, by those who consider that the final state of nature will be achieved through a repetition, albeit improved and elevated, of God’s original act of creation.<sup>24</sup> Of course, O’Hagan’s excellent study had an eschatological focus, and the original creation was merely assumed. In other words, the belief of the “Apostolic Fathers” in the Genesis creation account was not questioned, nor were the various uses that they made of it explored in his study.

O’Hagan refers to the ontological fact, in the Jewish view, of “the inherent goodness of matter which derives from creation’s continuity

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377, for Genesis 1-2 to be read “through the lenses of an eschatological, ecological hermeneutic of the Future and the Fullness Thereof.”

<sup>20</sup> Brox, “Apostolic Fathers,” 36.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Broz, “Hermeneutics,” 302.

<sup>23</sup> Oskar Skarsaune, “The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries—Except Clement and Origen,” in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, Volume 2, Ed. C. Brekelmans, Menahem Haran, and Magne Saebø. First published 1996. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 373-386, 375.

<sup>24</sup> Angelo P. O’Hagan, *Material Re-creation in the Apostolic Fathers*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Band 100. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), 1.

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with its Creator.”<sup>25</sup> It is this principle that necessarily links the first and second creations together, particularly in later Jewish and early Christian thought. Furthermore, soteriology and cosmology were reciprocally linked in that “God’s action in creation and in history was seen to be one and the same.”<sup>26</sup> A literal eschatological recreation therefore requires a literal understanding of the Genesis creation.

For these reasons, O’Hagan’s general conclusion was significant in terms of our consideration of the original creation: that this “belief in some material renewal of creation is found in such a large percentage of the Apostolic Fathers. . . and that it leaves fairly clear traces on almost all the others.”<sup>27</sup> This indicates that, “in view of the Apostolic Fathers widely differing origins, backgrounds, and literary forms, coupled with their lack of interdependence, belief in a material re-creation of the world was widespread during the sub-apostolic age.”<sup>28</sup> The reasonable corollary of this conclusion is that an original material creation of the world was also widespread.<sup>29</sup>

Although it is counter-intuitive in terms of popular contemporary stereotypes, the fact that the writers of the early patristic era lived in an ancient culture far removed from our own, and before scientific materialism, does not mean that they showed no interest in the nature and process of the Genesis creation. Irenaeus, for example, speculated on the nature of the days of creation.<sup>30</sup> Relevant to some more modern perspectives, Bouteneff accordingly notes that, “[t]he de-stressing of science did not forbid the early writers from asking what the “days” actually were—whether they were six twenty-four-hour periods, whether they were eras, millennia. . . or even how there could be said to be a morning, an evening, or a day before there was a sun.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8. See also *ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>27</sup> O’Hagan, *Material Re-creation*, 141.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>30</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.23.2; 5.28.3.

<sup>31</sup> Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 171.



## 5. The Theological Role of Creation in Specific Texts

### *1 Clement*

The first of the documents that will be considered is the letter known as *1 Clement*, which was written from the Christians in Rome to the church in Corinth. *First Clement* is “one of the earliest extant Christian documents outside the New Testament,”<sup>32</sup> being written “around the time when John was composing the book of Revelation on the island of Patmos.”<sup>33</sup> Although very few extant manuscripts of this document exist,<sup>34</sup> we know that later Christian writers valued *1 Clement* highly, and “[i]t was quoted frequently, and was considered as part of the New Testament in some areas.”<sup>35</sup> Robert Grant’s assessment was that, “[d]uring the first thousand years after the Apostolic Fathers wrote, the church valued most highly the writings of Clement and Ignatius, and the church was right in doing so.”<sup>36</sup> In Grant’s evaluation, the theologies of both Clement and Ignatius were “creative” rather than “derivative.”<sup>37</sup>

The occasion for the writing of *1 Clement* appears to have been internal discord within the Corinthian Church, the cause of which is unclear.<sup>38</sup> Holmes observes that, “the elements of peace, harmony, and order that are so important to the author (or authors) of this letter reflect some of the fundamental values of Roman society.”<sup>39</sup> In his pursuit of his goal of reconciling the factions within the Corinthian Christian community, the author of *1 Clement* uses Jewish and NT writings, as well as making extensive use of examples drawn from standard rhetoric. Scarsaune highlights that, “[o]ne feature of *1 Clement* has leapt to the

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<sup>32</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 33.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 35-36, also notes that, “[c]lues in the letter itself suggest that the document probably was penned sometime during the last two decades of the first century. . . . There is, however, a long-standing tradition of dating the document a bit more narrowly; to ca. AD 95-97.”

<sup>34</sup> Note that the complete Greek text of *1 Clement* has survived in only a single manuscript, Codex Hierosolymitanus from AD 1056. (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 38).

<sup>35</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> Robert M. Grant “The Apostolic Fathers’ First Thousand Years,” in *Church History* 31 (1962): 421-429, 429.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Grant here classifies the theologies of texts such as Barnabas, Didache, Hermas, Papias, Polycarp in the “derivative” category.

<sup>38</sup> As Holmes *Apostolic Fathers*, 34, notes, this internal discord is not the explicit focus of the letter due to the conventions of the genre. Note Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 34, where he reconstructs the possible circumstances of the writing of this letter.

<sup>39</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 33.

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eye of every commentator and has been stated over and over again” is “the strong feeling of *immediate continuity* with the Old Testament. . . displayed by the author.”<sup>40</sup> The author himself seems to be immersed in the knowledge of the Old Testament.<sup>41</sup>

*First Clement* presents God’s creation as a model of harmony for the Corinthian Church. He writes, “Let us note how free from anger he is toward all his creation.”<sup>42</sup> In this scheme, God is clearly the maker of a world that was made good:

Seeing, then, that we have a share in many great and glorious deeds, let us hasten on to the goal of peace, which has been handed down to us from the beginning; let us fix our eyes upon the Father and Maker of the whole world [τὸν πατέρα καὶ κτίστην τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου] and hold fast to his magnificent and excellent gifts and benefits of peace.<sup>43</sup>

Holmes rightly notes that in this passage, “[t]he portrait of cosmic harmony (20.1-12) is largely of Stoic origins, and his use of the metaphor of the body (37.5) is shaped by Stoic cosmology. . . .”<sup>44</sup> However, this is explicitly within a Judaeo-Christian setting in which, for example, the stars move at God’s decree, in a universe of which God is sovereign because of His right by creation:

The heavens move at his direction and obey him in peace. . . The sun and the moon and the choirs of stars circle in harmony within the courses assigned to them, according to his direction, without any deviation at all. . . . The earth, bearing fruit in the proper seasons in fulfilment of his will, brings forth food in full abundance. . . All these things the great Creator and Master of the universe ordered to exist in peace and harmony. . . [ταῦτα πάντα ὁ μέγας δημιουργὸς καὶ δεσπότης τῶν ἀπάντων ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ὁμονοίᾳ προσέταξεν εἶναι.]<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Skarsaune, “Scriptural Interpretation,” 381.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 382, also notes that, “[m]any of his short quotations seem to be quotations from memory, which explains some “free” renderings of the LXX text, and also some composite quotations. On the other hand, he is the first Christian writer to insert rather long quotations which obviously are copied *verbatim* directly from LXX manuscripts.” Skarsaune, *ibid.*, also notes here that the latter practice is “non-typical in comparable Jewish documents.”

<sup>42</sup> *1 Clement* 19:3, tr. Holmes, 73.

<sup>43</sup> *1 Clement* 19:2, ed. and tr. Holmes, 72-73.

<sup>44</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 37.

<sup>45</sup> *1 Clement* 20:1-11, ed. and tr. Holmes, 73-75.

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We may note here that the author of *I Clement* refers to God as ὁ δημιουργὸς καὶ δεσπότης τῶν πάντων. This is a title that is repeated in *I Clement* 33:2, as will be quoted below. It is a somewhat formulaic title that is, therefore, of some interest. Justo González observes that it may be possible that, “in calling God “demiurge” Clement conceives his relation with the world in Platonic terms, as the artisan who takes a pre-existent matter and gives it a form in imitation of an idea that is above himself.”<sup>46</sup> However, as González concedes, “Clement does not say enough about creation to allow us to make a judgment regarding the connotations that the title of ‘demiurge’ has for him.”<sup>47</sup>

Although the author of *I Clement* may use Platonic and Stoic terms, we should not underestimate how radically different his conception of the world is from the prevailing pessimistic understandings of the time. For what Clement is here insisting on, as is common to the Fathers of the earliest centuries, is the inherent goodness of the world, that is based on the reality of its divine origin with a God of goodness. This was not only a radically Christian understanding of existence; it was also a fundamental tenet of the early Fathers in their dire battle against Docetism.<sup>48</sup>

The fact that God is the Creator is presented by the author of *I Clement* as the motivation for the Corinthians to obey a series of ethical exhortations. These are introduced with the words, “Take care, dear friends, lest his many benefits turn into a judgment upon all of us, as will happen if we fail to live worthily of him and to do harmoniously those things that are good and pleasing in his sight.”<sup>49</sup> The connection between creation and the church is elaborated in *I Clement* 33:1–8, where the author asks:

What then shall we do, brothers? Shall we idly abstain from doing good, and forsake love? May the Master never allow this to happen, at least to us; but let us hasten with earnestness and zeal to accomplish

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<sup>46</sup> Justo González. *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. 1: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970), 63-64.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Paul, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*. Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford University Press: Oxford; New York, 2004), 83.

<sup>49</sup> *I Clement* 21:1, tr. Holmes, 75.

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every good work. For the Creator and Master of the universe [αὐτός γὰρ ὁ δημιουργὸς καὶ δεσπότης τῶν πάντων] himself rejoices in his works.<sup>50</sup>

For the author of *1 Clement*, the obligation of Christians to do good and to love is therefore based on the goodness of the Creator, and the reality that He Himself creates good works. The author of *1 Clement* goes on to refer to the manner by which God established the heavens in order, highlighting “His infinitely great might” and “His incomprehensible wisdom.” Next he refers to the separation of “the earth from the water surrounding it,” and to how God “called into existence by His decree” [τῆ ἐάντο διατάζει ἐκέλευσεν εἶναι] the “living creatures that walk upon it,”<sup>51</sup> having previously “created the sea and the living creatures in it.” Finally, the author of *1 Clement* describes how,

as the most excellent and by far the greatest work of his intelligence, with his holy and faultless hands he formed humankind as a representation of his own image. For thus spoke God: “Let us make humankind in our image and likeness. And God created humankind; male and female he created them. So, having finished all these things, he praised them and blessed them and said, ‘Increase and multiply.’”<sup>52</sup>

*First Clement* 33:1-8 is presented as an exhortation to good works and harmony within the church.<sup>53</sup> However, the passage quoted above is also notable in several other regards. Firstly, it clearly follows and quotes the creation account as presented in Gen 1. In doing this, it affirms the belief of the both the author and recipients of this letter in a literal, six-day creation. Secondly, it provides an account of the creation of humanity that relates directly to the Genesis account. Thirdly, the

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<sup>50</sup> *1 Clement* 33:2, ed. and tr. Holmes, 86-87.

<sup>51</sup> *1 Clement* 33:3, ed. and tr. Holmes, 88-89.

<sup>52</sup> *1 Clement* 33:4-6, tr. Holmes, 89, quoting Gen 1:26-28. O’Hagan, *Material Re-creation*, 97, notes that “[t]he notion of ‘establishing the universe’ is . . . a technical expression of Greek cosmology [which] had been absorbed into Jewish Hellenistic thought by Philo and the Alexandrian synagogue.”

<sup>53</sup> Thus, this section concludes with the admonishment, “We have seen that all the righteous have been adorned with good works. Indeed, the Lord himself, having adorned himself with good works, rejoiced. So, since we have this pattern, let us unhesitatingly conform ourselves to his will; let us with all our strength do the work of righteousness.” (*1 Clement* 33:1-8, tr. Holmes, 87-89.)

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passage confirms a belief in the manner in which God created the universe, that it was called into existence by “his decree.” This is also made explicit in *1 Clement* 27:4, where the author writes, “[t]herefore let faith in him be rekindled within us, and let us understand that all things are near to him. By his majestic word he established the universe [ἐν λόγῳ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ συνεστήσατο τὰ πάντα], and by a word he can destroy it.”<sup>54</sup>

*First Clement*, however, goes beyond merely making a link between creation and the church. It argues from creation, to the church, and finally to God’s recreation. The famous passage about the phoenix is presented in the context of this exhortation to appropriate ethical behaviour in the church.<sup>55</sup> *First Clement* uses the phoenix to illustrate the coming resurrection from the dead, which, in the context of a “new creation,” is then in turn related back to the original creation of the universe. The author argues, “How, then, can we consider it to be some great and marvellous thing, if the Creator of the universe [ὁ δημιουργὸς τῶν ἀπάντων ἀνάστασιν] shall bring about a resurrection of those who have served him in holiness. . . .”<sup>56</sup>

The doctrine of creation is therefore fundamental to the entire letter of *1 Clement*. It clearly underpins *1 Clement*’s ecclesiology, serving as the motivation for harmonious behaviour in the church. The doctrine of creation is explicitly related to eschatology, in terms of God’s new creation and the resurrection. In terms of his understanding of the original creation, the author of *1 Clement* clearly holds to a literal understanding of creation that follows the account in Gen 1 and 2. The letter ends with a prayer for harmony that includes the words, “[f]or you, through your works, have revealed the everlasting structure of the world. You, Lord, created the earth [σύ, κύριε, τὴν οἰκουμένην ἔκισας]. You are faithful throughout all generations, righteous in your judgments, marvellous in strength and majesty, wise in creating and prudent in establishing what exists.”<sup>57</sup> This is, in turn, followed by a summary of the letter in which God as the Creator is again emphasized:

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<sup>54</sup> *1 Clement* 27:4, tr. Holmes, 83.

<sup>55</sup> *1 Clement* 25.

<sup>56</sup> *1 Clement* 26:1, ed. and tr. Holmes, 80-81.

<sup>57</sup> *1 Clement* 60:1, tr. Holmes, 125.

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We have written. . . to you, brothers, about the things that pertain to our religion and are particularly helpful for a virtuous life, at least for those who wish to guide their steps in holiness and righteousness. For we have. . . reminded you that you must reverently please Almighty God. . . by being humble toward the Father and God and Creator [τὸν πατέρα καὶ θεὸν καὶ κτίστην] and toward all people.<sup>58</sup>

In his presentation of God as the creator, the author of *1 Clement* therefore concludes by reminding the audience that this has been a fundamental theme that underpins the arguments of his entire letter.

### ***2 Clement***

The document known as *2 Clement* is “the oldest surviving complete Christian sermon outside the New Testament.”<sup>59</sup> Traditionally following *1 Clement* in the manuscripts in which it is preserved, “virtually nothing is known about its author, date, or occasion.”<sup>60</sup> Holmes surmises that the author of the sermon, who is addressing a primarily Gentile congregation (1.6;3.1), “may also be reacting against Gnostic influences (10:5; cf. the stress on the deity of Jesus [1.1] and the resurrection and judgment [9.1–5]).”<sup>61</sup> This is within the context of a call to repentance and faithfulness, based on Isaiah 54:1.<sup>62</sup>

The proposals for the dating of *2 Clement* range from about the same time as *1 Clement* to around the mid-second century.<sup>63</sup> Skarsaune notes that this document is “principally paraenetic.”<sup>64</sup> However, Bromiley judges that the “most glaring weakness” of the author of *2 Clement* “is his incompetence in the theological exposition of scripture.”<sup>65</sup> Without making any generalized critique of the theological skills of the author of *2 Clement*, our interest is instead on the use that he makes of the Genesis creation narrative.

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<sup>58</sup> *1 Clement* 62:1-2, ed. and tr. Holmes, 128-129.

<sup>59</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 132.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 132. Skarsaune, “Scriptural Interpretation,” 381, by contrast, sees the polemic setting as “inner-Christian.”

<sup>62</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 132.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Skarsaune, “Scriptural Interpretation,” 381.

<sup>65</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley. *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 9.

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The author of *2 Clement* explicitly affirms creation *ex nihilo*. This appears evident when he writes, “[f]or he called us when we did not exist, and out of nothing he willed us into being.”<sup>66</sup> However, the overarching theme of *2 Clement* is ecclesiology. The link that *1 Clement* makes between creation and the church is also made in *2 Clement*. In fact, Muddiman refers to *2 Clement* as particularly illustrating “the importance of the Genesis creation story for this early Christian doctrine of the transcendent church.”<sup>67</sup> This is especially evident in the author’s assertion that:

if we do the will of God our Father we will belong to the first church, the spiritual one, which was created before the sun and moon [ἐσόμεθα ἐκ της ἐκκλησίας της πρώτης, της πνευματικης, της πρὸ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἐκτισμένης]. . . the living church is the body of Christ, for the scriptures says, “God created humankind male and female.” The male is Christ; the female is the church. [ὅτι ἐκκλησία ζωσα σωμα ἐστὶν Χριστου· λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή·ποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄρσεν καὶ θηλυ· τὸ ἄρσεν ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός, τὸ θηλυ ἡ ἐκκλησία] Moreover, the books and the apostles declare that the church not only exists now but has been in existence from the beginning. [τὴν ἐκκλησίαν οὐ νυν εἶναι λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ ἄνωθεν].<sup>68</sup>

For the author of *2 Clement*, therefore, an understanding of the creation of the world is important for an understanding of the doctrine of the church. It is significant to realise that although they are not writing systematic theology, the “Apostolic Fathers” are insightful in the theological connections that they make.<sup>69</sup> The notions of the “body of Christ” and of the male and the female are themselves Pauline,<sup>70</sup> and allude to an ecclesiology that is based on the person and nature of Jesus Christ, and ultimately on his creative and redemptive power.

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<sup>66</sup> *2 Clement* 1:8, tr. Holmes, 139.

<sup>67</sup> John Muddiman, “The Church in Ephesians, *2 Clement*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*” in *Trajectories Through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*. Eds. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher Mark Tuckett. The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers, 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107-122, 120.

<sup>68</sup> *2 Clement* 14:1-3, ed. and tr. Holmes, 154-157.

<sup>69</sup> Particularly in the light of a modern tendency to treat the Genesis creation account as if it has no systematic theological implications.

<sup>70</sup> 1 Cor 10:16; 12:27; Eph 4:12; 5:25-27.

### ***The Didache***

Although a wide range of dates, from before A. D. 50 to after the third century, has been proposed for the *Didache*, Holmes argues that it seems more probable that the *Didache* may have been put into its present form as late as 150.<sup>71</sup> However, “[t]he materials from which it was composed reflect the state of the church at an even earlier time.”<sup>72</sup>

This text, typical of the Church Father in their polemic against Docetism,<sup>73</sup> insists on the goodness of creation. Accordingly, in the very beginning of the *Didache*, the first principle of the gospel is introduced, which emphasises that humans have been made by God the Creator. The *Didache* states, “There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways. Now this is the way of life: First, you shall love God, who made you.” [τὸν θεὸν τὸν ποιήσαντά σε δεύτερον]<sup>74</sup> The doctrine of creation is therefore seen as underlying the essence of Christianity itself. This is also evident in the responsive thanks that is to be given after having participated in the Eucharist, “You, almighty Master, created all things [σύ, δέσποτα παντοκράτορ, ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα ἕνεκεν] for your name’s sake.”<sup>75</sup>

As is the case in *1 Clement*, the author of the *Didache* appeals for moral and ethical purity on the basis of creation. He writes, “But the way of death is this. . . It is the way of persecutors of good people. . . corrupters of God’s creation [φθορεῖς πλάσματος τοῦ θεοῦ]. . . May you be delivered, children, from all these things!”<sup>76</sup>

### ***The Epistle of Barnabas***

*Barnabas* “appears to have been written after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70<sup>77</sup> but before the city was rebuilt by Hadrian following the revolt of AD 132-135.”<sup>78</sup> It is also widely considered to have been written in Alexandria,<sup>79</sup> and may therefore be

<sup>71</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 337.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Stewart Bryan, “The Apostolic Fathers,” in *Omnibus IV: The Ancient World*, edited by D. Wilson, G. E. Veith, and G. T. Fisher (Lancaster: Veritas Press, 2009), 431-444, 435.

<sup>74</sup> *Didache* 1:1, ed. and tr. Holmes, 344-345.

<sup>75</sup> *Didache* 10:3, ed. and tr. Holmes, 359-389.

<sup>76</sup> The *Didache*, 5:1-2, ed. and tr. Holmes, 352-353; cf. *Barnabas* 20:2.

<sup>77</sup> Holmes, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 16.3-5.

<sup>78</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 373.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*



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“the first document of the young Alexandrine school of theology.”<sup>80</sup> The anonymous author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* seeks to show that “Christians are the true and intended heirs of God’s covenant.”<sup>81</sup> He pursues this “tendentious reading”<sup>82</sup> of the law of Moses and of prophets by means of allegorical exegesis, a method that was entrenched in first century Judaism, and indeed in subsequent eras. Holmes therefore sees *Barnabas* as “a good early example of what became the dominant method of interpreting the Bible in the early and medieval church.”<sup>83</sup>

Skarsaune comments that, “*Barnabas* has much original material and comment, not recurring in this peculiar form in later writers. It seems that *Barnabas* is depending on sources that stem from an early Christian milieu still in close contact with Jewish scholarship, possibly a Jewish-Christian milieu.”<sup>84</sup> *Barnabas*’ allegorical exegesis is in the context of “a strong eschatological awareness of living in the last days (esp. chs. 4; 15),”<sup>85</sup> and the author “sometimes applies a past-present-future scheme as a kind of hermeneutical key to the teaching of Scripture.”<sup>86</sup> This is evident in the author’s explanation that:

the Master has made known to us through the prophets things past and present [τὰ παρεληλυθότα καὶ τὰ ἐνεστώτα], and has given us a foretaste of things to come. [καὶ τῶν μελλόντων δοῦς ἀπαρχὰς ἡμῖν γεύσεως.] Consequently, when we see these things come to pass, one thing after the other just as he predicted, we ought to make a richer and loftier offering out of reverence for him.<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, for the author of *Barnabas*, the past is not only important, but it is essential, so that believers may have the correct understanding of both the present and the future. His allegorical exegesis and its application to the present and the future is based on the reality of past events. In a striking passage that illustrates his exegetical method, the

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<sup>80</sup> González, *Christian Thought*, 95.

<sup>81</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 370.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Skarsaune, “Scriptural Interpretation,” 387.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Barnabas* 1:7, tr. Holmes, 383.

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author of *Barnabas* writes, “And in another place he says: “If my children guard the Sabbath, then I will bestow my mercy upon them.” He speaks of the Sabbath at the beginning of creation, “And God made the works of his hands in six days, and finished on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it.” He continues, “Observe, children, what ‘he finished in six days’ means. It means this: that in six thousand years the Lord will bring everything to an end, for with him a day signifies a thousand years [ἡ γὰρ ἡμέρα παρ’ αὐτῷ σημαίνει χίλια ἔτη]...”<sup>88</sup> Continuing, the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* writes that:

Therefore, children, in six days—that is, in six thousand years—everything will be brought to an end. “And he rested on the seventh day.” This means: when his son comes, he will destroy the time of the lawless one and will judge the ungodly and will change the sun and the moon and the stars, and then he will truly rest on the seventh day.<sup>89</sup>

In this passage, the author interprets the six days of creation as referring to the “six thousand years” at the completion of which the world would end, inaugurating the rest of the “seventh day.” However, it should be noted that this interpretation is not based on a *denial* of the reality of a literal six days of creation, as has sometimes been assumed, but rather it is explicitly based on a strong *affirmation* of the reality of the account found in Genesis 1 and 2. The author of *Barnabas* clearly understands the Genesis account to be literal, and he demonstrates this both by direct quotation and affirmation. As such, he is able to say of the author of Genesis, that “[h]e speaks of the Sabbath at the beginning of creation,” (τὸ σάββατον λέγει ἐν ἀρχῇ της κτίσεως).<sup>90</sup>

However, within this scheme, and in terms of the author’s polemical concern to explore the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, the Sabbath, notably, is in fact interpreted entirely eschatologically:

Finally, he says to them: “I cannot stand your new moons and Sabbaths.” You see what he means: it is not the present Sabbaths that are acceptable to me, [οὐ τὰ σάββατα ἐμοὶ δεκτά] but the one that I

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<sup>88</sup> *Barnabas* 15:4, ed. and tr. Holmes, 426-427.

<sup>89</sup> *Barnabas* 15:4-5, tr. Holmes, 427-429.

<sup>90</sup> *Barnabas* 15:2, tr. Holmes, 426.

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have made; on that sabbath, after I have set everything at rest, I will create the beginning of an eighth day, which is the beginning of another world. [ἐν ᾧ καταπαύσας τὰ πάντα ἀρχὴν ἡμέρας ὀγδοῆς ποιήσω, ὃ ἐστὶν ἄλλου κόσμου ἀρχήν.] That is why we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which Jesus both arise from the dead and, after appearing again, ascended into heaven.<sup>91</sup>

It is clear that the author of *Barnabas* does not recognize the contemporary validity of the seventh-day Sabbath of the Genesis account. He uses it as an allegory of the “true” Sabbath, which is the eschatological Sabbath of one thousand years that is the beginning of the new creation. However, it is to be noted that he does not deny the existence of the original and literal creational Sabbath of the seventh day; he has merely re-interpreted it allegorically to provide a particular layer of meaning. Grenz comments that:

According to the author of this letter, even in the first creation narrative the act of creation refers to the eschatological renewal of the world. Not only was this interpretation widely held in the patristic era, it has gained increased following in our day. The Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad, for example, concludes that the Priestly writers intended the reader to understand God’s Sabbath rest on the seventh day of creation as the future, eschatological fulfilment. We are to conclude from the creation narrative, therefore, that we are living in the sixth day, awaiting the dawn of the day of perfect *shalom*, the completion of God’s creative activity.<sup>92</sup>

This presents us with a theology that is firmly based on the future. Without making any further evaluation of this theology, it certainly attempts to be focused on hope. Grenz explores the implications of the assertions of the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, noting their “weighty implications” that therefore “the creation of the world is yet future,” and that “[i]f the act of creation ultimately lies in the future, the essence of all reality is likewise ultimately not found in the primordial past, but in the eschatological consummation of history.”<sup>93</sup> Correspondingly, “[i]f the

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<sup>91</sup> *Barnabas* 15:8-9, ed. and tr. Holmes, 428-429.

<sup>92</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) 111, citing von Rad, *Genesis*, 62-63.

<sup>93</sup> Grenz, *Theology*, 111.

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ultimate human essence lies in the future, then we must not look to the first human pair in the pristine past for the paradigm of essential human nature. Rather, our essential nature lies in the resurrected humankind in the future kingdom of God, which is revealed to us before the end of time in the resurrected Christ.”<sup>94</sup>

However, this theology is still only possible because it is grounded in a real past.<sup>95</sup> Weber calls the fundamental theology, not just of *Barnabas*, but of the “Apostolic Fathers” more broadly, the “theology of recapitulation.” He outlines it as follows:

The theology of recapitulation is another way of describing the ancient framework of God’s story: creation–incarnation–re-creation. Recapitulation brings together the first Adam and the second Adam themes of Paul. It brings together all the typologies of Scripture and emphasizes the whole of Scripture, refusing to compartmentalize this or that doctrine or teaching without its connection to everything else. Jesus Christ is the new Adam who *does it over again*. . . winning the world back for his heavenly Father, returning it to the garden of God’s glory.<sup>96</sup>

Particularly in the way that *Barnabas* interprets Scripture, the creation story actually becomes the foundational narrative of all Christian doctrine.<sup>97</sup> This theological construct pervades the entire work. For example, it becomes the narrative of the incarnation, so that *Barnabas* writes that, “if the Lord submitted to suffer for our souls, even though he is Lord of the whole world, to whom God said at the foundation of the world, [καταβολης κόσμου] ‘Let us make humankind according to our image and likeness,’ how is it, then, that he submitted to

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. cf. 1 Cor 15:48-49.

<sup>95</sup> See for example, Barnabas’ argument against the temple: “Finally, I will also speak to you about the temple, and how those wretched people went astray and set their hope on the building, as though it were God’s house, and not on their God who created them. For they, almost like the heathen, consecrated him by means of the temple. But what does the Lord say in abolishing it? Learn! “Who measured heaven with the span of his hand, or the earth with his palm? Was it not I, says the Lord? Heaven is my throne, and the earth is a footstool for my feet. What kind of house will you build for me, or what place for me to rest?” (*Barnabas*, 16:1-2, tr. Holmes, 429-431.)

<sup>96</sup> Robert E. Weber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 172-173.

<sup>97</sup> This is particularly evident in *Barnabas* 6:8-14.

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suffer at the hand of humans?”<sup>98</sup> The author then goes on to apply this text to the incarnation of Christ. *Barnabas*’ author similarly uses the narrative of creation to describe conversion, so that, “since he renewed us by the forgiveness of sins, he made us people of another type, so that we should have the soul of children, as if he were creating us all over again [ὡς ἂν δὴ ἀναπλάσσοντος αὐτοῦ ἡμᾶς].”<sup>99</sup>

#### *The Shepherd of Hermas*

Holmes notes that *The Shepherd of Hermas* was “widely popular in the second and third centuries”<sup>100</sup> and that “there are more surviving early copies of *The Shepherd* than of many canonical writings.”<sup>101</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas* was accepted as Scripture by Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and, briefly, by Origen.<sup>102</sup> Dating the *Shepherd* is difficult, although its citation by Irenaeus (ca. 175) establishes a latest possible date, but dates as early as the 70s and 80s have been suggested.<sup>103</sup> Holmes suggests that the *Shepherd* may be a composite document, so that, “*Visions* 1-4 would represent the earliest stage of its formation, while the final editing, including the interpolation of *Parables* 9-10, may well have occurred about the time (mid-second century) suggested by the Muratorian Canon.”<sup>104</sup>

In the *Shepherd*, the author narrates several visions and their explanations that were given to Hermas, who was a Christian living in Rome. Holmes comments that, “[t]he *Shepherd* represents concerns primarily of lower-class slaves and freedmen of marginal social and economic standing, whereas *1 Clement* reflects the perspective of a better-educated, higher-status group, many of whom were likely Roman citizens.”<sup>105</sup> The piety reflected in the *Shepherd* is centred on “observing the divine commandments and self-control.” Holmes further observes

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<sup>98</sup> *Barnabas*, 5:5, ed. and tr. Holmes, 392-393.

<sup>99</sup> *Barnabas* 6:11, ed. and tr. Holmes, 398-399. Also Ryan T. Jackson, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe, 272 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 7.

<sup>100</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 442.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

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that, “[t]he distances from Paul’s Letter to the Romans. . . in tone and perspective is considerable.”<sup>106</sup>

The notion of the transcendent church, evident in the *Shepherd*, has already been noted with regard to *2 Clement*. Muddiman, in fact, observes that the similarities in this concept of the transcendent church between the canonical epistle to the *Ephesians*, *2 Clement*, and *Hermas*, are “very striking.”<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, this emphasis and link is explicitly through the creation story of Gen 2-3; explaining this, Muddiman observes that:

The pre-existence/foreordination of the church is implied in this appeal to the creation story of Gen. 2-3. . . .The creation typology appears again with the citation of Gen. 2.23 f., but its literal sense is decidedly secondary to the allegorical interpretation of the text in reference to Christ and the church. We shall observe the same move in *2 Clement* and the *Shepherd*.<sup>108</sup>

Muddiman acknowledges that there is no mention of Adam and Eve in *Hermas*,<sup>109</sup> however, the creation of the world and the creation of the church are certainly linked together. The only words that Hermas could remember that the old woman read from her book were the last words: “Behold, the God of hosts, who by his invisible and mighty power and by his great wisdom created the world [αὐτοῦ κτίσας τὸν κόσμον]. . . and by his own wisdom and providence created his holy church, which he also blessed.”<sup>110</sup> In stating that these were the only words that Hermas could remember, the author highlights the importance of God as creator in relation to what will be subsequently revealed to Hermas, and in particular, the link between the creation of the world and the church is again affirmed.

In the third vision, Muddiman notes that, “[t]he link between creation and the church appears again in the building of the tower which, like the universe, is ‘built upon water,’ representing the saving waters of

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Muddiman, “Church,” 121. On the possibility of some kind of influence from *Ephesians*, see *ibid.*, 111.

<sup>108</sup> Muddiman, “Church,” 112.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>110</sup> *Shepherd of Hermas* 3:4, ed. and tr. Holmes 460-461.

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baptism.”<sup>111</sup> When Hermas asks her about the meaning of the tower, the elderly woman says to him, “[t]he tower that you see being built is I, the church.”<sup>112</sup> Hermas then asks her who are the six young men who are building the tower, to which the elderly lady answers, “[t]hese are the holy angels of God who were created first of all, to whom the Lord committed all his creation [οἱ πρωτοι κτισθέντες, οἷς παρέδωκεν ὁ κύριος πασαν τὴν κτίσιν αὐτου αὕξειν].”<sup>113</sup>

The doctrine of the church is again represented in the parable of the field in *Herimas*. Again the notion of creation ties the concept of the creation of the church to God the Creator of the original creation, so that Hermas is told, “I will explain to you the parable about the field and all the rest that followed it. . . The field is the world, and the lord of the field is the one who created all things (ὁ δὲ κύριος του ἄγρου ὁ κτίσας τὰ πάντα).”<sup>114</sup>

In the *Didache*, the belief in creation is at the heart of the “way of life,”<sup>115</sup> and similarly the doctrine of creation is fundamental to what it means to be a Christian in *Herimas*. The shepherd commands Hermas to write down a set of commandments, beginning with:

[f]irst of all, believe that God is one, who created all things, and set them in order, and made out of what did not exist everything that is.<sup>116</sup>

Πρωτον πάντων πιστεύσον, ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας καὶ ποιήσας ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Muddiman, “Church,” 120. Regarding baptism, see *Shepherd of Herimas* 11:5.

<sup>112</sup> *Shepherd of Herimas* 11:3, tr. Holmes, 475. In fact, Hermas is told in a revelation who the elderly woman is. He asks, “Then who is she?” I said, “The church,” he replied. I said to him, “Why, then is she elderly?” “Because,” he said, “she was created before all things; therefore she is elderly, and for her sake the world was formed.” (‘Ὅτι, φησί, πάντων πρώτη ἐκίσθη διὰ τοῦτο πρεσβυτέρα, καὶ διὰ ταύτην ὁ κόσμος κατηρτίσθη - *Herimas* 8:1, ed. and tr. Holmes, 468-469.) Again the connection between creation and the woman is explicitly made.

<sup>113</sup> *Shepherd of Herimas* 12:1, ed. and tr. Holmes, 476-477.

<sup>114</sup> *Herimas* 58:1-2, tr. Holmes, 576-579.

<sup>115</sup> *Didache* 1:1.

<sup>116</sup> *Herimas*, 26:1, tr. Holmes, 505.

<sup>117</sup> *Herimas*, 26:1, ed. Holmes, 504.

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The fact that the first commandment requires belief in the Creator God, who made all things *ex nihilo*, speaks for the importance of this understanding in the many sections of early Christianity in which the *Shepherd of Hermas* circulated. The author of *Hermes* also brings in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit into both the concepts of the original creation and that of the church, so that, “[t]he pre-existent holy spirit, which created the whole creation (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ προόν, τὸ κτίσαν πᾶσαν τὴν κτίσιν), God caused to live in the flesh that he wished.”<sup>118</sup> Indeed, the doctrine of creation is the “glue” that binds the theological framework of the *Shepherd of Hermas* together. The concept of creation permeates the entire work, as is reflected again in the following passage, which again brings the church into view:

The name of the Son of God is great and incomprehensible, and sustains the whole world. If, therefore, all creation is sustained by the Son of God (Ἄκουε, φησί· τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ μέγα ἐστὶ καὶ ἀχωρητὸν καὶ τὸν κόσμον ὅλον βαστάζει. εἰ οὖν πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ βαστάζεται), what do you think of those who are called by him and bear the name of the Son of God and walk in his commandments? Do you see, then, what kind of people he sustains? Those who bear his name with their whole heart.<sup>119</sup>

This last quotation highlights a fundamental aspect that pervades the theology of the “Apostolic Fathers,” the idea of “community.” The concept appears in a number of the passages of the “Apostolic Fathers” mentioned above. God’s seeks community with creation through the Son of God. As Grenz characterises it, “[w]e may summarize God’s intention for the world by employing the term ‘community.’ Just as the triune God is the eternal fellowship of the Trinitarian members, so also God’s purpose for creation is that the world participate in ‘community.’”<sup>120</sup>

Having just mentioned the sustaining power of God throughout creation, it is worth observing how the “Apostolic Fathers” are quick to recognise that “the doctrine of creation readily leads to the doctrine of providence.”<sup>121</sup> Indeed, “[t]he apostolic fathers insist that Christianity is

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<sup>118</sup> *Hermas* 59:5, ed. and tr. Holmes, 580-581.

<sup>119</sup> *Hermas* 91:5-6, ed. and tr. Holmes, 648-649.

<sup>120</sup> Grenz, *Theology*, 112.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.



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enmeshed with the created order,<sup>122</sup> and consequently the doctrine of a literal six-day creation is fundamental.

#### ***The Epistle of Diognetus***

The *Epistle to Diognetus*<sup>123</sup> is the final document that will be mentioned in this discussion. Holmes comments that the inclusion of the *Epistle of Diognetus* “is more a matter of tradition than logic; in terms of both purpose and genre, they might more fittingly be placed among the Christian apologists.”<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, there is much unknown about the text. Holmes writes that “[t]he author is anonymous, the identity of the recipient is uncertain, the date is unknown, the ending is missing.”<sup>125</sup> The document would seem to come from the period after that of the “Apostolic Fathers,” and the most likely dating seems to be from the late second to the early-mid third century.<sup>126</sup>

O’Hagan comments that “many of the expressions and even ideas of the author betray the Hellenism of the late second-century world in which he lived.”<sup>127</sup> In this context, O’Hagan detects a “sharp trend away from the things of this earth”<sup>128</sup> in this text. However, in various ways, *Diognetus* still affirms the goodness of creation, and creation itself. *Diognetus* asserts that “the things created by God for human use” were “created good” (καλως λτισθέματα).<sup>129</sup> *Diognetus* refers to God as, “the one who made the heaven and the earth and all that is in them [ὁ γὰρ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς], and provides us all with what we need.”<sup>130</sup>

The main function of creation in the *Epistle of Diognetus* is in terms of its christology. Christ is the doctrinal focal point of *Diognetus*, and the fact that Christ is the Creator highlights the magnitude of God’s sending His Son into the world. The chain of logic is that God is the Creator, and creation reveals God’s love and wisdom, “[f]or God, the Master and

<sup>122</sup> Bryan, “Apostolic Fathers,” 435, quoting Ignatius, *Trallians*, 3:9.

<sup>123</sup> See Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 694-719.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 686. O’Hagan, *Material Re-creation*, 108, comments that the *Epistle to Diognetus* is rather capriciously included by history among the Apostolic Fathers.”

<sup>125</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 688.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 689.

<sup>127</sup> O’Hagan, *Material Re-creation*, 108.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>129</sup> *Diognetus* 4:1-2, ed. and tr. Holmes, 700-701.

<sup>130</sup> *Diognetus*, 3:3-4, ed and tr. Holmes, 698-699.

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Creator of the universe, who made all things and arranged them in order [δεσπότης καὶ δημιουργὸς τῶν ὅλων θεός, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα καὶ κατὰ τάξιν διακρίνας], was not only tenderhearted but also very patient.”<sup>131</sup>

The Father and the Son evidently share the work of creation, since the Father, who is the Creator, has sent the Son, who is also the Creator, to this earth to reveal His salvation. The author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* explains that:

the omnipotent Creator of all, the invisible God himself [ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ἀληθῶς ὁ παντοκρτωρὸς καὶ παντοκτίστης καὶ ἀόρατος θεός]. . . established among humans the truth and the holy, incomprehensible word from heaven... not, as one might imagine, by sending them some subordinate... but the Designer and Creator of the universe himself, [ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων]. . . by whom all things have been ordered and determined and placed in subjection, [ὡς πάντα διατέτακται καὶ διώρισται καὶ ὑποτέτακται] including the heavens and the things in the heavens, the earth and the things in the earth, the sea and the things in the sea, fire, air, abyss, the things in the heights, the things in the depths, the things in between—this one he sent to them!<sup>132</sup>

Through Christ, the doctrine of creation is linked to the concepts of God’s revelation and to salvation, and even to the nature of man. Indeed, as is evident in the quotation above, for the author of *Diognetus*, the doctrine of creation serves to frame and magnify the glory of Jesus and the wonder of His incarnation and redemptive work. For this reason, *Diognetus* states that:

God loved humanity, for whose sake he made the world [δι’ οὗς ἐποίησε τὸν κόσμον]. . . , them he created in his own image, to them he sent his one and only Son, to them he promised the kingdom in heaven, which he will give to those who have loved him.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Diognetus* 8:7, ed and tr. Holmes, 708-709.

<sup>132</sup> *Diognetus* 7:2, tr. Holmes, 705-707.

<sup>133</sup> *Diognetus* 10:2, ed. and tr. Holmes, 710-713. Through Christ, *Diognetus* also links creation with eschatology, since, “he will send him as judge, and who will endure his coming?” (πέμψει γὰρ αὐτὸν κρίνοντα· καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ τὴν παρουσίαν ὑποστήσεται - *Diognetus* 7:6, ed. and tr. Holmes, 706-707.)

## 6. Reflections and Conclusion

As O'Hagan observed, "the Apostolic Fathers refuse to be synthesized."<sup>134</sup> Although they admittedly do not portray a consistent focus or theology across their various texts, in terms of their understanding of the original creation, there are commonalities that can be identified. The first is that they assume, and often explicitly affirm, the creation narrative of Genesis in ways that indicate that they view it as a real and literal account.

The second commonality is that in their writings, the creation narrative plays a fundamental role in how they develop and express their theological understandings. This is particularly so in terms of their ecclesiology, christology, and soteriology. In fact, the very hermeneutic of the "Apostolic Fathers" depends on a literal understanding of the Genesis creation account. This conclusion essentially differs from that of Bouteneff, who writes:

[t]he point is not, then, whether the fathers took the seven "days" or Adam as historical. . . none of the fathers' strictly theological or moral conclusions—about creation, or about humanity and its redemption, and the coherence of everything in Christ—has anything to do with the datable chronology of the creation of the universe or with the physical existence of Adam and Eve. They read the creation narratives as Holy Scripture, and therefore as "true." But they did not see them as lessons in history or science as such. . . . Generally speaking, the fathers were free from a slavish deference to science. Rather their theological and paraenetic approach to the creation narratives left them free to enjoy an unprejudiced scientific inquisitiveness.<sup>135</sup>

Bouteneff here appears to assert that the "theological" approach of the Fathers precluded their understanding the creation narrative as events grounded in history; that somehow, because they had a theological or religious mind set, that the reality of the events did not matter. Bouteneff, it seems, treats the early Fathers unfairly, in attempting to impose a modern world-view on their mental world. The ancient world did not differentiate between religion, history, and science. The mental world of the early Fathers was much more organic, and was not composed of

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<sup>134</sup> O'Hagan, *Material Re-creation*, 139.

<sup>135</sup> Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 183.

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strictly discrete mental categories. The ancient Greeks had no word for “science” as a discipline as we presently understand it, and generally subsumed all knowledge under “philosophy.”<sup>136</sup> Of course, they did not see the Genesis narratives as discrete lessons in history or science, and they were certainly “free from a slavish deference to science.” However, this was not because they did not appreciate the Genesis narratives as being grounded in a past reality. Nor was this because they were so naïve as to not be able to discriminate between real history and its spiritual applications. It is simply because the concept of science as a discrete empirical discipline had not yet properly emerged.

Furthermore, the early Fathers were interested to a greater degree in the more recent facts that had impacted the world: the birth, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the growth and well-being of the church as His body. It is for this reason that their hermeneutical focus is so firmly christological. The reality is, however, that in spite of how far-fetched their allegorical hermeneutic may appear to be to some, its very existence is based on an affirmation, rather than on a denial, of the literal truth of Scripture’s account of God’s dealings with the world, beginning with its creation. This affirmation stands as a key foundation of their theological understanding, and particularly of their ecclesiology and soteriology.

The relevance of the findings of this essay to the current discussions about science and origins is that they illustrate that the “Apostolic Fathers” understood the Genesis creation account to be real and literal, and that they reflected this same emphasis in the writings that they left for us. There may be aspects of the teachings of the “Apostolic Fathers” with which we may choose to disagree; however, at least we should note that they carefully observed the implications of their literal understanding of the Genesis creation account, and worked them into their theological understandings. They understood the principle that beginnings do have endings, that beginnings do have implications, a principle that still holds true today.

Although the “Apostolic Fathers” are far from the idea of writing systematic theology, it is right to say that they rely to a greater extent on

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<sup>136</sup> See further R. W. Sharples “Introduction,” in *Philosophy and the Sciences in Antiquity*. Edited by R. W. Sharples. Keeling Series in Ancient Philosophy (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005), 1-7, 1-3.

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the Genesis creation account as a foundational element in their theologies, than do most modern theologians. In this emphasis, they align closely with Jewish and New Testament emphases, and they remind us not to neglect the work that God did “[i]n the beginning.”

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## **Thrones in the Book of Revelation**

### **Part 1: Throne of God**

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The throne is a constant point of reference in the book of Revelation. A basic statistical overview of the term's use reveals that out of the sixty-two *θρόνος* references of the New Testament forty-seven are in this book spread over seventeen out of the twenty-two chapters.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it can be argued that the throne motif is not absent even from the majority of the chapters which do not contain explicit *θρόνος* references (chs. 9, 10, 15, 17 and 18), since it is either assumed or referred to by a cognate concept. Ford rightly concludes that the intensive presence of the throne in Revelation "cannot be a coincidence."<sup>2</sup>

The structure of the throne motif is far more complex than the vast majority of the motifs in the book. Revelation is not merely permeated with *θρόνος* references, but the motif is featured with particular care at the central locations in the literary structure of the work. A clear indicator of the complexity is that the throne is applied not only to God, but also to the Lamb, his allies and even adversaries. Thus, thirty-six references link God individually to the throne, while the remaining

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<sup>1</sup> The throne references are concentrated mostly in the throne-room vision of Rev. 4-5: 4:2(2x), 3, 4(3x), 5(2x), 6(3x), 9, 10(2x); 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13. The other references are the following: 1:4; 2:13; 3:21(2x); 6:16; 7:9, 10, 11(2x), 15(2x), 17; 8:3; 11:16; 12:5; 13:2; 14:3; 16:10, 17; 19:4, 5, 20:4, 11, 12; 21:3, 5; 22:1, 3. The references outside Revelation include: Mt. 5:34; 19:28(2x), 23:22; 25:31; Lk. 1:32, 52; 22:30; Acts 2:30; 7:49; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:8; 4:16; 8:1; 12:2. Interestingly, no references to thrones are found in any other writings of the Johannine corpus.

<sup>2</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 76.

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eleven are ascribed in the following manner: two to God and the Lamb conjointly (22:1, 3), two individually to the Lamb (3:21; 7:17), three to the twenty-four elders (4:4[2x], 11:16), one to the saints (20:4), and in regard to God's adversaries, one to Satan (2:13) and two to the beast (13:2; 16:10). Structurally, the visionary part of the book (4:1-22:5) starts and ends with visions that strongly emphasize the centrality of the throne: the first in a heavenly context (4:1-5:14) and the last in the earthly context of the new creation (22:1-5). This *inclusio* suggests that the work has been organized within the framework of throne visions.

This article is the first in a series of four that examine individually the cardinal components of Revelation's throne motif: the throne of God, the throne of the Lamb, the thrones of God's allies and the thrones of his adversaries. The aim of these articles is not to provide a comprehensive picture on the nature of Revelation's throne motif, its background, development, rhetorical impact or theological significance.<sup>3</sup> I will rather focus in each article on a particular throne providing an exegetical analysis of the key texts and suggesting answers to the main questions that arise in the course of study.

Since the throne of God is the main cardinal component of Revelation's throne motif, it will be the subject of this first article in the series on the thrones. The centrality of God's throne in relation to the other thrones is evident in the fact that 76.6% of the book's θρόνος references (thirty-six out of the forty-seven) are throne of God texts. Almost half of them are concentrated in the throne room vision (chs. 4-5), which is the first vision in the central part of the book (4:1-22:5). In the first part of our examination detailed attention will be given to the heavenly scene of ch. 4, because it introduces the details of the heavenly realm with God's throne at the center. This will be followed by the investigation of the use of the formula "the One sitting on the throne" that runs through the book as the most frequent characterization expression of God. Finally, attention will be given to the dynamics of the throne.

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<sup>3</sup> For the in-depth discussion of these questions, see Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation* (LNTS; London: T. & T. Clark, 2013-forthcoming).

1. Description of God's Throne (4:1-11)

The throne room vision of Rev. 4-5 is generally considered to be the pivotal section of Revelation.<sup>4</sup> It provides the most detailed picture of the divine throne and the heavenly realm in the entire work. The concentration of the *θρόνος* references is the highest in the book: the word appears nineteen times in twenty-five verses. As noted rightly by Schüssler Fiorenza, this vision lays “the rhetorical foundation and provides the key symbolic images for all that follows.”<sup>5</sup> The literary and thematic unity of Rev. 4-5 has been often demonstrated.<sup>6</sup> Though these two chapters are clearly linked into a larger passage, at the same time they form two units in themselves. Müller aptly calls this literary phenomenon a “double scene.”<sup>7</sup> While the two basic components of the vision share numerous verbal and thematic parallels, their emphasis is different: the focus of ch. 4 is on God and his throne, whereas in ch. 5 the attention is shifted to the Lamb and his redemptive mission.<sup>8</sup> This literary relation justifies our intention to deal in this article only with God's throne concentrating primarily on ch. 4, while the Lamb's relation to the throne in ch. 5 will be discussed in the second article of this series.

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<sup>4</sup> Opposed to the majority view, Christopher Rowland (“The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature,” *JSJ* 10 [1979], 137-54[150]) views Rev. 4 as “incidental to the overriding purpose of the work as a whole.” For a critic of this suggestion, see Larry W. Hurtado, “Revelation 4-5 in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies,” *JSNT* 25 (1985), 105-24 (118).

<sup>5</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Proclamation Commentaries; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 58.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Russell S. Morton (*One upon the Throne and the Lamb: A Traditional Historical/Theological Analysis of Revelation 4-5* [SBL, 110; New York: Peter Lang, 2007], 68-70, 80 n. 149) views evidence for the unity in similar motifs in the chapters, the similarity of the hymnic material and the dependence of 5:1-2 on the preceding scene. He refers to the works of Lohmeyer, Charles, Allo, Kraft, Zahn, Swete, Beasley-Murray, Ladd, Farrer, Murphy, Roloff, Thompson, Beale and Mounce, who acknowledge the unity of Rev. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4-11* (AUSDDS, 21; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996), 204. For a syntactical display of the two chapters and a comparative table of the recurring words and phrases within the respective units, see pp. 77-83, 94-95.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1967), 262.



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### 1.1. Contextual and Structural Considerations

It has been widely recognized that the contextual relation of Rev. 4-5 to the immediately preceding Seven Letters addressed to the churches in Asia Minor (chs. 2-3) is of major significance for understanding the intention of the vision. It seems that the relation is not only thematic, but deeply theological.<sup>9</sup> This view has been argued by Smalley, who claims that the throne room vision “looks back to the life of the people of God on earth, described in the messages to the seven churches of Asia. . . by setting out the theological perspective given to this life by the Church in eternity.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the earthly and heavenly realities are contrasted with the intention of encouraging the church militant portrayed in chs. 2-3 through the disclosing of the indisputable supremacy of the heavenly power-center introduced in the vision of chs. 4-5.

There has been a considerable variety of suggestions concerning the structure of 4:1-11. While some attempts have been made to discover a chiasm, the interpreters of Revelation are more inclined to follow a more or less detailed outline.<sup>11</sup> Since it seems that everything is portrayed in the chapter in terms of the relation to the divine throne, I hold that it is appropriate to structure the chapter around this thematic center. After the typical apocalyptic opening of the vision (4:1-2a), first, the heavenly throne is introduced with its occupant (4:2b-3), which is followed by the description of the throne’s surroundings (4:4-7) and the hymnic adoration given to “the One sitting on the throne” (4:8-11).<sup>12</sup> The overall

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<sup>9</sup> Gregory K. Beale (*The Book of Revelation* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999], 311-12) rightly concludes of the thematic relation of the two visions: Rev. 4-5 “draws into itself the major themes of chs. 1-3.”

<sup>10</sup> Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 109.

<sup>11</sup> There is a disagreement among the proponents of the chiasmic structure of Rev. 4 concerning the focal point. For example, Müller (*Microstructural Analysis*, 207) views the four living creatures at the center, while Charles H. Giblin (‘From and before the Throne: Revelation 4:5-6a Integrating the Imagery of Revelation 4-16,’ *CBQ* 60 [1998], 500-12) the theophanic manifestation of 4:5-6. Nils Wilhelm Lund’s (*Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiasmic Structures* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992], 325-26) double chiasm is more complex with the focal points at 4:5b-6 and 4:10a. From these suggestions only Giblin’s view may be considered as possibly viable, because of the emphasis on the divine throne as the focal object of the chapter. However, I am more inclined to follow the majority view that advocates an outline structure.

<sup>12</sup> This outline is similar to that of Morton’s (*One Upon the Throne*, 83) with the minor difference that he views only 4:1 as the introductory statement.

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picture is that of concentric circles made up of a rainbow (ἵρις), the four living creatures (τέσσαρες ζῶα) and the twenty-four elders (εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι) with the “awe-inspiring throne”<sup>13</sup> at the focal point. The series of concentric circles is further expanded in 5:11 and 7:11 including a great host of angels. Such arrangement is suggested by the repeated use of κυκλόθειν (“around in a circle”) and κύκλω (“around in a circle”), the adverbs of place both occurring three times in Revelation—always in connection with the elements or beings encircling the throne.<sup>14</sup> The idea that the heaven is arranged in concentric circles with the divine throne at the center is not unique to Revelation, since it is attested in *1En.* 71:6-8 and in a more elaborate form in *3En.* 33:1-34:2.

### 1.2. Background

The heavenly throne room scene of Rev. 4 encompasses cultic and political aspects.<sup>15</sup> The two aspects should, however, not be divorced by a false dichotomy, because in John’s thought-world the religious was considered part of the political. These two aspects form together the larger interpretive context for the vision. The first interprets the imagery against the background of the Jewish tradition, while the second points to Graeco-Roman practices.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.2.1. Cultic Symbolism

Extensive evidence has been provided that Rev. 4 is pervaded by cultic imagery.<sup>17</sup> Although the term *ναός* is absent from the vision, the

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<sup>13</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (NCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 112.

<sup>14</sup> κυκλόθειν appears in 4:3, 4, 8, while κύκλω in 4:6; 5:11; 7:11.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33-35; David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1998), 63.

<sup>16</sup> For an attempt to understand the imagery of Rev. 4-5 as rooted in the ANE mythology, see Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 und Ap. 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895).

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., James Valentine, “Theological Aspects of the Temple Motif in the Old Testament and Revelation” (PhD Dissertation; Boston University, 1985), 210-11; R. Dean Davis, *The Heavenly Court Judgment of Revelation 4-5* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 118-43; Jon Paulien, “The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary and

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cumulative force of the numerous allusions point to cultic symbolism as the major background.<sup>18</sup> The most exhaustive study of the allusions to the Old Testament *היכל* in Revelation's throne vision is provided by Davis. He connects (1) the heavenly throne with the Most Holy Place; (2) the precious stones of jasper, sardius and emerald with the breastplate worn by the high priest; (3) the rainbow with the covenantal relationship central to the sanctuary; (4) the number and function of the twenty-four elders with the Old Testament priesthood; (5) the lightening, voices and thunder with Sinai, Yahweh's temple/throne prior to the construction of the wilderness sanctuary; (6) the seven torches of fire with the menorah; (7) the sea of glass with the molten sea, the portable laver and the bronze platform; and (8) the four living creatures with the cherubim.<sup>19</sup> Paulien adds to this list another three connection points, while he rightly omits the third and the fifth parallels argued by Davis. First, he suggests that the open door of 4:1 might refer to the door of the heavenly temple, since in LXX *θύρα* occurs scores of times in relation to the Israelite tent/sanctuary, temple and liturgy. Second, he interprets the voice like trumpet in 4:1 against a cultic background, since the trumpets have been used in the Old Testament both in a military as well as a cultic context (Num. 10:8-10). Third, he suggests that the four faces of the living creatures (4:7) should be viewed against a Jewish tradition that associates the lion, calf, man and eagle with the four banners which surrounded the

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Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 33 (1995), 245-64; Ranko Stefanović, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5* (AUSDDS, 22; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996), 202-06; Franz Tóth, *Der himmlische Kult: Wirklichkeitskonstruktion und Sinnbildung in der Johannesoffenbarung* (ABG, 22; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 201-88. See also the following works, which acknowledge the cultic setting without discussing the details: Ford, *Revelation*, 70-76; Kenneth A. Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 25 (1987), 107-21; Idem. "The 'Victorious-Introduction' Scenes in the Visions in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 25 (1987), 267-88; Bauckham, *Theology*, 33-34; Beale, *Revelation*, 315-16; Dan Lioy, *The Book of Revelation in Christological Focus* (SBL, 58; New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 131.

<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, Andrea Spatafora (*From the 'Temple of God' to God as Temple: A Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* [Tesi Gregoriana Seria Teologia, 22; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997], 127-247) in his study of the temple motif in Revelation fails to give attention to Rev. 4-5. The reason for this major omission is methodological, since the study focuses exclusively on examination of the *ναός* passages.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *Heavenly Court Judgment*, 118-34.

Isrealite camp in the wilderness. Finally, Paulien rightly concludes that no passage in the whole book contains “a larger quantity or a wider variety of allusions to the Hebrew cultus” than the vision of the heavenly throne room.<sup>20</sup> The exhaustive list of the allusions indicates the intention of the author that the vision should be understood primarily against a cultic background. However, the interpretation also needs to take into account the political symbolism present in the vision, which made a lot of sense to the original audience.

### 1.2.2. Political Symbolism

In his ground-breaking study on the topic, Aune advanced a suggestion which attracted much discussion: “John’s depiction of the ceremonial in the heavenly throne room has been significantly influenced in its conceptualization by popular images of Roman imperial court ceremonial.”<sup>21</sup> While he admits that this thesis is difficult to demonstrate, the idea that Rev. 4 correlates with the religio-political context John addresses gained wide support in scholarly circles.<sup>22</sup> Aune points out a considerable number of parallels between the throne room scene and Roman imperial imagery: (1) the twenty-four elders corresponding to the lictors of the emperor; (2) honoring the ruler with the presentation of crowns; (3) the act of prostration; and (4) the hymns with their acclamations that reflect the cultic practices of ancient Mediterranean regions. He argues also that the parallels are most evident in the honorific titles which are in Revelation applied to the Lamb, but in imperial terminology to the Caesar.<sup>23</sup> The most well-known examples are

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<sup>20</sup> Paulien, “Hebrew Cultus,” 249-51.

<sup>21</sup> David E. Aune, “The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John,” *BR* 38 (1983), 5-26 (22).

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Schüssler Fiorenza, *Vision of a Just World*, 59-60; Sophie Laws, *In the Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody, and Theology in the Apocalypse of John* (GNS, 31; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 76-77; M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (IBD; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 103; Bauckham, *Theology*, 34-35; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of all Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 75-76; Barr, *Tales*, 63-64; Morton, *One upon the Throne*, 180-85. For a critic of Aune’s thesis, see Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 251 n. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Aune (“Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial,” 20) mentions nine frequently used titles of the imperial terminology which are parallel to Christ’s portrayal in Revelation: (1) god; (2) son of god; (3) god made manifest; (4) lord; (5) lord of the whole world; (6) lord’s day;

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κύριος and θεός, the employment of which in Rev. 4:8, 11 is interpreted as “an antithetical reflection of the application of those titles to Roman emperors.”<sup>24</sup>

The parallelism between John’s throne vision and the Roman imperial court ceremonial is motivated by a rhetorical purpose on part of the author. Bauckham rightly notes that the point of the similarities lies not in the comparison, but rather the opposition of the two.<sup>25</sup> For this reason it is appropriate to interpret the parallels as ironical indicators of a larger parody.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.3. Interpretation

#### 1.3.1. Ascent to Heaven

John’s ascent to heaven is briefly stated in 4:1-2a, an introductory statement somewhat distinct from the rest of the chapter which sets the stage for glimpsing the heavenly throne room. The vision is opened by the combination of two apocalyptic motifs: the door and the open heaven. The door to heaven is a well-known apocalyptic concept that symbolizes access to God and eternal bliss.<sup>27</sup> Aune notes that the motif occurs only twice in the Old Testament (Gen. 28:17; Ps. 78:23), but it is more prominent in the Graeco-Roman tradition, particularly in southwest Asia Minor. For instance, he points to numismatic and literary evidence from the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus which had a door in the front pediment that was used for the ritual epiphany of the goddess.<sup>28</sup>

The simplicity of the ascent’s description is striking, since after the call into heaven by a “voice like a trumpet” the attention is immediately

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(7) saviour of the world; (8) epiphany; and (9) emperor. For the use of political language in Revelation reserved for the praise of emperors, see Dominique Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Paradosis, *Contribution to the History of Early Christian Literature and Theology*, 23; Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1974), 55-88.

<sup>24</sup> David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (3 vols.; WBC, 52A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1997), 310.

<sup>25</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> While Aune (“Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial,” 5) employs the term “parody” for the rhetorical phenomenon of Rev. 4, Laws (*In the Light of the Lamb*, 77) uses rather “counter-parody,” because of the reverse flow.

<sup>27</sup> *1En.* 14:10-11; 15:14; 104:2; *T. Levi* 5:1; *3 Macc.* 6:18.

<sup>28</sup> Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 281.

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shifted to the heavenly throne and its occupant.<sup>29</sup> John does not proceed from outer to inner spheres of holiness, but he is instantly taken to the heavenly throne room. Revelation's concept of a single heaven is in sharp contrast to the elaborate description of the plurality of the heavens widespread in Jewish literature.<sup>30</sup> Interpreting Revelation's concept of heaven Gruenwald suggests that the author may have not been aware of the latest developments in Jewish apocalyptic thought, since his cosmology reflects an outmoded view of only a single heaven.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to this view much persuasive is Hurtado's argument, which claims that the simple description of the heavenly ascent reflects John's conscious choice, because the "description of multiple heavenly layers simply forms no part of his purpose."<sup>32</sup> Namely, the intention of the author lies not in conveying knowledge about the heavenly geography, but rather in his explanation of the nature of the connection between the heavenly and the earthly realities. Since John "spends not a syllable on curiosity-titillating descriptions of the heavenly journey itself," his energy may remain focused entirely on the throne.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John's ascent has been connected with the heavenly trips in apocalyptic tradition (e.g., Gerhard Krodel, *Revelation* [ACNT; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989], 154; Jürgen Roloff, *Revelation* [trans. J.E. Alsup; CC; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993], 68). However, there is no compelling reason to interpret the expression ἐν πνεύματι as a release of the soul similar to in the Jewish apocalypses. The phrase should rather be understood as an idiom indicating that John's revelatory experience took place in a vision trance (Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* [London: Macmillan, 1906], 12-13; Robert H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introd., Notes, and Indices, also the Greek Text and English Translation* [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920], I, 22; Heinrich Kraft, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* [HNT, 16a; Tübingen: Mohr, 1974], 95).

<sup>30</sup> The term οὐρανός is used in the singular throughout Revelation, except in 12:12. It has been argued that this may be ascribed to the influence of Isa. 44:23 (Robert H. Mounce, *Revelation* [NICNT, 17; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977], 133 n. 3; Smalley, *Revelation*, 113).

<sup>31</sup> Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU, 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 48.

<sup>32</sup> Hurtado, "Revelation 4-5," 111.

<sup>33</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 102.

## GALLUSZ: THRONES IN REVELATION

### 1.3.2. The Throne and Its Occupant

The throne is the very first thing John glimpses in heaven (4:2b). There is no attempt to describe its physical features.<sup>34</sup> It is only stated that the throne “was located in the heaven” (ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ). Since it is stated in 4:1-2 that both the open door and the throne are located in the heaven, the double reference seems to emphasize the shift to the heavenly realm at the beginning of the vision.<sup>35</sup>

There has been some discussion concerning the meaning of ἔκειτο. It has been argued that this form is a passive of τίθημι (“to place”), which indicates the immediacy of the action, the possibility that the act of placing occurred in heaven at that point.<sup>36</sup> Beale even goes a step further suggesting that ἔκειτο may reflect the setting up of thrones in Dan. 7:9 (θρόνοι ἐτέθησαν).<sup>37</sup> However, it seems more likely that κείμαι (“to set”) as a verbal copula is in the mind of the author and the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ appears as a predicate with κείμαι. It is not indicated in Rev. 4:2 how the throne got to the place where it stood—the emphasis is only on its heavenly location.<sup>38</sup> Thus, God’s throne is portrayed in Rev. 4 as the *axis mundi*, the immovable center of all reality, unlike the description of the *merkabah* texts in which the throne appears as a dynamically moving object.

The identity of the throne’s occupant is not immediately disclosed. He is referred to by a circumlocution ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος (“the One sitting on the throne”; 4:2). The avoidance of naming the enthroned figure at the beginning of the vision generates a tension which is resolved in the hymnic section of 4:8-11, where the worshiping of the figure and the reference to his title, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (“Lord God Almighty”), unmistakably identifies him as the Father God. While the author is very reserved about the use of any anthropomorphic imagery concerning the enthroned figure, it is made clear that a person is in view

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<sup>34</sup> Similar to the other throne visions of the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature. The only possible exception is *IEn*.14:18: θρόνον ὑψηλὸν καὶ τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ κρυστάλλινον (“lofty throne—its appearance was like crystal”).

<sup>35</sup> Strand, “The ‘Victorious-Introduction’ Scenes,” 271.

<sup>36</sup> Swete, *Apocalypse*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 320.

<sup>38</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 88.

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here, not a principle or an elemental force.<sup>39</sup> The lack of explicit description is made up for by the comparison of “the One sitting on the throne” to three precious stones. He is characterized as “similar in appearance to jasper stone and a carnelian” (ὅμοιος ὁράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ καρδίῳ), while the rainbow encircling the throne is depicted as “similar in appearance to emerald” (ὅμοιος ὁράσει σμαραγδίνῳ). There is a disagreement concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the precious stones for the vision. While separate significance has been ascribed to the individual stones by some interpreters,<sup>40</sup> the view that they are meant to be taken together is supported by the majority. It has been also recognized that all three stones of 4:3 are part of the twelve jewels in the breastplate of the high priest (Exod. 28:17-21) and they appear also on the list of stones of the paradise (Ezek. 28:13).<sup>41</sup> I concur with Osborne that the concept of God as light probably provides the best explanation for the meaning of the precious stones, because the overall impression of the description is that of majestic splendor.<sup>42</sup> Following the same line of reasoning Beale concludes: “The stones intensify the light around the throne by reflecting the unapproachable brightness, and hence glory, surrounding God himself.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Rowland (“Visions of God,” 146) argues that the lack of anthropomorphic terminology is only superficial. He speaks of a “subtly disguised” anthropomorphism, because of the text’s indebtedness to Ezek. 28:13 in which “jasper and carnelian” occur in the same successive order as in the description of the *Urmensch*. Rowland’s argument is inconclusive, since the background of the precious stones of Rev. 4:3 is much wider. For a comprehensive discussion of the question, see, e.g., Davis, *Heavenly Court Scene*, 119-20; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 226-28.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., William Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (New York: Armstrong, 1901), 67-68; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1966), 104; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992), 342.

<sup>41</sup> E.g., Ford, *Revelation*, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 228. For the concept of God as light, see Ps. 18:12; 104:2; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 1:5, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 321. He convincingly argues that the precious stones and the rainbow in Rev. 4:3 are “an incipient hint” of the new creation that already began in heaven by the inauguration of Christ’s redemptive work.



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A peculiar feature of the heavenly throne is the rainbow (ἵρις) which directly encircles it (4:3).<sup>44</sup> The term ἵρις appears in the New Testament besides this reference only in 10:1. The image recalls Ezekiel's throne vision in which the radiant light surrounding the figure on the throne was likened to a rainbow (תִּקְוָה; Ezek. 1:28). Since תִּקְוָה is translated in LXX with τόξον ("bow"), Aune argues that John's use of ἵρις reflects intentionality, holding that the choice of a pagan term is probably for the sake of clarity.<sup>45</sup> In spite of the close affinity of the two contexts, there is a significant difference between Ezekiel's and John's use of the rainbow imagery. In Ezek. 1:28 the divine splendor is only likened to the appearance of a rainbow (בְּמַרְאֵה הַתִּקְוָה), while in Rev. 4:3 John sees a rainbow encircling the throne, which is likened to an emerald in appearance (ὁμοίως ὄρασει σμαραγδίνῳ). As Bauckham concludes, the rainbow imagery "moves from simile to reality."<sup>46</sup> Though in John's throne vision it evokes primarily the idea of God's glory, at the same time it introduces the theme of covenant developed later in the book.

The brevity of the introduction of the heavenly throne and its occupant as the center of reality in Revelation is surprising in light of the motif's prominence in the book. This feature reflects a theological purpose on part of the author. Namely, the detailed attention to the description of the heavenly throne's surroundings rather than focusing on the occupant implies the protection of the unknowable transcendence of God.<sup>47</sup> The reference to God primarily by the circumlocution "the One sitting on the throne" conveys the same purpose. I would like to suggest that the linguistic style of the chapter not only protects God's transcendence, but stresses the centrality of his throne. Every detail of the vision—all beings, objects and activities—are directly related to the

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<sup>44</sup> Some MSS mention ἱερεῖς ("priests") instead of ἵρις (κ\* A 1611<sup>2329</sup>). For text critical discussions, see Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols.; trans. John Moore Trout et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1953), I, 319 n. 4; Josef Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes* (2 vols.; *Münchener theologische Studien*; München: Zink, 1956), II, 73.

<sup>45</sup> He refers to *Ant. 1.103* in which Josephus explains that τοξεία and τόξον mean ἵρις (Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 286).

<sup>46</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 51-52.

<sup>47</sup> Jan A. du Rand, "The Transcendent God-View: Depicting Structure in the Theological Message of the Revelation of John," *Neot* 28 (1994), 557-73(569); Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 188.

heavenly throne as the focal point of John's cosmology and find significance only in their placement around this center of the universe.

### 1.3.3. The Surroundings of the Throne

Jewish apocalypses describe throne scenes in varying levels of detail. Some elaborate on a host of beings in varying ranks, while others provide a less complex picture. Similar to these writings John presents "an all-encompassing cosmic map"<sup>48</sup> at the beginning of the visionary part of Revelation, but his description is one of the least elaborate.

Closest to the heavenly throne, though not first in the order of description, are the seven burning lamps of fire that are located in its proximity, in front of it (ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καιόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου; 4:5). The interpretation of this symbol is given in the text: it is identified with the seven Spirits of God (ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ). The imagery is cultic in nature: just as in the sanctuary the menorah was located in front of Yahweh's ark (Exod. 25:31-38; 2Chron. 4:7), in 4:5 the seven lamps are placed in front of God's throne. The seven lamps have also a background in the Old Testament.<sup>49</sup> In the throne vision of Ezek. 1 "torches" are mentioned as moving "back and forth" (1:13) in contrast with the fixed torches of Rev. 4:5. Likewise, the author may also have been alluding to the seven lamps of Zech. 4:2, 10, which are similarly located before God and are identified with his eyes (cf. Rev. 5:6). The influence of these sources on Revelation's imagery is very likely, but nevertheless the statement that the seven lamps are the "Seven Spirits of God" is considered John's unique contribution.<sup>50</sup>

The identity of the Seven Spirits in 4:5 has generated some discussions. A number of scholars have cautiously identified them with heavenly angelic agents, who hold a specific ministry in connection with

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<sup>48</sup> David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2009), 97.

<sup>49</sup> Gunkel (*Schöpfung und Chaos*, 294-302) suggests astrological influence on the imagery of the seven lamps. His argument is, however, highly speculative. For a critique of this hypothesis, see Morton, *One Upon the Throne*, 94-96.

<sup>50</sup> Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT, 16; Tübingen: Mohr, 1926), 47.

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the Lamb.<sup>51</sup> Since in the primitive mind fire and flame were generally associated with divinity,<sup>52</sup> it seems more plausible to interpret the imagery as a reference to the Holy Spirit. There is a strong exegetical basis for this interpretation, because the Seven Spirits have similarly been introduced as being in front of God's throne in the book's prologue (1:4). The immediate context of this reference provides a key to identification, because it is given within the Trinitarian context of the epistolary salutation in which the Seven Spirits are referred to between the greetings of God and Christ. The number seven may refer to the fullness indicating the deity of the Spirit, but at the same time it may also be related to his presence in each of the seven churches addressed in the messages of chs. 2-3.<sup>53</sup>

Besides the seven lamps, the preposition ἐνώπιον relates something that appears to be "as sea of glass like crystal" (ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ; 4:6) to the heavenly throne. There is no consensus concerning the meaning of this imagery. While it has been interpreted symbolically, it has also been viewed as simply adding to the magnificence of the scene.<sup>54</sup> It seems most plausible to argue for complexity in this context, since several Old Testament ideas are alluded to that are not mutually exclusive. First, the "molten sea" of the Solomonic temple is reflected against the cultic background (1Kgs 7:23-26). Similar to the "sea of glass" in Rev. 4:6, the "molten sea" was located in front of the throne/ark, because the court was considered part

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<sup>51</sup> The seven principal angels standing in God's presence is a well-known motif of Jewish angelology (Tob. 12:15; *I En.* 20; 4Q ShirShabb). The angelic interpretation is advocated, e.g., in Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), 7-8; Charles Homer Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (GNS, 34; Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1991), 71-72.

<sup>52</sup> James Moffatt, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (5 vols.; London: Hodder and Stoughton; New York: George H. Doran, 1910), V, 279-494 (379).

<sup>53</sup> On the Spirit in Revelation, see F.F. Bruce, "The Spirit in the Apocalypse" in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament, Festschrift C. F. D. Moule*, eds. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 333-44; R. L. Jeske, "Spirit and Community in the Johannine Apocalyps," *NTS* 31 (1985), 452-66; J. C. de Smidt, "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation-Nomenclature," *Neot* 28 (1994), 229-44.

<sup>54</sup> For example, Mounce (*Revelation*, 137) views the sea of glass as part of the larger picture heightening "the sense of God's separateness from his creatures" without a precise figurative meaning. While this interpretation of the effect of the sea of glass is basically valid, the background of the imagery suggests a more profound meaning.

of the temple both geographically and theologically.<sup>55</sup> Second, there is an allusion to Ezek. 1:22 where the appearance of the firmament is compared to “crystal” or “ice.” In both contexts the imagery designates the floor of God’s heavenly throne. The description, written using the language of splendor, recalls Exod. 24:10 in which a sapphire pavement undergirding the throne of God is mentioned. The heavenly sea is also a common motif in apocalyptic literature.<sup>56</sup> However, given the lack of association with a throne scene, a direct dependence is hardly plausible.

God’s throne is encircled in Rev. 4 by two groups of beings. First, twenty-four elders are portrayed (εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι; 4:4), whose individual thrones are related to God’s throne by κυκλόθεν.<sup>57</sup> Since the thrones of the elders appear as heavenly thrones distinct from God’s, they will receive detailed attention in the third article in our series on thrones in Revelation (the thrones of God’s allies). I will focus here on the innermost concentric circle, in which there are four living creatures (τέσσαρα ζῶα) whose relation to the divine throne is defined by the preposition κύκλω (4:6). These beings show a close affinity with the cherubim imagery of Ezek. 1. While numerous similarities have been identified,<sup>58</sup> the differences are also significant and need explanation.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible* (BBRSup, 1; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 162.

<sup>56</sup> In *T. Levi* 2:7 the first heaven is described as a place where “much water was suspended.” *2En.* 3:3 refers to a “vast heavenly ocean,” while *T. Abr.* (B) 8 indicates that Michael lifted Abraham in bodily form via a cloud over “the river Ocean.”

<sup>57</sup> κυκλόθεν is employed also in 4:3 referring to the rainbow which encircles the throne. In 4:8 it appears in the context of the physical description of the four living creatures which are portrayed as beings “around and within . . . full of eyes” (κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν).

<sup>58</sup> William Hendriksen (*More than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1962], 86-87) has observed the following similarities: (1) the beings are called “living ones”; (2) their number is identical: four; (3) the appearance of their faces is compared to that of man, lion, ox and eagle; (4) they are closely associated with the throne; (5) fire moves to and fro among them; (6) they are covered all over with eyes; and (7) a rainbow encircles the throne that is guarded by the creatures.

<sup>59</sup> Charles (*Revelation*, I, 119) notes the following differences: (1) in Rev. the creatures have four faces, while in Ezek. only one; (2) in Rev. they have six wings and not four as in Ezek.; (3) they are standing immediately around the throne in Rev. and not bearing it as in Ezek.; (4) they sing praises contrary to the silence in Ezek.; (5) while in Rev. the creatures are “full of eyes,” in Ezek. the eyes are associated with the rims of the wheels; and (6) in Rev. the throne is fixed and the creatures are not in motion as in Ezek.

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Swete and Rowland interpret the differences as a sign of John's tendency to simplify the *merkabah* material of Ezekiel.<sup>60</sup> One of the weaknesses in this suggestion lies in the lack of explanation for the six wings of John's living creatures (Rev. 4:8) as opposed to the four wings of the cherubim (Ezek. 1:6). Also the unceasing praise of God in Rev. 4:8 contrasts with the silence in Ezek. 1. The differences are convincingly explained by Fekkes as the result of John's combination of Ezekiel's cherubim imagery with Isaiah's seraphim (Isa. 6:2-3):

The transition from Ezekiel to Isaiah coincides with a shift from the physical description of the living creatures to a presentation of their function (Rev 4:8b-9). Whereas in Ezekiel the duties of the cherubim are limited to the movement and activity of the divine throne chariot and have no function of worship or praise, the seraphim of Isa 6 serve as close attendants who lead in worship. Thus, while John takes over various physical attributes of Ezekiel's living creatures, their role as *merkabah* attendants is abandoned in favor of the worshipping seraphim of Isaiah.<sup>61</sup>

Revelation's imagery of the living creatures reveals that, in spite of the formative influence of Ezek. 1, the role of Isaiah's throne vision is not relegated to an "ornamental color or liturgical filler" of John's throne vision.<sup>62</sup> It rather functions as an important source for the theological substructure particularly regarding its strong emphasis on God's sovereignty. This conclusion is further supported by the shared motif of the *trishagion* sung both by John's living creatures (Rev. 4:8) and Isaiah's seraphim (Isa. 6:3).<sup>63</sup>

The most confusing detail in the characterization of the living creatures is their position in relation to the divine throne. They are

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<sup>60</sup> Swete, *Apocalypse*, 71; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 223.

<sup>61</sup> Jan Fekkes III, "Isaiah and the Book of Revelation: John the Prophet as a Fourth Isaiah?" in *As Those Who are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL*, eds. Claire M. McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull (SBLSymS, 27; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 125-43 (135).

<sup>62</sup> Fekkes, "Isaiah and the Book of Revelation," 136.

<sup>63</sup> For further details on the use of Isa. 6 in Rev. 4-5, see David Mathewson, "Isaiah in Revelation" in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel; London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 189-210 (190-91).

pictured in their introductory description as taking place ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου (“in the midst of the throne”; 4:6). The meaning of this prepositional phrase is a well-known *crux interpretum*. It has been suggested by Hall that John’s description is modeled on the ark of the covenant as attested in the Old Testament (Exod. 25:17-22).<sup>64</sup> That would mean that John’s living creatures are situated within the space of the throne as the integral components of the mercy seat.<sup>65</sup> According to this view God’s throne appears as a kind of “living entity.”<sup>66</sup> Although it has been argued that the evidence is insufficient for a verdict on this question,<sup>67</sup> Hall’s thesis can be challenged on several grounds. First, ἐν μέσῳ is clearly used differently in 5:6 as defining the position of the Lamb in relation to God’s throne, the living creatures and the elders. Second, ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου is clarified in 4:6 by the immediately following κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου, which is applied to worshiping angels in 5:11 and 7:11 implying separateness from the throne. Third, the living creatures appear twice in Revelation as falling down in worship before “the One sitting on the throne” (4:9; 19:4). The scene indicates a difference between the worshipers and the point towards which the worship is directed. Fourth, the concept of a heavenly throne with heavenly beings as its living components is not attested in earlier or contemporary literature. In Ezek. 1 the cherubim are beneath the throne, while in Isa. 6 the seraphim hover around it. Fifth, the cultic background sheds some light on the double reference to the position of the living creatures (ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου). Whereas the two

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<sup>64</sup> It is stated by Josephus that to “the cover [of the earthly ark] were affixed two. . . “cherubs”. . . and Moses says that he saw them sculpted on the [heavenly] throne of God” (*Ant.* 3.137). Similarly, *PRE* 4 and *Midr. Rab. Cant.* 3.10.4 claim that the four cherubim were engraved on parts of the heavenly throne itself.

<sup>65</sup> Robert G. Hall, “Living Creatures in the Midst of the Throne: Another Look at Revelation 4.6,” *NTS* 36 (1990), 609-13; cf. Darrell D. Hannah, “Of Cherubim and the Divine Throne: Rev. 5.6 in Context,” *NTS* 49 (2003), 528-42; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* (SP, 16; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 80; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (IVPNTCS, 20; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 93; Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (trans. Maria P. Johnson and Adam Kamesar; *Italian Texts & Studies on Religion & Society*; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 136.

<sup>66</sup> Michaels, *Revelation*, 93.

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., Dale C. Allison, “4Q403 Fragm. 1, Col. I, 38-46 and the Revelation of John,” *RevQ* 12 (1986), 409-13 (411).

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cherubim of the כַּפְרִית have been related to the ark of the covenant as being in the role of guardians, at the same time cherubim are portrayed on the walls of the Most Holy Place (1Kgs 6:23-29). The cumulative force of the evidence suggests that it is more appropriate to interpret Rev. 4:6 in terms of implying the “extreme closeness”<sup>68</sup> of cherubim to the throne, the surrounding of the center of the universe with their presence, rather than being situated within the throne as its living components.

The role of the living creatures needs some further clarification. There have been some attempts to interpret the arrangement set out in 4:6 as reflecting that of the Greek amphitheater.<sup>69</sup> Such an approach is unnecessary in the light of the cultic and political background of the vision. It is clearly indicated in Rev. 4 that the living creatures appear as a distinguished group of celestial beings acting in the role of guardians of the heavenly throne. At the same time their symbolic interpretation is very likely. Though several hypotheses have been proposed in this regard,<sup>70</sup> the most viable is the one that views the living creatures as representatives of the whole created order of animate life.<sup>71</sup> This interpretation sets the divine throne symbolically in the broadest context, portrayed as encircled by all the sentient creation gathered around it. Since the praise of the living creatures is unending, the throne appears in their midst as the epicenter of the praise.<sup>72</sup>

#### 1.3.4. Hymnic Adoration

The throne-room vision of Rev. 4-5 with its five doxological scenes is considered to be one of the richest liturgical sections in the entire

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<sup>68</sup> Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John* (The New Testament in Context; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 183-84.

<sup>69</sup> Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 501-02; Raymond R. Brewer, “The Influence of Greek Drama on the Apocalypse of John,” *ATR* 18 (1936), 74-92; Ford, *Revelation*, 74.

<sup>70</sup> Osborne’s (*Revelation*, 233-34) list of the different symbolic interpretations is an appropriate representation of the variety of suggestions: (1) the four gospels (church fathers); (2) the four corners of the zodiac (Charles, Farrer, Kraft, Beasley-Murray); (3) the representation of royalty with winged sphinxes or winged lions (Albright, Ford); (4) the divine attributes or spiritual characteristics (Walvoord, Johnson); (5) the four tribes of Israel (Scott); and (6) the whole of animate creation (Swete, Ladd, Mounce, Harrington, Wall, Roloff, Giesen, Beale).

<sup>71</sup> For interpreters supporting this view, see Charles Brüttsch, *Die Offenbarung Jesu Christi* (3 vols.; ZBK, 18; Zürich: Zwingli, 1970), I, 230-33.

<sup>72</sup> Barr, *Tales*, 71.

book. In the throne-scene of ch. 4 the hymnic material is concentrated in the concluding verses in which the adoration of the four living creatures (4:8) is followed by praise offered by the twenty-four elders (4:9-11). The interpretive role of these hymns has been convincingly argued by Beale, who claims that they “make explicit the main point of the vision and of the whole chapter: God is to be glorified because of his holiness and sovereignty.”<sup>73</sup>

The first hymn focuses on the character of the One sitting on the throne.” God’s distinctiveness is emphasized immediately at the beginning by the employment of a *trishagion*, drawn from Isa. 6:3, which is an appropriate opening anthem within a temple setting. The *trishagion* is followed by two complex divine titles: κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (“the Lord God Almighty”) and ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὄν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (“the One who is and was and is coming”). Though the throne’s occupant has been characterized until this moment only by circumlocutions, the content of the hymn discloses his divine identity. The two divine titles set a theological tone for the entire chapter by highlighting the ideas of God’s absolute kingship and sovereign control over history and time.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the content of the first hymn is consistent with the theological message the throne motif conveys with its strong centrality in the chapter.

While the first hymnic passage contains the praise of the creatures in the concentric circle nearest to the throne, the second hymnic section records the response of the twenty-four elders as the group situated in the second circle. The relationship of the two worship scenes is indicated by the temporal clause of 4:9 introduced by ὅταν (“whenever”), which modifies the main clause of 4:10.<sup>75</sup> These two verses act as an introductory statement for the second hymn’s transcript in 4:11. Still, they contain four references to God within the context of describing the act of worship. He is twice referred to by the circumlocution ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, while also twice by the title τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, which appears here for the first time in the book and continues the emphasis of the first hymn on God’s sovereignty as rooted

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<sup>73</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 331-32.

<sup>74</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 333.

<sup>75</sup> ὅταν followed by a future indicative (δώσουσιν) is not the classical usage (BDF, §382.4).



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in his eternal nature.<sup>76</sup> In the same texts three acts of the twenty-four elders are mentioned, which clarify their relationship to the occupant of the central throne: (1) they bow down before God vacating their thrones; (2) worship him; and (3) cast their crowns before the throne. All three acts are acts of subordination. Their combination indicates vassalage—the acknowledgment that homage belongs exclusively to the enthroned One. Aune has observed that, while the scene of casting down crowns before the divine throne is without parallel in Jewish literature, it is comprehensible against the ceremonial traditions of Hellenistic and Roman ruler worship.<sup>77</sup> A further parallel has been noted by Stevenson in his examination of the act of placing crowns at the feet of the conqueror by the conquered rulers (Cicero, *Sest.* 27; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.29). His conclusion about the Revelation scene is set against the Graeco-Roman context:

The performance of the elders should be understood as an imitation of such an act of subordination. By vacating their thrones and casting their crowns at the feet of the one on the central throne, the elders testify either that they have no right to possess for themselves what those objects represent or that they recognize one with greater right. The behavior of the elders thus functions to show that whatever is symbolized by the thrones and crowns belongs to God.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Gregory K. Beale (*The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984], 196) notes that this phrase occurs five times in different forms in the Old Testament outside of Daniel and in the apocrypha (Deut. 32:40; Esd. 4:38; Tob. 13:2; Sir. 18:1; 37:26). He regards, on the basis of the closest verbal parallels, Dan. 4:34 and 12:7 as the most probable influences on Rev. 4:9.

<sup>77</sup> Aune, "Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial," 13.

<sup>78</sup> Gregory M. Stevenson, "Conceptual Background to Golden Crown Imagery in the Apocalypse of John (4:4, 10; 14:14)," *JBL* 114 (1995), 257-72(269). He notes that three types of crowns appear in Revelation: (1) the organic wreath (στέφανος; 2:10; 3:11; 6:2; 12:1); (2) the diadem (διάδημα; 12:3; 13:1; 19:12); and (3) the golden wreath (στεφάνους χρυσοῦς; 4:4, 10; 9:7; 14:14). Traditionally, the diadem has been interpreted as a crown of royalty, while the organic and golden wreaths as wreaths of either victory or royalty. Stevenson rightly holds that this categorization is too simplistic. He demonstrates on the basis of literal and archaeological evidence that the golden wreath worn by the twenty-four elders in Rev. 4 is capable of expressing at least four concepts: victory, royalty, divine glory and honor.

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The hymn of the elders, similarly to the praise of the four living creatures, shares the focus on God's sovereignty, more specifically the acknowledging of his kingship. The three acts of vassalage finely resonate with the content of the elders' two-segment confession: the first focusing on God's worthiness and the second on the basis of his worship. The transition between the two parts is indicated by ὅτι, which introduces the rationale for the worship as grounded in his universal creatorship (4:11). The hymn of the twenty-four elders, similar to that of the four living creatures, ascribes lordship to God (ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν) and with the emphasis on his creatorship it serves as an indicator of the "natural disproportion between the one who adores and the one who is adored."<sup>79</sup>

It seems appropriate to close the exegetical study of Rev. 4 with the observation of Bauckham, who notes: "Revelation is theocentric because it offers a vision of the world in which God is the central and utterly decisive reality and in which the worship of God and the truth of God are key elements."<sup>80</sup> Though this theological perspective is conveyed by the book as a whole, the idea is nowhere stronger grounded than in the throne-room vision, in which the foundational picture of reality as focused on the divine throne is given. The reader of Revelation is reminded repeatedly of this viewpoint by the recurring characterization of God throughout the book, which pictures him as occupying the sign of his authority, the throne. I turn now to the discussion of this characterization formula.

## 2. Characterization of God by the Throne Motif

From ch. 4 onward God is referred to as the occupant of the heavenly throne twelve times. The references occur in six different grammatical forms: (1) ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος (4:2); (2) τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ (4:9; 5:13; 7:10; 19:4); (3) τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου (4:10; 5:1, 7; 6:16); (4) ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ (21:5); (5) ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου (7:15); and (6) θρόνον . . . καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ' αὐτόν (20:11). Also the abbreviated ὁ καθήμενος occurs once (4:3) as referring

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<sup>79</sup> Lupieri, *Apocalypse*, 137.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Bauckham, "God in the Book of Revelation," *PIBA* 18 (1995), 40-53(41).

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to the θρόνος in the previous verse.<sup>81</sup> The variations are not significant for the basic meaning of the expression.<sup>82</sup> Aune convincingly argues that the formula functions as “a circumlocution for the name of God,” since generally no other divine names are placed in syntactical connection with any of the mentioned passages.<sup>83</sup> The question of theocentric characterization has been studied extensively by Rotz, who persuasively argues that the expression functions as the key characterization technique for God throughout the book.<sup>84</sup> Since the formula is a theologically loaded expression with an essential role in conveying the theocentric perspective of Revelation, attention will be given here to its background, its use in the book and theological meaning.

### 2.1. Background

The expression “the One sitting on the throne” is not attested in the Old Testament as a circumlocution for God’s name. In Jewish and Christian literature it is rare, but not entirely absent. The closest affinity with Revelation’s circumlocution appears in Sir. 1:8-9 in which the formula is clearly applied to the divine κύριος portrayed as the creator: εἷς ἔστιν σοφός φοβερὸς σφόδρα καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ κύριος αὐτὸς ἔκτισεν. . . (“There is one wise, exceedingly to be feared, the One who sits upon his throne. The Lord himself created. . .”).<sup>85</sup> Also God is referred to in the *LAE* 37:4 as a Lord, who sits on a throne which is qualified as holy: δεσπότης καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἁγίου θρόνου αὐτοῦ

<sup>81</sup> This categorization is slightly different from Aune’s (*Revelation 1–5*, 284) who groups the text into five groups taking the references in 4:2 and 20:11 as the same grammatical form in spite of the clear differences. He also omits the reference in 4:3.

<sup>82</sup> Charles (*Revelation*, I, 112) in his discussion of the variation of cases suggests an explanation following the lead of Alford and Bousset: “The participle in the nom. and acc. is followed by ἐπί and the acc., and the participle in the gen. and dat. by the gen. and dat. respectively.”

<sup>83</sup> Aune (*Revelation 1–5*, 284) notes that 7:10 (τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ) and 19:4 (τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ) are exceptions in which the circumlocution is preceded by θεός. Charles (*Revelation*, I, 112) holds that this longer form is actually the full expression.

<sup>84</sup> Carol J. Rotz, “The One Who Sits on the Throne: Interdividual Perspectives of the Characterization of God in the Book of Revelation” (D. Litt and Phil. Dissertation; Rand Afrikaans University, 1998), 358-407.

<sup>85</sup> The expression occurs also in Sir. 40:3 as καθημένου ἐπὶ θρόνου ἐνδόξου (“from him who sits on the throne of glory”). However, the throne is not related to God here, but it is rather a motif employed in the development of the theme of suffering being the human lot.

(“the Lord who sits on his holy throne”). The expression is applied to human figures in *T. Abr.*, in which Adam and Abel are designated several times as figures occupying thrones.<sup>86</sup> It has been noted by Aune that, in contrast to its scarcity in the Old Testament and Jewish literature, the formula ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ appears as a divine epithet with great frequency in Graeco-Roman sources: within the texts of magical formulas and magical papyri, and also as inscribed on magical gems, lamellae and defixiones.<sup>87</sup>

Revelation’s concept of the enthroned God is rooted primarily in the Old Testament throne theophanies. This applies in spite of the absence of a precise verbal parallel to the expression “the One sitting on the throne,” since in three of the four Old Testament throne visions the concepts of the heavenly throne, God and sitting are closely related.<sup>88</sup> The meaning of κάθημαι is rooted in the Old Testament concept of שׁב, which denotes more than the physical posture of sitting. It functions as a technical term for ascension to a throne and the designation of reigning with reference to both human and divine subjects.<sup>89</sup> The theological significance of שׁב as a term denoting Yahweh’s dwelling in heaven is well known. It stresses “the stability and duration of his residence there” as contrasted with the “human experience of God on the earth, where for the most part, Yahweh is said to יָשׁב, dwell, emphasizing the temporary nature of his manifestations.”<sup>90</sup>

God’s repeated depiction as sitting on his throne needs to be also evaluated against the common understanding of the sitting posture as a mark of honor and authority in the ancient world. As France notes, “A king sat to receive his subjects, a court to give judgment, and a teacher to teach.”<sup>91</sup> In materials from ANE and Greece, sitting is often reserved for

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<sup>86</sup> *T. Abr.* (Rec.A) 11:4, 6; 12:11; 13:2; (Rec. B) 8:7.

<sup>87</sup> For details, see Aune’s (*Revelation 1-5*, 284-85) concise discussion of the topic and the literature cited in it.

<sup>88</sup> The closest parallels to Revelation’s formula are in Isa. 6:1 (τὸν κύριον καθήμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου) and 1Kgs 22:19 (τὸν κύριον θεὸν Ἰσραηλ καθήμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου αὐτοῦ), where even the present participle is shared. In Dan. 7:9 the three concepts are related even though the participle is lacking, plural thrones appear and God is named by the unique title “Ancient of Days.” Ezek. 1:26 seems to be the furthest away, since κάθημαι is entirely avoided in indicating the sitting position of the enthroned figure.

<sup>89</sup> M. Görg, “שׁב” in *TDOT*, VI, 420-38.

<sup>90</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, “שׁב” in *NIDOTE*, II, 550-51 (551).

<sup>91</sup> Richard T. France, “κάθημαι” in *NIDNTT*, III, 587-89 (588).

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deities as a sign of distinctiveness: a god often sits while people stand in front of him in prayer.<sup>92</sup> Revelation's portrait of God as sitting on his throne is closely related to this idea, reflecting the notion of sovereignty as he takes his seat upon a sign of authority exercising permanent rulership.

### 2.2. The Use of the Circumlocution

The examination of Revelation's καθήμενος passages related to God reveals the use of the expression in five different contexts. The circumlocution is most prominently featured in the heavenly temple scenes, but it also appears in contexts elaborating the day of wrath (6:15), the cosmic conflict (12:5),<sup>93</sup> the millennial judgment (20:11) and the new creation (21:5). In the following only the καθήμενος passages in heavenly temple scenes will be discussed, since the circumlocution appears only once in the other contexts and its use in the temple scenes reflect a strong theological purpose as will be demonstrated.

The circumlocution "the One sitting on the throne" appears in two heavenly temple scenes in the book of Revelation. It is the dominant reference to God in the throne room vision used seven times (chs. 4-5), while an additional reference is found in a cultic setting in the context of the Final Judgment vision (chs. 19-20).

The circumlocution appears six times in its complete form in the throne room vision (4:2, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13), while an additional reference from 4:3, which is a shorter form of the expression (ὁ καθήμενος), is to be added to this group. Seven as the number of references to God through the throne motif seems to reveal deliberateness on the part of the author since, as Bauckham points out, numerical symbolism concerning the employing of divine titles is one of the ways in which John "wrote

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<sup>92</sup> E.g., Homer, *Il.* 4.1; *Od.* 16.264; Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 101; Euripides, *Tro.* 884; Pausanias, *Desc. Gr.* 5.17.9.

<sup>93</sup> I suggest that the expression πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ ("to God and to his throne") in 12:5 functions in a similar manner to the circumlocution of God's name under discussion, since θεός and θρόνος are juxtaposed within the same sentence. For this reason the text in question should rightfully be classified as a characterization throne-texts.

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theological meaning into the detail of the composition of his work.”<sup>94</sup> While I concur with this general observation of Bauckham, his suggestion concerning the significance of seven references to the formula ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ in this grammatical form in the book is highly questionable. He suggests that “it looks that John used . . . variations quite deliberately in order to keep the number of occurrences of the precise phrase to seven.”<sup>95</sup> While the point of such a decision on part of the author would not be very clear, I suggest that John’s numerical deliberateness is probably more evident in the seven καθήμενος references in the pivotal vision of the book in chs. 4-5, in spite of the variations in the formula.

The pervasive nature of the formula’s employment in chs. 4-5 is also informing. Namely, the throne-room vision is the only section of the book in which it appears in different types of materials within a single vision: in the visionary description (4:2, 3; 5:1, 7), in the introductory/explanatory formula for worship (4:9, 10) and in the texts of the hymnic material (5:13). While the nineteen θρόνος references in the vision with the description of the clear arrangement of the heavenly realm around the divine throne is already a strong indicator of God’s sovereign kingship over the created order, this leading theological idea is additionally emphasized by the author’s sevenfold and pervasive use of God’s central characterization formula.

In contrast to the throne room vision in which the circumlocution formula pervades the entire material, in the temple scene of 19:1-10 it appears only as a single reference (19:4). As the introductory scene of the Final Judgment vision (chs. 19-20) the section is dominated by four hymns of praise and the introduction of nuptial imagery in reference to the Lamb’s wedding. It picks up the theme of God’s justice reflected in the elects’ reward and the judgment of their enemies which has been

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<sup>94</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 33. Bauckham rightly notes of the complexity of John’s literary technique that some “titles for God which are most characteristic of Revelation and most important for the theology of Revelation occur seven times each. Especially in the circumstances of ancient writing, this would not have been easy to achieve.”

<sup>95</sup> Bauckham, *Climax*, 33.

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announced already by the seventh trumpet (11:15-18).<sup>96</sup> The hymnic material of 19:1-10 records praise offered to God for the demonstration of his sovereign reign in the deposing of Babylon and the salvation of the elect. He is referred to by three names in the four hymns of this temple scene: θεός ἡμῶν (19:1, 5), the fuller version κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ὁ παντοκράτωρ (19:6) and the circumlocution τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου (19:4). Significantly, the reference at the center of our attention appears within the description of worship on part of the beings that appear in the throne-room vision as the setting of the divine throne. The text clearly specifies the throne occupant as the object of worship (προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ). The divine throne itself is mentioned again within the same context as a point from which response came in the form of an unidentified voice (φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου ἐξῆλθεν; 19:5). This reference will be discussed later in our study of the phenomena emerging from the throne.

#### 2.3. Theological Meaning

In the formula “the One sitting on the throne” two concepts, God and king, are merged into a single powerful rhetorical device which highlights the “embodiment of absolute power.”<sup>97</sup> With the focus on the throne itself, avoiding description and naming of God, it is set forth the idea of the duration of his kingship and the safeguarding of his transcendence. The circumlocution presents an immobile and stable image of God, who is never dramatized as a figure actively involved in the course of events. Nevertheless, the formula does not convey the idea of passivity, but rather a high theocentricity. Johnson rightly notes that the theological purpose of the expression lies in highlighting of God’s control over the development of the affairs in Earth’s history: “Nothing

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<sup>96</sup> The idea of judgment is closely tied here to the justification of martyrs and to their cry in 6:9-11. It is made clear in chs. 17-18 that Babylon is responsible for the oppression of God’s people and the shedding of their blood (17:6; 18:24). Thus, the text implies the legal action of judging Babylon and avenging the blood of God’s servants (Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 543).

<sup>97</sup> Stephen D. Moore, “The Beatific Vision as a Posing Exhibition: Revelation’s Hypermasculine Deity,” *JSNT* 60 (1995), 27-52(32). Cyril T. Gadd (*Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient East* [London: Oxford University Press, 1948], 33) observes that “God and king are two conceptions so nearly coupled in the oriental mind that the distinction is constantly blurred.”

happens, nothing exists in the past, present, or future apart from God's intention. Whatever authority is given. . . is given by God."<sup>98</sup>

The circumlocution reflects the reluctance of naming or describing God directly. There has been pointed out that by avoiding anthropomorphisms God's mysterious transcendence is accentuated, namely the impossibility of expressing his awesomeness. For this reason Raschke cautions that naming God in finality and fullness equals the rousing of the beast.<sup>99</sup> Similarly Rotz and du Rand note: "God cannot be tamed, domesticated or analyzed. The One who sits on the throne can best be described as jasper and sardius (4:3). The mystery remains, yet Revelation is just that: revelation."<sup>100</sup> This understanding is not contradictory to Moore's observation that the book is not entirely free from anthropomorphisms, since in 5:1, 7 God's right hand is mentioned.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, Boring goes a step further suggesting that avoiding to name God in chs. 4-5 is at least partially due to the book's intention to emphasize the role of Jesus in God's plan. He argues that John intentionally leaves "a blank center in the picture to be filled in by the figure of the Lamb" affirming "that God is the one who defines himself by Christ."<sup>102</sup> The weakness of this suggestion lies in a neglect to give appropriate attention to the Hebraic nature of the circumlocution formula which should not be pressed too far without grounding it on appropriate exegetical evidence. For this reason, more appropriate is to interpret the circumlocution "the One sitting on the throne" against the background of Old Testament throne visions rather than viewing it as an intentional device for emphasizing high Christology.

### 3. Phenomena/Actions Emanating from the Throne

Although God is silent almost throughout the entire book of Revelation, his throne is a dynamic representation of the divine authority,

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<sup>98</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *Revelation: The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 66.

<sup>99</sup> Carl L. Raschke, "The Image of the Beast, or Theology and the Thought of Difference" in *New Dimensions in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Carl L. Raschke (JAARS, 49; Missoula, MT: American Academy of Religion, 1982), 109-27.

<sup>100</sup> Carol J. Rotz and Jan A. du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne: Towards a Theory of Theocentric Characterization according to the Apocalypse of John," *Neot* 33 (1999), 91-111(97).

<sup>101</sup> Moore, "Beatific Vision," 31.

<sup>102</sup> Boring, *Revelation*, 103.



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since different phenomena and actions are recorded as emanating from the throne. These references are most often placed at strategically significant locations within the book as indicators of the decisiveness of the divine involvement. Three aspects of the dynamics of the heavenly throne will be discussed in the following: (1) heavenly phenomena; (2) speeches; and (3) unidentified voices.

#### 3.1. Lightning, Voices, Thunder

The divine throne in Revelation is a place where God's holiness and power are openly revealed. While significant attention is devoted in chs. 4-5 to the description of the throne's surroundings, at the same time heavenly phenomena are introduced as strongly evocative of the awe and mystery related to the divine θρόνος. The prepositions related to the throne are informative in this regard: κυκλόθειν (4:3, 4) and ἐνώπιον (4:5, 6, 10) focus on the surroundings of the throne and ἐν μέσῳ on its center (4:6), while at the heart of the vision heavenly phenomena are pictured as emanating from the throne itself, as indicated by the use of ἐκ (ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται; 4:5). Aune notes that until this point the vision is recorded in the past tense, but in 4:5 the description changes to the present indicative. The significance of the shift is in emphasizing the continuity of the phenomena emanating from the throne.<sup>103</sup>

The content of the heavenly phenomena is threefold: ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί ("lightning, voices and thunder"; 4:5).<sup>104</sup> As noted by Holtz, the combined imagery generates the impression of might and stirs up fear with a sense of mystery.<sup>105</sup> It is generally acknowledged that these phenomena are linked to the traditional Old Testament theophanies which are often accompanied by lightning, noise and/or thunder. The primary background of Revelation's imagery is in the Sinai theophany. Rowland suggests that specifically Exod. 19:16 "provided material which could form the basis of the belief in the fiery elements which

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<sup>103</sup> Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 293-94.

<sup>104</sup> It has been suggested the possibility of translating φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί as "peals of thunder," a single event instead of two (Bratcher, *Handbook on the Revelation*, 90). The weakness of this view lies in the fact that the intended combination of the two phenomena is in Revelation expressed by the formula φωνὴ βροντῆς without the conjunction of coordination (6:1; 14:2; 19:6).

<sup>105</sup> Traugott Holtz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (NTD, 11; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 56.

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proceed from God's immediate presence."<sup>106</sup> At the same time it seems that the author is influenced also by the chariot vision of Ezekiel. Since this well-known *merkabah* scene forms the most prominent background to Rev. 4, it is not surprising to discover that the heavenly phenomena recorded in 4:5 show affinity with the imagery in Ezek. 1:13.<sup>107</sup> On the other hand, Morton has provided a whole impressive list of other possible sources from Old Testament and early Jewish apocalyptic thought.<sup>108</sup> Even so, it seems most appropriate to view these texts as the result of the formative influence of the Sinai theophany.<sup>109</sup>

The theological meaning of the threefold heavenly phenomena emanating from the throne in 4:5 is to be understood in the context of the other related references in Revelation. Namely, the formula appears three more times in progressively expanding versions located at critical junctures in the development of Revelation's story-line. Bauckham convincingly argues that the progress is a deliberate stylistic device which is evident once the following four texts are compared:

4:5: ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ  
8"5" βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ σεισμός  
11:19: ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός καὶ χάλαζα  
μεγάλη  
16:18-21: ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμός ... μέγας ...  
καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη

As suggested by Bauckham, all four references are built on Sinai theophany and they are closely related to the heavenly temple.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 221-22. While two of the three phenomena of Rev. 4:5 show verbal parallels with Exod. 19:16 (ἀστραπαὶ and φωναὶ), the third parallel is only thematic (βρονταὶ and φωνή ... μέγας).

<sup>107</sup> While the only verbal parallel is ἀστραπή/ἀστραπαί, the moving fiery element of Ezek. 1:13 is strongly reminiscent of Rev. 4:5.

<sup>108</sup> Morton's (*One upon the Throne*, 93) list of parallels includes texts such as Ps. 18:6-15; 29; Dan. 7:10; *IEn.* 14:19; 59:1-3; 60:1-4; 4Q405.

<sup>109</sup> E.g., Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 115; Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 349; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 294.

<sup>110</sup> Bauckham, *Climax*, 202. This view is somewhat criticized by Aune (*Revelation 1-5*, 295), who holds that the conscious influence of the Sinai tradition is exaggerated. He calls our attention to Est. 1:1d-e, where a similar list of four disturbances is found as part of a dream in which violence against the Jews is anticipated. He also points to the Graeco-Roman

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However, a significant difference is that in 4:5 the theophany is limited exclusively to the context of the throne room, while in the other three texts it is related to the earth. The difference concerning the sphere of the phenomena's manifestation is indicated by the addition of the earthquake motif (σεισμός) as the fourth element of the formula in the last three occurrences, which would be inappropriate in the heavenly context.<sup>111</sup> These references are connected to the visions of judgment that appear with increasing severity throughout the book as indicated by the progressive expansion of the formula. Their connection to the primary reference of 4:5 points to God as the source of these judgments. Bauckham rightly concludes: "The progressive expansion of the formula corresponds to the progressive intensification of the three series of judgments. In this way the whole course of the judgments is depicted as the manifestation of the same divine holiness which is revealed in the theophany in heaven in 4:5."<sup>112</sup>

It has been convincingly argued that the repetition of the theophanic formula reflects a pastoral purpose. As noted by Beale, it assures the suffering community that the One from whose throne the phenomena emanate "has not forgotten them because he has not forgotten their persecutors, whom he will surely judge."<sup>113</sup> Thus, the manifestation of the divine holiness in 4:5 anchors the later judgment series in God's throne as their source and interprets them as the "fanfare for the

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background of the thunderbolt which was closely associated with Zeus and Jupiter and, as attested by numismatic evidence, it was consequently used by several Roman emperors including Domitian (*BMC* 2:381, no. 381; 389, no. 410; 399, no. 443) and Trajan (*BMC* 3:174, no. 825; 190, no. 899). This view is further developed by Morton (*One upon the Throne*, 93-94), who argues for a conscious influence of this tradition on the theophanic references of Revelation under discussion. While I hold that the emperor cults form a significant political background to the argument of the book of Revelation as a whole, this connection concerning the atmospheric-seismic phenomena seems exaggerated.

<sup>111</sup> For the function of the earthquake as apocalyptic imagery in the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature, see Bauckham, *Climax*, 199-202. It has been aptly noted that the imagery had a great rhetorical power as employed in the first-century C.E. Asian context not only because the Graeco-Roman world took earthquakes seriously as signs of divine displeasure, but because of the devastating earthquakes of the first century in Asia Minor. See James S. Murray, "The Urban Earthquake Imagery and Divine Judgement in John's Apocalypse," *NovT* 47 (2005), 142-61.

<sup>112</sup> Bauckham, *Theology*, 42.

<sup>113</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 326.

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testimony of God's triumph."<sup>114</sup> I would like to suggest that God's sovereign kingship is brought to the attention additionally by relating all four theophanic texts directly to God's throne: (1) in 4:5 it emanates immediately from the heavenly throne (ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται); (2) in 8:5 it comes as the consequence of throwing a censer to the earth which is filled with fire from the altar standing in front of the throne (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου; 8:3); (3) in 11:19 it is related to the ark of the covenant, the cultic symbol of God's throne in the Old Testament (ὡφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης ... καὶ ἐγένοντο); and (4) in 16:18-21 it is the result of the declaration of a loud voice coming out of the temple, more specifically from the throne (ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου; 16:17).

### 3.2. Speeches From the Throne

While all the judgments of Revelation are seen as coming from the presence of "the One sitting on the throne," God's direct speaking is limited to only two contexts in the entire work (1:8; 21:5-8). Since both divine speeches are connected to the divine throne as the place of utterance, they will be examined here.

#### 3.2.1. First Speech (1:8)

God's first speech in Revelation appears in the final statement of the prologue (1:1-8). Following the foreword (1:1-3), epistolary greetings (1:4-5a) and a doxology (1:5b-6) the prologue ends with a two-partite thematic motto (1:7-8) which introduces the basic apocalyptic perspective of the book. The first statement of the motto is given in a style of prophetic annunciation (1:8), while in the second statement God himself gives a brief self-revelation. His words are a fitting climax of the prologue (1:8), since they point to the identity of the originator of the book of Revelation and they bring thus back the readers to the opening statement of the book (1:1).<sup>115</sup> God's speaking in the prologue is of critical theological significance, since his short self-declaration appears as the first recorded speech of any character in the book.<sup>116</sup> The fact that

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<sup>114</sup> Robert W. Wall, *Revelation* (NIBCNT; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 93.

<sup>115</sup> Smalley, *Revelation*, 38.

<sup>116</sup> As Meredith G. Kline (*Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963], 14) demonstrates, the self-identification of the covenant Lord at the opening of the Decalogue (Exod. 20:2) and the ANE treaties reveal a similar pattern of self-declaration.

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God speaks before anyone and before anything is disclosed highlights his privileged position, worthy of undivided attention. As Resseguie rightly notes, this theocentric speech provides “theological context for all that follows” in the book.<sup>117</sup>

The theme of God’s speech in 1:8 is his own divine nature, as indicated by the presence of the Johannine ἐγώ εἰμι formula (ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ).<sup>118</sup> It has been convincingly argued that the reference to the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet functions as a merism<sup>119</sup> which is supplemented by additional merisms in two other places in the book, where the original self-declaration re-appears. The meaning of this word-play is illuminated by its Old Testament background in Isa. 41-48, where God is portrayed in the context of a polemic against the idols of Babylon in a similar fashion as the only Creator and sovereign Lord of history.<sup>120</sup> The Jewish alphabet symbolism throws additional light on the merism of Rev. 1:8: the Hebrew אמת (“truth”) has been understood as a way of designating God as the beginning, middle and end, since א is the first, מ the middle and ת the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>121</sup> Against these backgrounds, the “Alpha–Omega” merism of Revelation appears as stressing the sovereignty of God, who controls the beginning as well as the end and everything in between.<sup>122</sup> Farrer goes a step further, arguing that ΙΑΩ, the

<sup>117</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse* (BibIS, 32; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 106.

<sup>118</sup> In several witnesses ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος (⋈\* fam 1611<sup>1854 2050 2329</sup> 2351 Andreas it<sup>sig h</sup> vg cop<sup>bo</sup> Beatus) or ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (fam 1611<sup>2329</sup> cop<sup>bo</sup>) is inserted after the τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ self-declaration. Bruce M. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament* [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2nd ed., 1994], 663) convincingly argues that these longer variants are scribal insertions, since “if the longer text were original no good reason can be found to account for the shorter text, whereas the presence of the longer expression in 21:6 obviously prompted some copyists to expand the text here.”

<sup>119</sup> Merism is a figure of speech which expresses totality by reference to polar opposites.

<sup>120</sup> Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12.

<sup>121</sup> For the idea in Jewish literature that the first and the last letter of the alphabet denotes the whole extent of a thing, see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (4 vols.; München: Beck, 1922-1961), III, 789.

<sup>122</sup> For this understanding in the early Christian interpreters, see Tertullian, *ACW* 13.78-79; Jerome, *Ag. Jov.* 1.18, *NPNF* 2.6.360; Oecumenius, *Com. Apoc.*, *TEG* 8.268.

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rendering of “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” functions as the Greek form of the יהוה tetragrammaton.<sup>123</sup> This forced hypothesis has been convincingly refuted by Aune, who turns our attention rather to the background of the merism in magical papyri, in which ΑΩ designates abbreviation of a divine name.<sup>124</sup> In spite of Aune’s suggestion, which merits a closer examination in another study, I align myself rather with Beale, who grounds the interpretation primarily in the Old Testament, noting that if Aune’s suggestion is on the mind of the author, it would be only in combination with the Old Testament background.<sup>125</sup>

The “Alpha–Omega” self-designation in 1:8 is clearly attributed to God, who is qualified by three divine names in the same verse: (1) κύριος ὁ θεός; (2) ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος; and (3) ὁ παντοκράτωρ. Bauckham rightly considers these three titles as belonging among the four most important designations for God in the entire book, together with “the One sitting on the throne.”<sup>126</sup> The appearance of these key titles within a single verse underscores the strategic significance of the text. The concentrated package at the climax of the prologue serves the purpose of projecting a basic theological outlook for the entire book. Namely, in the focus of Revelation is the notion of God’s supremacy and absolute lordship over the created order, which is manifested in his overseeing all the affairs of human history and directing them towards their ultimate end. The self-declaration of 1:8 discloses and the unfolding of the events in the rest of the book confirms an understanding of God as “the source and the fulfilment of all things . . . however distant and hidden . . . still one who breaks into human experience in unexpected and surprising ways.”<sup>127</sup>

The throne motif is indirectly related to God’s speech in 1:8. The location from which the divine self-declaration is given is not specified in the verse itself. However, in the same context of the prologue, in the

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<sup>123</sup> Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John’s Apocalypse* (Westminster: Dacre, 1949), 263-68.

<sup>124</sup> Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 57-59; Idem., *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (WUNT, 199; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 361-64.

<sup>125</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 200. In contrast, Aune (*Revelation 1-5*, 59) gives the advantage to Hellenistic revelatory magic as the primary source of the divine title.

<sup>126</sup> For a detailed study of these titles, see Bauckham, *Theology*, 25-35.

<sup>127</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, *Apocalypse* (New Testament Message, 22; Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979), 8-9.

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salutary part, God is directly related to the throne which is qualified as “his throne” (1:4). The key for the identification of the speaker in 1:8 with the occupant of the throne in 1:4 is the shared divine title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος which appears verbatim in both verses.<sup>128</sup> While God’s sitting on his throne is only presupposed in the prologue and there is no direct statement about this, the value of my suggestion that a close theological relation exists between the meaning conveyed by the motif of throne and the content of the first divine speech in Revelation is in no way diminished by this fact. While God’s self-revelatory statement strongly stresses the notion of divine sovereignty, the connection with the throne symbolism provides additional theological force to this central idea which remains the focus of the author’s attention until the end of the book.

#### 3.2.2. Second Speech (21:5-8)

God’s second speech in Revelation is located at the climactic part of the “thesis paragraph” of the new creation vision (21:5-8). It has been rightly noted concerning the significance of this passage that together with the speech of the unidentified voice from the throne in 21:3-4 it “captures in a nutshell the meaning of the entire Book of Revelation.”<sup>129</sup> While God’s second speech in the book is considerably longer than the first, the almost verbatim reappearance of the self-declaration from 1:8 in 21:6 indicates a close connection. The original formula is, however, supplemented here by an additional title ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (“the beginning and the end”), which function lies in the interpretation of the original divine self-declaration.<sup>130</sup>

The content of God’s second speech in Revelation has not received the attention it deserves in previous studies. While the division of 21:5-8

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<sup>128</sup> Leonard L. Thompson (*Revelation* [ANTC; Nashville, TN Abingdon, 1998], 52) notes that the repetition of the divine title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος in 1:4 and 1:8 exemplifies a ring composition, an envelope pattern, in which “a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning and at the end of a unit and thus forms a ring around the block of text.” This literary technique is the key for identification of the divine speaker in 1:8. For a detailed discussion of the meaning of this *Dreizeitenformel* in Revelation, see Sean M. McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos* (WUNT 2/107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 195-231.

<sup>129</sup> Michaels, *Revelation*, 235.

<sup>130</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), 306; Smalley, *Revelation*, 541. The similar ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος title is attributed to Christ in 1:17 and 2:8.

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into seven strophic statements has rightly been noted,<sup>131</sup> the significance of the fact that the ἐγὼ τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ self-declaration is the middle statement of the entire speech has remained unnoticed. I suggest that an investigation of the relationship between the particular statements of the divine speech reveals the possibility of a “sandwich-chiasm.” By a “sandwich-chiasm” I mean joining two minor chiasms into a larger structure with a central statement sandwiched at the middle:

- A21:5a – the promise of the new creation (ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα)  
B 21:5b – the trustworthiness of the divine promise (οἱ λόγοι πιστοί ...)  
A' 21:6a – the accomplishment of the new creation (γέγοναν)  
C 21:6b – the guarantee of the new creation (ἄλφα ... ὦ, ἡ ἀρχὴ ... τὸ τέλος)  
A 21:6c – the new creation as a reward (ἐγὼ τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς ...)  
B 21:7 – the climax of the divine promise (ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα ...)  
A' 21:8 – the new creation as a punishment (τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς ...)

I would like to suggest that the aim of this “sandwich-chiasm” is the emphasis on the “Alpha–Omega” statement at the focal point of the structure.<sup>132</sup> Even if this proposal remains at the level of possibility regarding the author’s intention, in a wider sense a simpler chiasm of an ABA’ pattern is certainly justified, since the first part of the structure points to the divine side of the new creation promise, whereas in the second part the attention is shifted to humanity’s destiny in the face of this climactic event. The groups of statements on both sides of the chiasm are related to the actions or commands of God, but the focal

<sup>131</sup> See David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (WBC, 52C; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1114; Smalley, *Revelation*, 533-34. Whereas the number seven is intentional concerning the division here, similarly to the seven beatitudes scattered throughout the book, there has also been argued a less convincing six-part division of the section (Osborne, *Revelation*, 728).

<sup>132</sup> As an alternative view, the first statement of the speech (21:5a) has been considered the centerpiece of 21:5-8 in Roloff, *Revelation*, 237; Jan A. du Rand, “The New Jerusalem as Pinnacle of Salvation: Text (21:1-22:5) and Intertext,” *Neot* 38 (2004), 275-302 (290). This approach, however, fails to notice a deeper structure of the passage.



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statement centers on God's character as the sovereign Lord of history, the originating cause from whom the eschatological new creation emanates.<sup>133</sup>

The throne reference is not marginal in God's second speech in Revelation. Contrary to the brief self-disclosure in 1:8, the longer speech of 21:5-8 is introduced by a formula that directly identifies the speaker by the circumlocution related to the throne (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ). Besides the throne-related introductory statement two shorter remarks precede the second (καὶ λέγει; 21:5)<sup>134</sup> and the third statement (καὶ εἶπέν μοι; 21:6) of the divine speech. However, they are without particular significance, as they point back to the speaker introduced in 21:5 referring in this way to his authority. The reference to the divine throne at the beginning of the divine speech of 21:5-8 is motivated by a clear intention on the author's part. It has been convincingly argued that God's speech in 21:5-8 has the effect of divine authentication not only of the new creation's certainty, but more broadly of the entire book.<sup>135</sup> A reference to God by a circumlocution related to the throne is an appropriate introduction for the authentication as it directs the attention to God's sovereign authority, the guarantee of the realization of his plan.

The theological significance of the relation between God's two speeches in Revelation has often been pointed out.<sup>136</sup> The "Alpha–Omega" self-declaration near both the beginning and the end of the book (1:8; 21:6) reveals purposiveness on part of the author. It not only forms an *inclusio* around the work, but frames also its theological message. Yarbrow Collins rightly notes the appropriateness of such a literary strategy, which "implies that all things in time and space are part of divine providence."<sup>137</sup> Beale similarly excludes the possibility of coincidence, arguing that the two opposites underscore God's absolute

<sup>133</sup> The meaning of ἀρχή (21:6) is besides "origin," "source," "ruler" also "an initial cause" (LN §89.16).

<sup>134</sup> Several MSS contain the longer reading καὶ λέγει μοι (ⲛ025 051 fam 1006<sup>10061841</sup> fam 1611<sup>2050</sup> Andreas it<sup>a</sup> vg syr<sup>ph</sup> cop<sup>sa bo</sup> arm eth), but the shorter reading is preferable (TCGNT, 764-65; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1111).

<sup>135</sup> E.g., Charles, *Revelation*, II, 212; Priegent, *Apocalypse*, 600; Wall, *Revelation*, 247.

<sup>136</sup> See, e.g., Bauckham, *Theology*, 27; Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 579; Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 106.

<sup>137</sup> Yarbrow Collins, *Apocalypse*, 145.

control over the totality of the events portrayed between 1:8 and 21:6.<sup>138</sup> Thus, the “Alpha–Omega” statement functions as “a succinct proclamation of the theocracy,”<sup>139</sup> since “the One sitting on the throne” has the first and the last word in the book, as his purpose is coming to be fulfilled both in the advancement of history (1:8) and in the new creation at eschaton (21:5-8).

### 3.3. Voices From the Throne

Though the auditory aspect of Revelation has been often called to our attention, analysis of the voices appearing in the book has not attracted much scholarly interest.<sup>140</sup> The most profound investigation has been done by Boring, who identified one hundred and forty-one speech units around which quotation marks can be put.<sup>141</sup> The variety of voices is great. Not only are divine voices heard, but also voices of heavenly beings and earthly characters participating in the drama of Revelation. Though even the voices of animals, an altar and the seven thunders are recorded, significantly God’s archenemies, such as the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, Babylon and the prostitute, never speak in the book. Boring convincingly explains their muteness against the background of Jewish polemic contra idols, who in “contrast to YHWH the only God . . . show that they are no gods in that they are unable to speak.”<sup>142</sup>

One of the largest groups among the many speech units in Revelation is that which includes voices that are not clearly identified.<sup>143</sup> The

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<sup>138</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 1055.

<sup>139</sup> Ford, *Revelation*, 367.

<sup>140</sup> For a review of the research on the topic, see M. Eugene Boring, “The Voice of Jesus in the Apocalypse of John,” *NovT* 34 (1992), 334-59 (334 n. 2).

<sup>141</sup> The issue is, however, more complex, as noted by Boring (“Voice,” 335): “The text of Revelation can be thought of as several layers of quotation marks, hierarchically arranged.” More specifically, Boring notes three layers of speakers: the lector, the written text and John himself as the author. He demonstrates that these layers often overlap with the voice of Jesus as the source of the book (1:1) to such extent that they cannot be clearly separated.

<sup>142</sup> Boring, “Voice,” 337-38. On the muteness of the idols, see Ps. 115:5; 135:16; Jer. 10:5; Hab. 2:18-19; *3Macc.* 4:16; cf. 1Cor. 12:2.

<sup>143</sup> According to Boring’s classification the following texts belong to this group: 4:1; 6:6; 7:4; 9:4; 9:13-14; 10:4; 10:8; 10:9b; 11:12-13; 12:10; 14:2; 16:1; 16:17; 18:4-20; 18:9-10a; 18:10b; 18:11-13; 18:14; 18:15; 18:16-17a; 18:17b-18a; 18:18b; 18:19a; 18:19b-20; 19:5; 19:6-8; 21:3. Only the angels speak more often in the book (thirty-two references). For a comprehensive list of different voices in Revelation, see Boring, “Voice,” 357-59. For the

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identity of these anonymous voices has attracted some scholarly interest. Charlesworth has suggested on the basis of the apocalyptic literature that Jews (at least some religious ones) believed before 100 C.E. in the existence of the voice of God hypostasized as an independent celestial figure. In his study on the topic he argues with particular reference to the identity of the φωνή in Rev. 1:12 that “the author of the Apocalypse. . . took the Jewish concept of the Voice and baptized it. . . placing it in a context with clearly Christian phrases, terms and titles like the Son of Man and the slain Lamb.”<sup>144</sup> For the purpose of our study it is significant to note that φωνή appears in three different contexts in Revelation as related to the heavenly throne. In all three texts the voice is unidentified, but in 16:17 and 21:3 it is a “great voice” (φωνή μεγάλη), while in 19:5 it is without further qualifications.<sup>145</sup> An additional difference between these references is that in 16:17 and 19:5 the relation of the unidentified voice to the throne is determined by the preposition ἀπό (ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου), while in 21:3 by ἐκ (ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου). In spite of the different prepositions, there is no discernible difference in meaning between the two expressions.<sup>146</sup> Charlesworth’s hypothesis concerning the identity of the “voice” is not supported in the three mentioned throne texts of Revelation as it will be confirmed by the analysis of these texts, which follows.

In 16:17 the “great voice” announces the eschaton within the climactic seventh bowl plague. The location from which the voice emanates is clearly specified by the reference to the heavenly temple and more specifically the throne located in it (ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου). In spite of the lack of the precise identification of the voice as God’s, the cumulative force of the evidence suggests that the speaker is a divine

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background of the unidentified revelatory voices in the Old Testament, Jewish literature and Graeco-Roman sources, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (WBC, 52B; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 561-62.

<sup>144</sup> James H. Charlesworth, “The Jewish Roots of Christology: The Discovery of the Hypostatic Voice,” *SJT* 39 (1986), 19-41(38).

<sup>145</sup> φωνή μεγάλη is also applied to different characters in Revelation: angels (5:2, 12; 7:2; 10:3; 14:7, 9, 15, 18; 19:17; 18:2[φωνή ἰσχυρά]), the souls under the altar (6:10), the great multitude (7:10) and the eagle (8:13). The same expression often appears in a heavenly context without the specification of the speaker (11:12, 15; 12:10; 16:17).

<sup>146</sup> Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1027.

being.<sup>147</sup> First, it is hardly possible that within the unique context in which the heavenly temple and the throne are juxtaposed the announcement of the completion of the divine plan (γέγονεν; “it is done”) would come from anyone other than the sovereign Lord of history.<sup>148</sup> Second, at the beginning of the same vision the “great voice” is indirectly identified as God’s, since in 16:1 is stated that it is coming out of the temple and only God is said to be in the heavenly ναός in 15:8. On the basis of the evidence it can be concluded that God must be the speaker in both texts. Third, the voice coming out of the temple is an allusion to Isa. 66:6 in which the identity of the speaker is clarified by a parallel phrase “a voice from the temple, the voice from the Lord repaying his enemies all they deserve.”<sup>149</sup> Thus, the voice coming from the throne in Rev. 16:17 is clearly a divine voice, though it is difficult to explicitly determine whether God’s or Christ’s voice is in view here.

The identity of the φωνή ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου in 19:5 is a more complex question.<sup>150</sup> The voice invites within a heavenly praise scene over the fall of Babylon all the servants of God, who fear him to praise “our God” (αἰνεῖτε τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν). Scholarly opinion is sharply divided over the identity of the speaker, since the reference to God as θεός ἡμῶν within the context of a call to worship seems to exclude God as the speaker. For this reason the voice from the throne has been attributed to the one of the

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<sup>147</sup> κ identifies the voice explicitly as God’s, but it omits the reference to the throne, replacing ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου by ναοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. The same omission is attested also in 051 in which this phrase is substituted by ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. In spite of these witnesses there is no compelling reason for questioning the validity of the throne reference in the text. In 2027 pc the throne is qualified as θρόνου θεοῦ; however this reading is not supported by further manuscripts, therefore it is unlikely.

<sup>148</sup> The exclamation γέγονεν appears twice in Revelation—both references are connected to the divine throne. In 16:17 it expresses the completion of the divine plan concerning the judgment of evil forces, whereas in 21:6 it points to the new creation as the climactic completion of the divine plan of redemption.

<sup>149</sup> See, e.g., Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 679; Beale, *Revelation*, 812; Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (trans. Wendy Pradels; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 465.

<sup>150</sup> In 046 Primasius θρόνου is substituted to οὐρανοῦ. These witnesses, however, do not provide a compelling reason for omitting the throne reference from 19:5.

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four cherubim or the twenty-four elders,<sup>151</sup> while Christ<sup>152</sup> or an angel of the throne<sup>153</sup> have been also viewed as the speakers. Even the fading of several voices into a single voice has been suggested.<sup>154</sup> In the absence of a convincing argument there is no satisfactory answer to this question. As Aune notes, it seems the safest to conclude only that “the phrase “from the throne” at the very least indicates the divine authorization of the speaker.”<sup>155</sup> Thus, the voice functions as “God’s authorized spokesman” in spite of the ambiguous identity.<sup>156</sup>

The last reference in Revelation to the unidentified voice occurs in 21:3 within an introductory statement preceding the announcement which is considered programmatic for the New Jerusalem vision. The statement specifies that the announcement is given in a great voice from the throne (φωνή μεγάλη ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου).<sup>157</sup> Though the identity of the speaker is unclear, it seems that the voice cannot be God’s, since he is referred to in the third person within the announcement (21:3-4).<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, Beale ascribes the voice directly to God, explaining that the announcement might be seen as expressing God’s “own reflections on Old Testament prophecy as he sees it being fulfilled.”<sup>159</sup> The weakness of this suggestion lies in the lack of conformity to the pattern

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<sup>151</sup> Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 721; Charles, *Revelation*, II, 124; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 378.

<sup>152</sup> Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 5th ed, 1906), 427; David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Forth Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987), 472-73.

<sup>153</sup> Kraft, *Offenbarung*, 243.

<sup>154</sup> Boring, “Voice,” 352.

<sup>155</sup> Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, 1027.

<sup>156</sup> Priegent, *Apocalypse*, 522. Though Priegent is right in this observation, he supports Marc Philonenko’s (“Une voix sortit du Trône qui disait . . .,” *RHPR* 79 [1999], 83-89) hypothesis, who quotes several texts of the *hekhalot* literature arguing that the voice in 19:5 is that of the throne of God itself. Since this idea is based on later sources and is completely alien to biblical literature, it is highly speculative.

<sup>157</sup> The variant οὐρανοῦ replaces θρόνου in 025 046 051 Oecumenius<sup>2053</sup> Andreas Byzantine it<sup>sig</sup> syr<sup>ph</sup> Tyc<sup>2</sup> Beatus. Aune (*Revelation 17-22*, 1110) persuasively argues that the context favors θρόνου, while οὐρανοῦ may be explained as a mechanical repetition of ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ in 21:2.

<sup>158</sup> The commentators most often hesitate to identify the speaker, though the following suggestions have been advanced: cherubim (Charles, *Revelation*, II, 205), the Lamb (Giblin, *Revelation*, 194) or God (Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* [New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001], 556).

<sup>159</sup> Beale, *Revelation*, 1046.

of God's two clearly outlined speeches in which he is directly specified as the speaker, speaking in the first person (1:8; 21:5-8). There is no logical reason to suppose a change to this pattern on the basis of an anonymous voice speaking in the third person about God within a larger passage in which "the One sitting on the throne" is already clearly pictured as speaking (21:1-8). Still, this interpretation of the anonymous voice does not discount its divine authority, just as in 19:5.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article has focused on three aspects of God's throne in Revelation: its foundational treatment in Rev. 4, its use in the circumlocution formula "the One sitting on the throne" and its dynamics. On the basis of this study it can be concluded that God's throne as a leading sub-motif within the throne motif of Revelation permeates the entire book and as such it conveys a message not only about the structure of the universe, but also about the function of God within it and the dynamics of human history.

The study of Rev. 4 led us to the conclusion that God's throne is portrayed immediately at the beginning of the visionary part of the book as the *axis mundi* of the universe. Actually, the throne is the very first thing John glimpses in heaven. However, in comparison to the very detailed description of its surrounding, neither the throne nor its occupant is described. I have argued that the reason for this feature lies on the one hand in the protection of the unknowable transcendence of God, and on the other in stressing the throne's centrality as implied by the linguistic style of the description. While it has been suggested in scholarly circles that the cherubim constitute part of the heavenly throne, I offered an argument against this interpretation and suggested that the cherubim should be viewed as representatives of the whole created order. In this sense, their extreme closeness to the throne indicates symbolically the need for a throne-centered orientation of creation. It has been demonstrated that the foundational picture of reality is focused on the divine throne and everything in the creation finds its significance only in its orientation towards the center of the universe, the throne which stands for the One occupying it.

One of the most significant representations of God's throne is found in the repeated characterization of God as "the One sitting on the throne." I have argued that this description is primarily rooted in the Old

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Testament throne visions and it appears in Revelation in five contexts: in heavenly temple scenes, in the “day of wrath” description, in the cosmic conflict setting, in the millennial judgment scene and in the final vision of the new creation. It has been demonstrated that the formula is employed with a clear theological purpose, since the reluctance of naming God directly accentuates his mysterious transcendence, the impossibility of expressing his awesomeness. At the same time it implies his absolute control over the developments in the course of history.

While “the One sitting on the throne” formula presents an immobile and stable image of God, I have demonstrated that the divine throne appears as an object from which phenomena are issued, statements are pronounced and judgment is passed. The examination of the throne’s dynamics revealed God’s active involvement, which is clearly indicated by the theophanic formula featured at strategic locations in the book (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18-21). Significant attention has been given to God’s two speeches in Revelation and it has been established that both are related to the throne and a theological relation exists between them that highlights the notion of God’s sovereignty. Namely, the fact that God speaks near the beginning and the end of the book indicates that the first and the final word in the human history and all in-between are his—all things are supervised by the providence of “the One sitting on the throne.”

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## **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in the General Epistles and the Book of Hebrews<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

Few discussions of the New Testament pneumatology focus on either the General Epistles<sup>2</sup> or the Book of Hebrews<sup>3</sup> where references to the Holy

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<sup>1</sup> Presented at the Seventh-day Adventist South American Division Biblical-Theological Symposium on Pneumatology, Iguassu Falls, PR, Brazil, May 20-23, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The letters of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2 and 3 John; and Jude are known collectively as the General or Catholic Epistles on the grounds that they were originally addressed to early Christians in general rather than to specific individuals or congregations. See Philip B. Harner, *What Are They Saying About the Catholic Epistles?* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>3</sup> While Hebrews has been included among the letters of Paul since ancient times, its placement between the letters of Paul and the General Epistles reflects awareness among earlier scholars of the work's distinctiveness (James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (ed. Mikeal G. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 4.) The book identifies neither the author nor its recipients. There is absence too, of normal epistolary conventions. There are few clues for its dating or location. Though many maintain that Hebrews is a letter written to Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to Judaism, the book gives rather a coherent reorienting picture of the issues any Christians living during the time were facing. Hebrews challenges every reader with a vision of reality, an understanding of Jesus Christ, and a sense of Christian identity and hope in a world of ambiguity and uncertainty. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (ed. C. Clifton Black; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1-3; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 7, 20-21. In light of these observations, this study purposefully includes the book of Hebrews in a discussion of pneumatology along with that of the General Epistles. While



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Spirit are rare, brief, and passing—seemingly more of an aside than a well-defined focus. Since the clearest emphasis on the lively activity of the Holy Spirit in the early years of the Church is found in the writings of Luke, Paul, and John’s Gospel,<sup>4</sup> what more could these oft “forgotten books in the back of the New Testament”<sup>5</sup> bring to the discussion? What do they have to say on pneumatology? What more might they tell us about the Holy Spirit within the early Church—or within normative Christian experience? What model, if any, would they provide? What further insight might they give into the Church’s pneumatology as its members encountered the challenges of the Greco-Roman world, the variety and ferment of its own expanding membership, the emergence within of subtle enervating heresies, and the articulation of its beliefs and praxis? What continued link between the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost and the church’s sustained vision of the resurrected Christ would we observe? Any inquiry into the pneumatology of the General Epistles or the Book of Hebrews inevitably asks such questions—and more. We begin by placing these books in historical context.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost enabled the early Church to envision (as well as experience and proclaim the benefits of) the

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not a General Epistle as such, the message of Hebrews is nevertheless addressed to early Christians in general rather than to specific individuals or congregations. In doing so this author does not deny Pauline authorship of the book.

<sup>4</sup> Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), xi.

<sup>5</sup> In comparison to the rest of the New Testament writings, the General Epistles and the Book of Hebrews for the most part have been neglected with regard to discussions on many New Testament matters. It is felt that one can hardly find an elaborate theology in such short letters like the General Epistles. Recent scholarship however, is bringing a greater understanding of these books as well as a deeper appreciation for their rich contribution to Christian faith and life. See *ibid.*; Craig L. Blomberg & Miriam J. Kamell, *James* (ed. Clinton E. Arnold; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 21-35. The enigmatic nature of Hebrews together with its breadth of ideas, stately flow of argument (the longest sustained argument in the NT) and challenging assertions have likewise led it to be a neglected part of New Testament theological reflection. See Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2002), 3-17; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1-3; William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence: The Book of Hebrews Speaks to Our Day* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), 9-11; George R. Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2003), 21; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 3-20.

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exaltation and coronation of Christ (Acts 2:1-36). The Spirit was to fall on all because Jesus was Lord of all (Acts 2:36). The Spirit's coming shattered the church's understanding of reality with a new image of Jesus and discipleship. The Holy Spirit was a worldview transforming sign from heaven (Acts 2:16-22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30; Heb 2:4; 6:4, 5). Thus the Spirit's descent animated the Church's identity and zeal for mission to the world, so much so that the Church literally burst upon the Greco-Roman world (Acts 2:40-47; 4:4; 5:14; Col 1:23; cf. Acts. 28:30-31; 1:8). Within one generation the gospel of the exalted Christ reached across the civilized world turning it upside down (Acts 17:6). This incredible expansion was not without opposition both from the Greco-Roman world, which the Church sought to win, and from the ferment of enervating heresies within her own community. How could the Church sustain momentum and maintain spiritual/doctrinal integrity against these counter realities? How could she sustain her vision of the exalted Christ? Would matters of the Spirit still factor large?

The answer in part is found in the General Epistles together with the Book of Hebrews. Written in the turbulence of the above-mentioned challenges, their respective messages unfold theological and practical concerns during the chaotic years at the beginning, the close, and throughout first century Christian writing.<sup>6</sup> They reveal, so to speak, "a

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<sup>6</sup> James is the first of the so-called Catholic or General Epistles and likely provides one of the earliest New Testament documents written—perhaps the first Christian writing of any kind of which we know of very early Jewish Christianity—suggesting to the modern reader that these are our roots. Scholars place James' death in A.D. 62 and suggest the letter may have been written somewhere before the apostolic council in Jerusalem (A.D. 48-49). The thinking is that if the letter had been written after the apostolic council in Jerusalem it surely would have mentioned the issues from that momentous occasion. Thus the letter was most likely written in the early to mid-40s. See Andrew Chester, "The Theology of James," in *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1994), 1-62; Harner, *What Are They Saying About the Catholic Epistles?*, 1-20; D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1979), 39-41; Kamell, *James*, 35; Ralph P. Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," in *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 63-168. The letters of Paul are also quite early with scholars placing Galatians as early as A.D. 48 (see Carl P. Cosaert, *Galatians: A Fiery Response to a Struggling Church* [Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011], 19-22). On the other end of the century's spectrum, the Epistles of John highlight spiritual and ecclesiastical issues at the close of the first century.

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theology on the run<sup>7</sup> where much is assumed, tacit, unfinished. Throughout, significant elements of faith regarding the Holy Spirit emerge by way of passing comments or brief points made during the course of arguments.

The Church's pneumatology however, is more pervasive than the few references might suggest. Each writer worked within a larger triune God mindset; where two persons of the Godhead could be related together and by implication includes the third.<sup>8</sup> The implications of this Trinitarian mindset comprise distinctness of persons, ontological equality/oneness, and role diversity: in other words, the three members of the Godhead equally share in the divine being.<sup>9</sup> Christian experience in effect, is envisioned as one with the Triune God. It means—from the standpoint of the Godhead—Triune atonement (Heb 9:14; 10:29-31), invitation to know the Triune God (Acts 2:38-39), Trinitarian salvation (Rom 5:5-6; 8:9, 11; Eph

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<sup>7</sup> The experience of each leader/writer together with the Holy Spirit led to corresponding Spirit guided theological reflection and exhortation, which in turn would mold the church's understanding and way of life (experience).

<sup>8</sup> Within the same thought context, the authors may casually refer to the different members of the Trinity. Four kinds of scriptural material express this triune God (Trinitarian) mindset. These comprise passages that include: 1) Jesus and the Father (Matt 1:23; 2:15; 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:27; 27:43; Mk 14:36; Jn 1:1, 14, 18; 5:17-18; 6:40, 47; 8:18-19, 38; 10:15, 36; 11:4; 13:3; Rom 1:3; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 2 Th 1:2, 12; Phlm 3; Heb 1:1-8; 2 Pet 1:2, 16-17; 1 Jn 1:2-3; 2:22-24); 2) Jesus and the Spirit (Matt 1:18; 3:17; 12:28; Lk 1:35; 3:22; 4:1-14, 18; 10:21-24; 11:13, 20; 12:11-12; Jn 1:32-33; 7:37-39; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 20:21-23; Acts 2:33; 10:38; Rom 8:2; 9:1; Gal 3:14; 5:5-6, 22-24; Eph 1:13-14; 3:5-6; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:11); 3) the Father and the Spirit (Matt 10:20; Lk 11:13; 24:48-49; Acts 1:4-5; Rom 5:5; 8:27; 15:13; 1 Cor 2:4, 5, 10-14; 3:16; 6:19; 14:2; 2 Cor 5:5; Eph 6:17; 1 Thess 4:8; 2 Pet 1:21); and 4) all three persons (Matt 1:20-23; 28:19, 20; Lk 1:35; 24:49; Jn 1:32-34; 20:21-22; Acts 1:3-5, 7-8; 28:23, 25; Rom 1:1-4; 15:30; 2 Cor 1:4-6; 13:14; 1 Thess 1:3-5; 5:18-19; Heb 3:7-12; 6:1-5; 10:15-22, 29-31; Jude 19-25; Rev 1:4-6; 4:1-5; 12; 14:6-13; 22:1-17). It is not necessary that they all be in the same verse or with a triune formula or triadic structure. Furthermore, most of the New Testament books begin and end with references to two or three persons of the Trinity. This literary *inclusio* means that the view of God included in these materials brackets the book. For the most part the General Epistles either begin and end or just begin with references to two persons—Jesus and the Father. Every book but 3 John begins with at least two members of Triune God. Hebrews, 1 John, and Jude clearly express the Trinitarian literary *inclusio*. First Peter and Jude place all three members of the Triune God together in one thought unit. See Coppedge's discussion Allan Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 19, 20, 23-52.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 34.

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2:18, 21-22; 1Pet 1:2), Trinitarian witness of salvation (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 2:3-4), and Trinitarian assurance of salvation (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:3-6; 4:6).<sup>10</sup> From the standpoint of the believer, it includes a Triune understanding of spiritual things (1 Cor 2:12-13, 16), an abiding in the Triune God (1 Jn 3:23-24; 4:13-15), a Triune growing and building up in faith (Jude 20-21), Trinitarian test of the spirits (1 Jn 4:2-3), praying with Triune intercession (Rom 15:30; 8:26-27; Jude 20-21), Triune discipleship and making disciples (Matt 28:19, 20; Eph 3:14-19; 5:18, 20), the Trinity and spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:3-6), Trinitarian ministry (Rom 14:17-18; 15:16), a Trinitarian ecclesiology (Eph 4:3-5), and Trinitarian peace and grace (Rev 1:4-6), the future in Trinitarian hands (Rev 1:4-6; 14:6-13; 22:1-17), and Triune doxology (2 Cor 13:14).<sup>11</sup> Obviously the reality of the Holy Spirit is assumed throughout this view of triune God reality—therefore not needing either specific or considerable mention in any of the documents.

Furthermore, the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the General Epistles and the book of Hebrews unfolds against backdrop discussions of Christology, theological/praxis orthodoxy, unity, ethics, identity and worldview, character, trials and adversity, suffering, church and state, revelation and inspiration, soteriology, spiritual warfare, the heavenly sanctuary in view of the passing away of the earthly, ecclesiology/community, the covenants, personal and corporate lifestyle, assurance, perseverance, hope, spiritual disciplines, the mission and message of the Church, and truth. References to the Holy Spirit throughout these numerous (and interconnected) themes reveal a *pneumatology* where the reality of the Holy Spirit is integral to every aspect of Christian thought, life, hope, and apologetics. Together these vibrant writings reveal the complex world of first century Christianity and provide a sober look at the early Church's Spirit-driven life in spiritual, doctrinal and ethical terms. In unique, yet complementary ways, each work unfolds the Church's profound pneumatology. Each expresses ideas that were basically around simultaneously. The phenomenon of the Spirit which each document

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 51.

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unfolds underscore how biblical pneumatology is more a matter of divine revelation and inspiration than it is a matter of the church or its growth in the first century.<sup>12</sup>

This study briefly reviews both the content and broad implications of each document's references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. With these distinct insights in view, an outline summary of theological and practical themes of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the General Epistles can be observed. Except for the Book of Hebrews (which appears last in this study), the order each book is explored follows its position of the books in the traditional canon rather than sorted chronologically.<sup>13</sup> This is to avoid suggestion of a developmental pneumatology during the church's formative and often chaotic early years. The General Epistles together with the Book of Hebrews have more to offer than often thought. They can and must play a distinctive role in the contemporary discussion and formulation of pneumatology in Christian faith.

#### The Holy Spirit in James

The letter of James hardly ever appears in discussion of New Testament pneumatology.<sup>14</sup> The word *pneuma* occurs only twice in the book (James

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<sup>12</sup> Important questions regarding New Testament pneumatology include: Is there a chronological development of thought and understanding or are the ideas basically around simultaneously? Are the concepts of the Holy Spirit in the different letters quite different? How much is biblical pneumatology a matter of the church? How much is it divine revelation and inspiration?

<sup>13</sup> When affirming canon, we accept the biblical canon in its final form as the locus of Scripture and the basis of Christian doctrine. A final-form canonical approach is crucial to the interpretative task of Scripture and honors the nature of Scripture as it has been providentially preserved and handed down to the church by the Holy Spirit throughout Christian history.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Bauckham, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5), in *The Jewish World around the New Testament: Collected Essays I* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 421. Questions loom over whether James has any theology at all or even a discernable outline. See Chester, "The Theology of James," 3; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 22-57; Kamell, *James*, 23-26. Chester writes: "James' theology is limited in many respects. He says nothing for example about the spirit and does little more than hint at an understanding of other themes, such as Christ, God, baptism, worship, and organization . . . his understanding of the law is very positive . . . it is sin, the human condition, and misuse of speech that James sees as the fundamental problems that need addressed. These and other ethical concerns permeate the whole letter, while the eschatological context and perspective are important for these issues

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2:26; 4:5) and only one reference could conceivably refer to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God.<sup>15</sup> “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the spirit/Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?’”(James 4:5). The question is whether the word *pneuma* refers here to the divine Spirit or to the human spirit?<sup>16</sup> Problems of translation and the source from which James drew his thoughts make this a challenging passage.

The passage in question appears within a discussion of the turbulent manifestations of worldliness and an adulterous friendship with the world among God’s people.<sup>17</sup> The context leading up to this verse affords repeated references to man’s inner attitude (spirit?) and drives. James has not yet directly alluded to the Holy Spirit in his epistle so a sudden appearance here is rightly questioned.<sup>18</sup> On the surface then, the context seems to suggest it is best to understand “spirit” as the human spirit for James has just finished calling his audience “adulteresses” in their relationship with God and is not likely to be thinking of the Holy Spirit living in them at this point.<sup>19</sup> This verse would be an amplification of the theme picked up from verse 2 of the destructive power of human desire and envy, rather than that of God’s jealous relationship with His people. It would then be translated—“The (human) spirit which He (God) has made to dwell in us is one which feels passionate envy.” In articulating such, James would not

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and in their own right for James. Above all, while James says little about faith and justification, and is mostly negative about faith, he has a highly positive, if not particularly profound, theology of works. It is this especially that shows that James’ theology is rooted in the concrete, specific issues of how people live in relation to each other in everyday life,” (Chester, “The Theology of James,” 44, 45).

<sup>15</sup> Bauckham, “The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy (James 4:5),” 421.

<sup>16</sup> Four possibilities to James’ intended meaning include: 1) the human spirit is the main object of the verb (He [God] yearns enviously for the spirit which He caused to dwell in us); 2) the divine Spirit is the object of the verb (He [God] yearns enviously for the Spirit which He caused to dwell in us); 3) the human spirit as the subject of the main verb (The spirit which he [God] made to dwell in us longs enviously); and 4) the divine Spirit as the subject of the main verb (The Spirit which he [God] made to dwell in us yearns enviously). See Hiebert, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith*, 256, 257. McCartney provides one of the clearest outlines of the issues needing to be resolved as well as making choices among the options (Dan G. McCartney, *James* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009], 209-219).

<sup>17</sup> Hiebert, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith*, 239-267.

<sup>18</sup> Kamell, *James*, 192.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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be suggesting a dualism, but instead that it is the same human spirit (which God has placed within man) that can bring forth good and evil, virtue or vice.<sup>20</sup> This reading would suggest two spirits at war within individuals for the allegiance of human beings—a basic reality of fallen human nature (c.f. Rom 7:14-25).<sup>21</sup>

Although some assert that *pneuma* here does refer to God's Spirit, the only other use of the term in James clearly means the human spirit (James 2:26). Nevertheless, numerous commentators suggest that this passage refers to the Holy Spirit's reaction to the believer's envious worldliness.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that man's envy of the world, which expresses hostility toward God (James 4:4), is met by God's own enmity towards human envy—via the Holy Spirit. In this case, a reference to the human spirit would be an unnecessarily indirect way of pointing to God's own opposition to envy.<sup>23</sup> *To pneuma* then would refer to the divine Spirit rather than the human spirit. If one understands the tenth commandment as in view here ("thou shalt not covet") as per the preceding argument, it is possible that spirit could mean the Holy Spirit who speaks authoritatively through that commandment against the covetousness at play both in the human heart and in the early Christian community. Or, following James' discussion forward toward his ensuing reference about God giving "a greater grace" to the humble (James 4:6) one could conclude that God's jealousy is surpassed by God's grace<sup>24</sup>—which again could open the way for understanding *to pneuma* as being the Holy Spirit. If James does have the Spirit in mind in the passage, he provides an early insight into the interior work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace, which God gives to those who are humble.

Some suggest that the way in which James 3:13-18 refers to the wisdom that "comes down from above" and produces the fruits of ethical qualities in Christians resembles the Pauline understanding of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).<sup>25</sup> In this view, wisdom in James would be effectively equivalent to the Spirit in the New Testament. This idea would complement the

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<sup>20</sup> Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 227.

<sup>21</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 124.

<sup>22</sup> See BAUCKHAM, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5), 428, 429; HIEBERT, *The Epistles of James: Tests of Living Faith*, 254-257.

<sup>23</sup> BAUCKHAM, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5), 429.

<sup>24</sup> MCCARTNEY, *James*, 216.

<sup>25</sup> BAUCKHAM, "The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy," (James 4:5).

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understanding of *to pneuma* in 4:5 as being the Holy Spirit, i.e., “both the wisdom from above of 3:13-18 and the Spirit of 4:5 are opposed to envy.”<sup>26</sup> While there are interesting parallels between what Paul lists as the gifts of the Spirit (compare 3:17-18 and Gal. 5:22-3) as well as wisdom and spirit used in parallel in Jewish texts, to speak of James as having a “wisdom pneumatology” per se goes beyond the evidence.<sup>27</sup> However, since James does begin with a reference to two members of the Godhead: Jesus and the Father (James 1:1) one can rightly assume James is working within the larger triune God thought context as per above. This being so one could assert that the Holy Spirit is integral to James’ argumentation while not specifically named. If so (and it likely is), the wisdom which James speaks as coming from God or coming from above could be understood as taking place via the person and work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> This would be tacit reference to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, which brought divine resource in His train. Wisdom for James then would function much like the Spirit does elsewhere in the New Testament.<sup>29</sup> This may explain why there is no unambiguous reference to the Holy Spirit in the book.<sup>30</sup> This understanding however, would not necessitate *to pneuma* in 4:5 being a reference to the Holy Spirit.

If James does have the Spirit in view, the work provides an early insight into the interior work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace, which God gives to those who are humble. Nevertheless the book reflects the Trinitarian thought mix, which includes the Spirit in its purview.

### **The Holy Spirit in 1 Peter**

#### *An Eschatological Ministry*

While some would suggest that the Holy Spirit does not figure prominently in 1 Peter,<sup>31</sup> the epistle begins with an extended threefold

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 430.

<sup>27</sup> Chester, “The Theology of James,” 39. Compare with Bauckham, “The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy,” (James 4:5), 429.

<sup>28</sup> See discussion Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 51-56; Ralph P. Martin, *James* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), lxxxvii-xciii.

<sup>29</sup> McCartney argues that any linkage of the “spirit” with “wisdom” in James points not to the Holy Spirit, but the presence of God in divinely given wisdom, i.e., to the spirit of wisdom (McCartney, *James*, 214-215.).

<sup>30</sup> Kamell, *James*, 257.

<sup>31</sup> Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 117.



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“Trinitarian structure”<sup>32</sup> consisting of parallel prepositional phrases, which includes the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus:<sup>33</sup> “who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (1 Pet 1:2). The epistle closes with references to two members of the Trinity—Jesus and the Father (1 Pet 5:10). This opening and closing set the context for understanding all of the material in the book in light of the three persons of the Godhead.<sup>34</sup> There is a clear view of the Triune God at play throughout the document. Everything that follows its opening assumes this Trinitarian vision and includes a Holy Spirit connection in all that is said. It is a given that within the Church’s Trinitarian vision the Holy Spirit is viewed as a distinct person who ontologically shares the divine being. The role of the Holy Spirit is thus more pervasive than the epistles’ few references might suggest.<sup>35</sup>

First Peter displays most of the main elements of the Holy Spirit’s work in relation to the believer which one finds mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. And much of what unfolds appears to mirror Pauline tradition in particular (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 1 Thess 4:7-8; 2 Thess 2:13).<sup>36</sup> However, the epistle is strikingly original and comparably creative with regards to the Holy Spirit’s function in Christian experience and life.<sup>37</sup> Here readers are encouraged to think of themselves as living in the new age of God’s salvation heralded by the prophets and brought to reality by Christ (see 1 Peter 1:10-11). This suggests that the Spirit’s ministry is “eschatological.”<sup>38</sup> The person and work of the Holy Spirit unfolds within four broad areas: 1) salvation and becoming a disciple of the triune God (1 Pet 1:2, 23); 2) Christology (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18); 3) gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18); and 4) suffering, trials, adversity (1 Pet 4:14).

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<sup>32</sup> Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 27, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Earl J. Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2000), 31. First Peter is placed primarily in the last half to third of the first century, see *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> See discussion of the Trinitarian structure of the New Testament books in Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 34-35.

<sup>35</sup> Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 119.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 117, 118.

<sup>37</sup> Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 119.

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In one of the clearest Trinitarian passages of the New Testament, one that speaks on the purposes of God, the atonement of Jesus, and sanctification by the Spirit (1 Pet 1:1, 23),<sup>39</sup> salvation and discipleship are envisioned as a triune experience.<sup>40</sup> Each member of the Godhead communicates “grace” and “peace” to believers (1 Pet 1:2d; cf. Rev 1:4-6; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2).<sup>41</sup> Yet within this triune mix the process of salvation or “making holy” (*hagiasmos*) is clearly asserted as the Spirit’s domain (1 Pet 1:2). Within biblical imagery “holiness” is the chief attribute of God. Peter thus identifies the Spirit as both a distinct person and with the essential being of God (cf. 1 Pet 1:2 and 1:15-16). This “making holy” includes the Spirit’s cleansing work in applying the atonement accomplished by Christ to the sinner.<sup>42</sup> Christian life begins now by the power of our share in Christ’s resurrection and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:23; cf. John 3:3-8).<sup>43</sup>

The Spirit’s work in salvation further includes the activity of the prophets, the proclamation of the good news, and an abiding divine presence as a source of hope (1 Pet 1:10-12; 4:14). By implication, the injunction to live holy lives and to exhibit honorable and loving conduct—despite one’s difficulties—is made possible by the presence of the Spirit (1 Pet 1:15, 22; 2:12).<sup>44</sup> This is how one becomes a disciple of the triune God.<sup>45</sup> The Holy Spirit plays an important role in Christian initiation<sup>46</sup> along side of Christ’s redeeming blood. He plays a role too in being born again through the imperishable word of God (1 Pet 1:12, 23-25; cf., John 3:8). The person and work of the Holy Spirit is the effective mediating source of divine grace and peace (1 Pet 1:2; cf. Rev 1:4-6).

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<sup>39</sup> Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>41</sup> This promise of grace and peace from the triune God implies three distinct and separate persons, each being on equal ground ontologically, and each capable of communicating these divine blessings.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Harvey & Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter & Jude* (ed. Grant R. Osborne; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 49.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> See discussion Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 42-44, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 24.

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*The Spirit of Christ*

The epistle provides an unusual combination of themes with respect to the Spirit in relation to Christ.<sup>47</sup> It asserts that the Spirit that dwelt in the prophets was Christ's Spirit, i.e., "the Spirit of Christ in them" (1 Pet 1:11). This is not to be read principally Christological as the activity of the pre-existent Christ, but rather eschatologically as the divine Spirit who speaks of hidden things to come—in this case Christ. This is an objective genitive "Spirit [prophesying] about Christ."<sup>48</sup> The work of the Spirit here is both revelatory and dynamic. It is not quite the same as the mode of inspiration and interpretation of the Scripture which is outlined in 2 Peter 1:19-21.<sup>49</sup> The model for Christian living in 1 Peter is Christological in empowerment, model, and intimacy—for Christ is the chief shepherd and guardian of the flock (1 Pet 2:25; 5:1-5). The Spirit plays a fundamental effective role in these realities—enabling one to love the unseen Christ (1 Pet 1:8). The Spirit was an active agent in the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet 3:18). This is in contrast to Hebrews 9 where it was through the eternal Spirit that Jesus offered himself without blemish to God (Heb 9:14). Thus the Spirit would play a unique role in both the substitutionary atonement of Jesus and His glorious resurrection.

The link between "the Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Pet 1:12) and gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:12) echoes Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36) and implies that gospel proclamation by the Spirit is being made to the present generation (Acts 2:39). The author would have personal knowledge of these realities. Through the Spirit the gospel has been preached to Christians who have already died (1 Pet 4:6).<sup>50</sup> The Spirit was also active in pre-flood appeals to the antediluvian world (Gen 6:3) in the rebuke of demonic spirits (1 Pet 3:18, 19).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 50, 51.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>49</sup> Martin. "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 118.

<sup>50</sup> See discussion of options: Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 173-176. The dead are disobedient spirits of 3:19 or those who dwell in the abode of the dead (either the righteous or all those deceased). The dead are the spiritually dead. The dead are Christians who died prior to the Lord's coming. Richard chooses the third option asserting that the dead refers to Christians who have already died.

<sup>51</sup> There is question as to whether "spirits in prison" refers here to "human spirits" or to "demonic spirits." The context implies the latter, i.e., angels, authorities, powers being made subject to Christ following the resurrection and subsequent ascension (1 Pet 3:22; cf. Eph 1:20-22; 6:12) as elsewhere "demonic spirits" are spoken of as currently imprisoned (2

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*Helping Hurting Believers*

Suffering is a paramount theme throughout the epistle and in view of it the author unfolds a theology of suffering.<sup>52</sup> Peter addresses the issue of Christians in a non-Christian society and offers a challenging discussion of sociopolitical thought,<sup>53</sup> i.e., church and society. Christians have a duty toward the state, non-Christian neighbors, and all human beings (1 Pet 2:17). A broad strategy of nonviolent resistance and gentle defense is outlined. It is in the living presence of the Spirit that sufferers already possess something of the glory that is to be revealed with Christ (1 Pet 4:14).<sup>54</sup> This is true for both the individual and believing community. In this challenging context of suffering and the need for orientation and patient perseverance, the Spirit's ministry in the life of the hurting believer takes on a practical and pastoral character. Persecuted believers are comforted in their trials by the assurance that the divine Spirit rests as a protecting shield over them. This strengthening of the Spirit in time of stress is in line with what is promised in other New Testament documents—Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12.<sup>55</sup> Given the larger biblical witness one would assume that the Spirit's protective shield has to do with truth, courage, perseverance, hope, and witness rather than any physical protection (cf. Acts 4:31; 7:55).

In view of the heightened pagan-Christian conflict or tension, 1 Peter addresses the Christian reality of a new life that resulted from the Father's call, the Spirit's sanctifying activity, and Jesus' obedient submission of his life for the salvation of the believer (1 Pet 1:2).<sup>56</sup> Believers have been called by God out of the pagan populace and, like the Jews of the time, as a result of divine election live in communities among the Gentiles, that is the *diaspora* (1 Pet 1:1, 2). The book underscores "the fact that as a result of God's call through the Christ-event, mercy was conferred on humanity and

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Pet 2:4, 5; Jude 6), while humans are currently dead" (1 Pet 4:6). Scripture will refer to angels as spirits (Heb 1:7). This would imply that the Spirit's contending in Genesis 6:3 is not just with human beings but includes the larger context of the great controversy in opposition to and judgment against demonic powers that were influencing the antediluvian world. Interestingly Jesus via the Spirit engages demonic spirits (1 Pet 3:18, 19) while Noah via the Spirit engages human beings (2 Pet 2:5).

<sup>52</sup> Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 72.

<sup>55</sup> Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 118.

<sup>56</sup> Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 18.

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a new people constituted. By means of the death and resurrection of Jesus, whether employing the imagery of ransom, purification, conversion, or new birth, the author establishes the basis for the community's unity, strength, and source of life. Though tested and in religious exile, it is nonetheless a house built of living stones, along with the rejected, chosen, and precious salvific stone. It is a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (1 Pet 2:4-5, 9).<sup>57</sup> In this context pneumatology touches matters of Christian self-identity and *being*. Ecclesiological implications abound.

First Peter thus places the person and work of the Holy Spirit squarely in the experience of salvation and what it means to become a disciple of the triune God (1 Peter 1:2, 23) as well as Christology (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), Gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), and suffering, perseverance, self-identity (1 Pet 4:14).

### The Holy Spirit in 2 Peter

#### *Spirit Engendered Truth*

While considered an “elaborately constructed polemic document”<sup>58</sup> and “on the fringe” of New Testament thinking,<sup>59</sup> 2 Peter nevertheless opens with the Trinitarian mindset which pervades the New Testament by referring to two members of the Godhead, Jesus and the Father (2 Pet 1:1, 2). Later, and within the same chapter it is the Father and the Spirit who are placed together (2 Pet 1:21). In this context the Spirit is referred to as *pneumatōs hagiou* linking the Spirit with the fundamental reality of God—holiness. All the implications of divine personhood, ontology, and diversity of the person and work of the Spirit in this thought matrix are assumed and implied.

Second Peter is a homily on Christian growth set in the context of threats to Christian stability from heretical teachings.<sup>60</sup> The bold claims and fictitious anecdotes of false teachers were confusing the churches with notions that God's Spirit was speaking a fresh message through them.<sup>61</sup> There were accusations that the apostles' had been following cleverly invented stories (2 Pet 1:16). There was need to assert the reliable

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, “The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter,” 146.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 146, 147.

<sup>60</sup> Dick Lucas & Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude* (ed. John R. W. Stott; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

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eyewitness of the apostles' gospel preaching (2 Pet 1:16-18).<sup>62</sup> The book's purpose is threefold: 1) to expose false teachers for what they are; 2) to link the words of the apostles with those of the prophets; and 3) to set before the churches the conditions of survival when doctrinal and moral perversions infiltrate their fellowships.<sup>63</sup>

The question is what can Peter put before the churches to counter the influence of the new voices being heard everywhere, especially when his own voice would soon be silent (2 Pet 1:14)? The answer is the apostolic eyewitnesses, which Peter sets against the firm backdrop of Spirit engendered truth through the reality and certainty of the prophetic word (2 Pet 1:12-21). This is perhaps the greatest single treasure within this short letter regarding a number of theological issues: pneumatology, revelation and inspiration, prophecy and the *eschaton*, Christology, spiritual life, and assurance.<sup>64</sup> The "prophetic word" (2 Pet 1:19) remains forever God's Word. It is not merely the prophet of long ago who speaks (as per 2 Pet 1:17, 18), but the living God Himself via the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The Spirit has spoken and continues to speak via the Word of truth already given. And if this is so, one is wise not to attempt to reinterpret what the Holy Spirit says as though they are now in possession of some superior wisdom. The Spirit continues to speak through the prophetic Word, which He initiated, rather than in a fresh message through new teachers. Believers are to be anchored in the Word of God<sup>65</sup>—and thus the Spirit's guiding influence.

*Christian Life and Ethos*

Peter's call to trust God's witness and pay attention to the Scriptures is followed by his assertion that the message of Scripture originates with the Holy Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:20, 21). Here we find the Holy Spirit in relation to the inspiration of Scripture and prophecy in particular. "We can have utter confidence that God truly speaks to us in His Word because both the divine revelation given to its authors and their interpretation of its was direct by the Holy Spirit."<sup>66</sup> The text describes a divine-human partnership

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<sup>62</sup> Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 61.

<sup>63</sup> Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 23, 24.

<sup>66</sup> Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 70.

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not that of equals but as a powerful, energetic superintendence by the Spirit: “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>67</sup>

These insights into the person and work of the Holy Spirit appear against the backdrop of an ill-defined spirituality. More than correct doctrine or the reliability of the biblical message is in view. It is Christian life and ethos that is nuanced. Peter understands that we have miraculous resources for Godly living (2 Pet 1:3-4). We have everything we need for life and godliness. One of those heavenly resources is the comprehensive nature of the revelation given to believers (2 Pet 1:16-21; 3:1-2).<sup>68</sup> The Holy Spirit brings divine resources for here and now via and alongside of God’s Word. Ultimately genuine spiritual life is linked to the true voice of the Holy Spirit via the prophetic word (2 Pet 1:19).

The reference of the Holy Spirit at the end of chapter 1 provides an interpretive hinge relating both backward and forward in the author’s discussion regarding the accusations by false teachers who suggest God’s Spirit is speaking a fresh message through them. Not only does the Spirit continue to speak through the prophetic word, which He initiated, but also genuine spiritual life is linked to the true voice of the Holy Spirit via the prophetic word.

**The Holy Spirit in 1, 2, 3 John**

*Fourth Gospel Backdrop*

Within the Johannine Epistles, only 1 John refers directly to the person and work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>69</sup> Even there the prominence and role of the Holy Spirit does not appear to be a key theme. Any theology of the Spirit in 1 John appears restrained<sup>70</sup> against a generally *theocentric* feel of the epistle—suggesting the writer may be more preoccupied with the “Godhead” itself than with individual members of the Godhead.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The prophets raised their sails so to speak. The Holy Spirit used human beings as His authors and worked through their personalities. Verse 21 affirms what Peter stated in verse 20, that the prophets did not by themselves “think up” what they then proclaimed as the Word of the Lord. They were divinely inspired. The Holy Spirit spoke to and through them to deliver the truth of God to His people.

<sup>68</sup> Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Twelve times in all within five verses: 1 John 3:24; 4:2, 13; 5:6, 8. Themes in 2 and 3 John have pneumatological implications.

<sup>70</sup> Steven S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (vol. 51; Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1984), xxix-xxx, 250.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii.

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However, 1 John reveals a community struggling for a balanced understanding of the person of Jesus.<sup>72</sup> The author seeks a balanced Christology. There were some who emphasized the divinity of Christ, while others exaggerated the humanity of Jesus.<sup>73</sup> The historical and life-giving Jesus is obviously central to the writer's vision of the doctrine of God. This may further explain some of the constant ambivalence of John's reference to the Spirit (i.e., anointing, seed, born, abide in you, etc.).

Needless to say because 1 John does not include an extensive or unrestrained body of material on the Holy Spirit, the pneumatology expressed therein has not received the same degree of scholarly attention as that of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>74</sup> Frequent points of contact between 1 John and the Fourth Gospel, however suggest 1 John might reflect to a smaller scale both the structure and content of the Gospel.<sup>75</sup> Common themes in 1 John and the Farewell Discourse of John 14-17 are evident.<sup>76</sup> One of these thematic links is the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:13; John 14:16-17).<sup>77</sup> Both books begin with Christology (the incarnation), themes of divine light, and the reality of fellowship with God (1 John 1:1-7; John 1:1-14). Both books highlight love to God and love for one another (1 John 3:16-18; 4:7-12; John 3:16; 13:34, 35; 14:15-31; 15: 15:9-19). Both books highlight the atoning work of Christ (1 John 4:9, 10; John 3:14-17). More specifically both books focus on the reality of the Holy Spirit in relation to the new birth experience (1 John 3:9; John 3:5-8). Reading the letters against the backdrop of the Fourth Gospel highlight the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as of fundamental concern for 1 John indicating that any dealing with this

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., xxiii, xxvi.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., xxvi. Those with a high view of Jesus appeared to have a low view of the law, while those who had a low view of Jesus had a high view of the law.

<sup>74</sup> Donald W. Mills, "The Holy Spirit in 1 John," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, 4, (Fall 1999): 33. It is suggested that 1 John de-emphasizes the role of the Spirit and that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not a key theme.

<sup>75</sup> Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, xxix.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., xxix-xxx. Common themes in 1 John and the Farewell Discourse include: A) the Godhead and the Christian: love of the father (1 John 4:16; John 1:21); abiding of the son (1 John 3:24; John 15:4); the gift of the Spirit (1 John 4:13; John 14:16-17); B) the Christian and the Godhead: mutual indwelling (1 John 3:24; John 14:20); forgiveness (1 John 1:9; John 15:3; 13:8); eternal life (1 John 2:25; 17:2); righteousness (1 John 2:29; John 16:10); and C) conditions for Christian discipleship: renounce sin (1 John 1:8; 3:4; John 16:8); obedience (1 John 2:3; 3:10; John 14:15); rejection of worldliness (1 John 2:12; 4:1; John 15:19); keeping the faith (1 John 2:18; 5:5; John 17:8).

<sup>77</sup> See Smalley, *ibid.*, xxx.



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epistle must reckon with it its pneumatology.<sup>78</sup> While guarded and indirect, what the epistle does say about the Holy Spirit is significant.<sup>79</sup>

In keeping with New Testament Trinitarian thought context 1 John begins and ends with references to two persons of the Godhead—Jesus and the Father (1 John 1:3; 5:10). 2 John likewise opens with reference to Jesus and the Father (2 John 3, 9). Only 3 John has a reference to God without any specific reference to the Father, the Son, or the Spirit. As per above the implications of divine personhood, ontology, and diversity of the person and work of the Holy Spirit within this Trinitarian thought matrix are assumed and implied. First John never refers to the Spirit as the “Holy” Spirit.<sup>80</sup>

*Pneumatological Crisis*

Despite the aforementioned paucity of references to the Spirit, 1 John gives evidence that at least one of the theological/experiential crises facing the churches in John’s community was *pneumatological*.<sup>81</sup> Two broad areas of the Spirit’s person and work are articulated in response to this conflict, which provide “vital marks of authentic pneumatology.”<sup>82</sup> One is theological, Christological, the other experiential, praxis.

First, there is the major role of the Holy Spirit in bearing witness to the significance of the earthly life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (1 John 5:5-8).<sup>83</sup> Jesus is the One who “came” into human history “with the water and with the blood.” The “water and blood” refer to the terminal points in Jesus’ earthly ministry: His baptism and His crucifixion.<sup>84</sup> Historically Jesus “came” into His power by the “water” of His baptism and even more so by the “blood” of His cross.<sup>85</sup> These are empirical truths regarding Jesus in whom faith is placed (1 John 5:5),<sup>86</sup> and which the Holy Spirit affirms (1 John 5:6). Two important and closely related truths are affirmed: “(1) the

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<sup>78</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 33.

<sup>79</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 34.

<sup>80</sup> Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 211.

<sup>81</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 34.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-36.

<sup>84</sup> Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 196.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 280-286.

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human Jesus cannot be ontologically separated from the divine Christ, for they are one person, the Son of God, and (2) the same person who was baptized was also crucified, Jesus Christ.<sup>87</sup> Thus one person, Jesus Christ, came through both the baptism and crucifixion. Again, these are truths to which the Spirit testifies both objectively and experientially for the believer (1 John 5:6). The context suggests that this double witness to which the Spirit testifies is to highlight the latter, i.e., the blood—Christ’s atoning work on the cross. This suggests “any view of pneumatology that de-emphasizes the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross is suspect.”<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, as the custodian and guarantor of these Christological truths, the Spirit does not do this by mere subjective feeling, intuition, or experience, but as He bears witness of Christ who has acted in history.<sup>89</sup> The Spirit brings believers back to what they have heard from the beginning (1 John 1:1). In this context the Spirit is also the virtual presence of the absent Christ.<sup>90</sup> His witness in the believer summarizes Jesus’ ongoing self-disclosure until He returns.<sup>91</sup> As such, John’s assertion that “there are three that testify” (1 John 5:7) affirms that there are three foundational underpinnings to Christ’s historical earthly self-disclosure—water, blood, and Spirit—i.e., baptism, crucifixion, and Pentecost.<sup>92</sup> The Spirit was at work during each of these defining historical Christ-events. The Spirit is given priority over the witness of “water and blood” because He testifies through them (1 John 5:6). While “water and blood” give witness of Christ as non-personal historical events, the Spirit does so as a personal being.<sup>93</sup> The Spirit’s witness in relation to Christ’s baptism and crucifixion give them an enduring living witness and power.

Second, there is the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.<sup>94</sup> It is the Holy Spirit who brings: 1) the new birth and its genuine fruit (1 John 3:9-10);<sup>95</sup> 2) the assurance of eternal life and hope at Christ’s

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<sup>87</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 35.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 284.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>93</sup> See discussion, Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 281.

<sup>94</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 34, 36-50.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-40.

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return (1 John 3:24; 4:13);<sup>96</sup> 3) the ability to remain in the truth (1 John 2:20, 27);<sup>97</sup> and 4) the discernment between truth and error (1 John 4:1-6).<sup>98</sup>

*Agent of New Birth*

According to 1 John the Holy Spirit is the agent of the new birth as well as the practical evidence of it: “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9; cf. John 3:3-8). Parallels with the Fourth Gospel are evident. No one reading the phrase “born of God” would have missed the association with the Holy Spirit (John 3:5).<sup>99</sup> Spiritual regeneration is the means of divine sonship (cf. 1 John 2:29; 3:1, 10). The use of the perfect tense *gegennēmenos* “born” indicates not only the initial act of Christian rebirth, but also its continuing results (1 Jn 3:9).<sup>100</sup> The words “his seed abides in him” point to the divine nature, which is implanted in the person who is spiritually reborn, and which is responsible for Christian growth and obedience (1 John 3:10).<sup>101</sup> From the standpoint of Johannine theology the “seed” refers to the Holy Spirit.<sup>102</sup>

*Twofold Assurance*

In 1 John 3:24 and 4:13, the work of the Spirit is described as bringing assurance to the believer who may question their standing with God—evidently one of the larger reasons for the epistle.<sup>103</sup> It is the knowledge of the indwelling Spirit that gives the believer assurance of his or her membership in the family of God: “The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:34); “By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 40-42.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 42-45.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 45-50.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>100</sup> Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 172.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 173. As opposed to Yarbrough who asserts “seed” denotes the believer’s status as God’s offspring rather than any message received, one’s anointing, or the Holy Spirit (Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 195).

<sup>102</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 38.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 40.

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Spirit” (1 John 4:13). The primary evidence of our mutual abiding experience in God is the presence of the Spirit in our lives.

Here the pneumatology of 1 John grants a twofold assurance: we are present possessors of the life of God, and we can enjoy a sense of confidence that we are identified as being in Christ. This is not a subjective feeling but is “knowledge obtained by drawing a conclusion based on facts. When one possesses the Spirit of God, it is divine evidence of the reciprocal relationship, enjoyed and experienced. (cf. Rom 8:16).”<sup>104</sup>

*Safeguard Against Apostasy*

The Spirit’s ministry of safeguarding one against apostasy is expressed in the vivid imagery of “anointing”:<sup>105</sup> “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know” (1 John 2:20); “As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him” (1 John 2:27). A word-play takes place here in which the terms *antichristos*, *Christos*, and *chrisma* are all being used to explain the difference between secessionists from the faith and those who are faithful to the Gospel.<sup>106</sup> Believers are to be encouraged because they have received an anointing from “the anointed one,” here called the “Holy One.”<sup>107</sup> Origin, character, and communion are all involved. Jesus sends the Spirit (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; Acts 2:33). It is the Spirit who abides in the believer (cf. John 14:17). It is the Spirit who teaches the truth (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). It is the Spirit who enables one to continue in Jesus’ word and confess Him as the Christ (cf. John 6:60-71; 1 John 3:24-4:2, 6). In 1 John the Word and Spirit complement each other. The proclamation of the gospel is an objective exercise (cf. 1 John 1:1-3, 5), whereas the anointing of the

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<sup>104</sup> Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 169.

<sup>105</sup> Old Testament nuances linking the Holy Spirit with anointing are assumed (Exod 29:7; 30:25; 40:15; 1 Sam 16:13; Isa 61:1). Peter says in Acts 10:38 that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Anointing here is a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit which is “the characteristic endowment” of believers (Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 106).

<sup>106</sup> Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 117.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. In keeping with John 14-17 and Acts 2 where Jesus is the One who sends the Holy Spirit, the primary Christological interpretation of “from the Holy One” in v 20 is to be assumed. See Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 124.

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Spirit is subjective, personal, inward—but also objective in that it is real.<sup>108</sup> The Spirit “manifests himself objectively in the life and conduct of the believer”<sup>109</sup>; inspiring a true confession of Jesus and enabling one to act righteously. The Spirit bears witness to God’s indwelling presence without *explaining* this phenomenon.<sup>110</sup>

In 1 John 2:20, 27 the abiding presence of the Spirit (the “anointing”) assures one of discernment in his or her struggle with the legion of antichrists (1 John 2:18).<sup>111</sup> The Spirit enables one to know God. The Spirit mediates the knowledge of God. The Spirit invalidates the authority of false teachers. The Spirit assures a proper doctrine of Christ. The Spirit enables one to remain in the truth. The Spirit brings personal and corporate assurance. The anointing of the Spirit is an established fact for every believer.

*Spiritual Discernment*

Finally there is the matter of the Spirit and spiritual discernment in relation to competing spirits or spiritual warfare (1 John 4:1-6). John asserts that there is the “Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:6), a divine Spirit and a diabolic spirit (1 John 4:2a, 3b) who manifest themselves in human behavior specifically in relation to true and false confessions of faith. Given this conflict between the two spiritual realms, and perhaps two spiritual beings (the Holy Spirit and Satan, though in opposition, the structure does not put them on a par),<sup>112</sup> John exhorts one to test all spirits to determine their truthfulness. Believers are warned not to believe every spirit as if he were the Spirit of God (1 John 3:24). Believers dare not be indiscriminate and accept everyone who claims that the Spirit directs his or her teachings.

Two criteria are given for making this determination: the content of the teaching, and the character of the audience.<sup>113</sup> The first is Christological: Who is Jesus Christ? What does this spirit say about Jesus Christ? Does he confess Christ’s incarnation—that He came in the flesh? The true Spirit-inspired is one who affirms the historicity of Christ’s appearance, i.e., His

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<sup>108</sup> Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 124.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>111</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 44.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 47; Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 224.

<sup>113</sup> Mills, “The Holy Spirit in 1 John,” 45.

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incarnation. More precisely, this confession concerns Christ's humanity together with its salvific importance.<sup>114</sup> God actually came to earth, permanently taking upon Himself human nature (1 John 1:1-4; cf. John 1:14; 6:51-55).

The second is ecclesiological: Who listens to whom? What is the nature or character of the audience? John writes: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:4b-6). "He who is in you" refers to the Spirit. "He who is in the world" refers to the "spirit of antichrist." Heretics "align themselves with the world and speak the language of the world as evidenced in the denial of Christ."<sup>115</sup> True believers align themselves with the Spirit and receive only what the Spirit says regarding Christ. In other words we listen to those who speak our own language. This points to the true character of the listener(s) in response to the correct confession of Jesus as much as it does the content of that confession itself. This too, is evidence of the Holy Spirit's work within the community of faith in that He creates that community of spiritual discernment. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned via the Spirit.<sup>116</sup> The greater Spirit of God who lives within believers renders the world powerless. Through the Spirit the Church recognizes its own and listens to their message, which originates in the Spirit and reflects the Spirit's perspectives. He who belongs to God hears what God says. This is how we know the Spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood.

John's first epistle unfolds a *pneumatological* crisis in which the Holy Spirit's person and work become key. In this context the Holy Spirit plays a key role in Christ's self-disclosure in the world (1 John 5:6, 8)—baptism (water), crucifixion (blood), and exaltation/coronation (Spirit, i.e., Pentecost). In keeping with the epistle's Fourth Gospel backdrop (both in structure and content) the Holy Spirit's role in the "new birth" experience (1 John 3:9) along with its genuine moral/spiritual fruitage is highlighted (1 John 3:7-24). The "anointing" (of the Spirit) engenders assurance of eternal life and confident hope of Christ's soon return as well (1 John 2:20, 27, 28;

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 49; Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 226-230.

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3:24). One's ability to remain in the truth and discernment between truth and error (or true and demonic spirits) is likewise linked to the Spirit's work in both the individual and church community (1 John 4:1-3).

**The Holy Spirit in Jude**

*Divine Keeping Power*

Jude is basically a polemical document<sup>117</sup> in which argument and arrangements of material are closely woven in artistic style. The twenty-five verse epistle follows a well-known pattern of "text and interpretation" in which an authoritative text is followed by an interpretive application to the reader's own day.<sup>118</sup> This implies theological/ethical<sup>119</sup> reflection on implications of biblical materials in a contemporary context. Elements of faith regarding *pneumatology* emerge through the running argumentation. In keeping with the other General Epistles and Hebrews, Jude opens with typical Trinitarian thought by referring to at least two members of the Godhead: Jesus and the Father (Jude 1). Eighteen verses later the Spirit, the Father, and the Son appear in close connection: "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life" (Jude 20, 21). Positively growing as a disciple means building oneself up in the faith (Jude 20). Jude presents this reality of building oneself up in the faith as a "trinitarian challenge."<sup>120</sup> As per 1

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<sup>117</sup> Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 66. Some suggest Jude is the most neglected book in the New Testament and has not been widely valued by modern scholarship or most Christian readers until most recently (Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 164). The close relationship between 2 Peter and Jude is easy for any reader to see. Parallels include (ibid., 159): 1) the Christian faith as already in existence as a settled and final body of saving truths; 2) the presence of godless teachers in positions of authority within the churches; 3) the new teachers are antagonistic and scoffing towards the heart of the gospel itself as well as particular articles of Christian faith; 4) the need for faithful Christians painstakingly stand firm in evil times; 5) church members are urged to make steady progress in their knowledge of God; 6) there is urgency for them to write to their dear friends; 7) the havoc created in the churches by present day Cains, Balaams and Korah's reflects the reality that it has all happened before and Scripture's record of these events serve as a warning for us; 8) there is unwavering belief that Jesus is the reigning Lord of the Church. So many parallel themes raise questions as to distinctive contributions, if any that Jude in particular might make (Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 67).

<sup>118</sup> Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 159.

<sup>119</sup> Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 18.

<sup>120</sup> Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 45.

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and 2 Peter, all the implications of divine personhood, ontology, and diversity of the person and work of the Holy Spirit are assumed and implied in this thought matrix.

As Jude begins and ends with the theme of being kept by divine power (Jude 1, 24-25)<sup>121</sup> the assumption is that the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role providing divine power. More specifically, two insights emerge into Jude's *pneumatology* regarding the aforementioned growth in faith: 1) the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christian orthodoxy, unity, and worldview (Jude 20); 2) the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christian spiritual discipline and growth (Jude 21).

*Orthodoxy, Unity, and Worldview*

In a section that might be termed "signs of the times" Jude invites readers to remember how the Apostles spoke about life in the last times where mockers would arise and individuals would follow their own desires. There would be grumbling and faultfinding. There would be freethinking and loose theology. The combination of these enervating realities would bring damaging effects on Christian life (Jude 15-18). Jude asserts that the individuals against whom he writes are the very men whom the Apostles have warned against. They divide. They follow mere natural instincts. And they do not have the Holy Spirit (Jude 20). The implication is that in their twisted theology, these men not only misquote Scripture, but also are actually claiming that the Holy Spirit is guiding them in their lawless rebellion against both truth and church leaders. In the process they assert that anyone reluctant to follow them (the false teachers) would not have the Spirit at all. Jude turns this argument on its head stating that it is self-proclaimed "Spirit-led" people who do not have the divine Spirit and that their ideas are not open to the Spirit but to their own lower desires.<sup>122</sup> Proof for this assertion is based on the writer's "text and interpretation" pattern, which keeps readers coming back to biblical referents.

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<sup>121</sup> Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 66. Verse 1 uses the word *tereo* while verse 24 uses the word *phulasso*.

<sup>122</sup> Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 217.



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Since Jude consistently castigates the false teachers for immorality, slavery to passion, self-interested flattery and the like,<sup>123</sup> Christians in Jude's day must have been taught that the "life in the Spirit required a serious moral transformation."<sup>124</sup> The Greek word "worldly-minded" *psychikoi* is derived from the word *soul* and can mean what is merely natural. However, in contrast with what Jude assumes as the essence of being *spiritual* his use of *psychikoi* implies that he views such individuals as not spiritually mature—that they are not Christians.<sup>125</sup> If you apply Jude's logic (Jude 19, 22-23) it would mean that if a person does not have the Spirit, that person is no believer.<sup>126</sup> This would resonate with Pauline thought where one is not a Christian unless they have the Spirit (Rom 8:9; cf. Gal 3:3-5; 4:6). It also underscores the reality that moral dysfunction is proof of Holy Spirit absence in the life.

#### *Spiritual Discipline and Growth*

The three linked verbs "building," "praying," and "expecting the mercy of Jesus" are a syntactical arrangement suggesting an intimate connection and which emphasizes the human endeavor needed to ensure divine protection.<sup>127</sup> The phrase "keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21) appears to be the focus of the complex sentence suggesting that God's love is not only the source of the believer's election but also the protection of the faithful.<sup>128</sup> The reference to the Holy Spirit in relation to prayer (Jude 20) opens a window into spiritual discipline and experiential realities of spiritual life, growth, and perseverance. The preposition phrase "in the Holy Spirit" can designate a variety of situations including prophetic/apocalyptic inspiration (cf. Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; Eph 3:5) as well as the believer's life in the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9-11; Eph 2:22).<sup>129</sup> Both the authenticating

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<sup>123</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 20. What moves them is not the Spirit (Jude 19), which is the source of Christian virtue, but rather base, animal instincts (Jude 10), which results in ungodly lives (Jude 4, 15, 18).

<sup>124</sup> Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 144.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>126</sup> Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude*, 217.

<sup>127</sup> Martin, "The Theology of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter," 79.

<sup>128</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 119; Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 291, 292.

<sup>129</sup> Some suggest that here Jude means prayer in a Spirit-given tongue (glossolalia) but this is doubtful. See Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 293; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 483; Towner, 2

activity of the Spirit and the Spirit's activity in the believer who comes to God in prayer is in view here. In sharp contrast with the heretics who are devoid of the Spirit (Jude 19) what explicitly marks the community of believers is the possession of the Spirit and communion with God through His agency.<sup>130</sup> The context gives the sense that it is "by means of prayerful invocation of God's Spirit that believers will remain in God's domain where they will receive protection in view of Jesus' return."<sup>131</sup> Jude affirms the activity of prayer as intrinsic to Christian life. "Believers cannot keep themselves in God's love without depending on him by petitioning him in prayer. Love for God cannot be sustained without a relationship with him, and such a relationship is nurtured by prayer."<sup>132</sup> The sphere of this activity is the Holy Spirit.<sup>133</sup>

Jude contains one of the few yet important Trinitarian passages which mentions the three members of the triune God together (Jude 20, 21). The Holy Spirit is seen in relation to Christian orthodoxy, unity, worldview, ethics (Jude 19, 20) as well as Christian spiritual discipline and growth (Jude 21). In doing so the epistle unfolds spiritual growth as a "Trinitarian challenge."

### **The Holy Spirit in the Book of Hebrews**

#### *Reorienting Vision of Reality*

With the longest sustained argument in the New Testament Hebrews provides "one of the earliest examples of Christian theology as faith seeking understanding."<sup>134</sup> The concepts are powerfully argued, difficult, sweeping, enigmatic—not the easiest book in the Bible to understand. Nevertheless its purpose is both plain and basic: it is a "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22) inviting a positive personal response to Jesus Christ. It is more a sermon that has been adapted to letter format than a standard epistle or theological

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*Peter & Jude*, 226.

<sup>130</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 121.

<sup>131</sup> Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 293.

<sup>132</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 483.

<sup>133</sup> Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, 225.

<sup>134</sup> Thompson, *Hebrews*, 3. While far from the most popular book in the New Testament, Hebrews nevertheless has played an important role in shaping the faith of the Christian Church—including liturgy theology, and practical application to life. It is one of Scripture's most beautifully written, powerfully argued, and theologically profound writings. See Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1.

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treatise.<sup>135</sup> It has long been asserted that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to Judaism.<sup>136</sup> In effect though, the book provides a coherent reorienting picture of the issues any Christians living during the time were facing.<sup>137</sup> It explains what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now. In the process readers are challenged with a vision of reality, an understanding of Jesus Christ, and a sense of Christian identity and hope in a world of ambiguity and uncertainty.<sup>138</sup> They are invited to see beyond the realities of this visible world and take refuge in the promised certainty of the ultimate triumph of God in Christ (chapters 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13). In doing so, the book posits a worldview.<sup>139</sup>

Though Hebrews makes only seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) pneumatology is nevertheless integral to its vision of reality. The writer asserts how the Holy Spirit brings divine confirming witness of the definitive word spoken through Christ: “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (Heb 2:3,4; cf. Heb 1:1-2; Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12).<sup>140</sup> The verbal testimony of those who originally heard Jesus along with the Spirit-inspired deeds of His contemporary followers validated the truth of Christ’s message. These evidences of the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit are joined by the other distributions (*merismoi*) of the Holy Spirit, which

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<sup>135</sup> Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*, 13.

<sup>136</sup> Thompson, *Hebrews*, 7.

<sup>137</sup> I.e., drifting from the Christian message (Heb 2:1); being tempted to unbelief (Heb 3:7-12); hardening one’s heart against the Spirit’s appeal (Heb 3:13-15); failure to grow spiritually (Heb 5:11-14); crucifying the Son of God afresh ((Heb 6:6); spurning the Son of God (Heb 10:29); insulting the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29); and refusing God’s warnings (Heb 12:25). Some had quit going to church (Heb 10:25) and some even publically renounced Christ and fallen away (Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31). Some had lost sight of the hope of Christ’s return (Heb 9:7, 8; 10:36-39) and some had lapsed morally (Heb 12:12-16; 13:1-6) or had neglected the Sabbath (Heb 4:9-11). In light of these realities Hebrews seeks to reorient a community that has been disoriented by the chasm between their Christian confession of triumph in Christ and the reality of suffering that they were presently experiencing. See *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>138</sup> See Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1-3; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 7, 20-21.

<sup>139</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 2. Readers are confronted with a real world, which most would consider imaginary.

<sup>140</sup> Greek “gifts” is *merismos* (distribution) rather than *charisma*.

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refer to an inward experience compared to the aforementioned outward phenomenon.<sup>141</sup>

If these Holy Spirit empowered confirmations have indeed occurred, then God has acted in Christ among believers and they “are faced with a reality—and a demand—from which they truly cannot ‘escape’” (cf. Heb 2:3).<sup>142</sup> This passage is key to the argument of Hebrews as a whole and as such it places the person and work of the Holy Spirit at the very heart of the Christocentric reality which the book advances. The definitive expression of the divine will (*thelēsin*) in relation to the Holy Spirit’s distributions describes the active exercise of will, i.e., continued intentional action.<sup>143</sup> The Holy Spirit as both gift and Giver is still with the Church—still casting vision regarding the exalted Christ. Echoes of Pentecost are evident (Acts 2:1-36).<sup>144</sup>

*Applying Scripture Today*

Elsewhere Hebrews places emphasis upon the Holy Spirit as the source of Scripture’s inspiration (Heb 3:7, 9; 9:8; 10:15).<sup>145</sup> The Holy Spirit speaks through the written word enabling Scripture’s message and appeal to remain current and contemporary.<sup>146</sup> “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS” (Heb 3:7; cf. Psa 95:8-11; 106:33). Because of the Holy Spirit, the words of Scripture are “living words” and have power (cf. Heb 4:12). Scripture is not simply revelation in the past,

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<sup>141</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 40. The writer seems to imply that the readers are aware of those gifts mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (1 Cor 12:4-11; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:7-16).

<sup>142</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 89.

<sup>143</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 62; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 40.

<sup>144</sup> There are echoes of Pentecost here as Peter used the expression “miracles and wonders and signs” in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:22). This placing of signs and wonders (and miracles) together occurs nine out of the 12 times found in the NT in the book of Acts and occurs in the first fifteen chapters of Acts which relate the early growth and spread of the Church (Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12).

<sup>145</sup> Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 38.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 57; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 113.

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but the present ongoing Word of God. The Holy Spirit speaks in the present.<sup>147</sup> “just as the Holy Spirit says.” The Holy Spirit interprets Scripture for today (see Heb 9:8).

In Hebrews 3:7-11 the author of Hebrews repeats 5 verses from Psalm 95. Then he explains the passage (which is the main subject for Hebrews chapters 3 and 4). He introduces reference to Psalm 95 with the words: “as the Holy Spirit says” (Heb 3:7). Two meanings are possible: 1) Although David wrote that Psalm (Heb 4:7), the Holy Spirit inspired him to write. This would mean that the Scripture’s origin is not human, and its authors did not just write from their own initiative or intelligence (cf. 2 Pet 1:20, 21). Scripture then is the Word of God; 2) The Holy Spirit is saying these very things again, now. These are not just some words that God spoke long ago. God’s Word is active and alive today (cf. Heb 4:12), and its message is ever contemporary, for “Today.”

The author undoubtedly believes both and so the message of the Psalm still warns. Believers must obey God’s message from the past—“Today, as they hear his voice.” This is so because of the Spirit’s activity both past and present. The Holy Spirit is principally One who both inspires Scripture and interprets it for contemporary believers.<sup>148</sup> He speaks to man by means of the inspired Word of God.<sup>149</sup> In this context He even speaks to those reading the Book of Hebrews.<sup>150</sup> Because this is so, it is always “Today” that one is to both hear and keep his or her heart open to the Holy Spirit’s appeal (Heb 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).<sup>151</sup> This moves the Holy Spirit’s interpretation of and appeal from the Word of God into the very depths of the human self: heart, soul, spirit, mind, motives, conscience (see Heb 3:7, 8, 10; 4:12; 9:8, 9, 14).

*Interior Transformation*

This generative and interpretive work of the Spirit in relation to Scripture encompasses deep typological and soteriological aspects of Israel’s sanctuary relative to the believer’s experience of worship and conscience: “The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing,

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<sup>147</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 113.

<sup>148</sup> Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 57.

<sup>149</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 91.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 114.

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which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience” (Heb. 9:8, 9). This revealing of the deeper meaning of the text has the technical meaning of a revelation of hidden mysteries.<sup>152</sup> Here the Holy Spirit reveals the limitations of the ministry of the Israel’s sacrificial system as well as its deeper meaning in relation to fulfillment in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who unlocks how the earthly sanctuary accomplished the purpose for which God created it, but even more so how only the sacrifice and ministry of Christ would eliminate once-for-all the problem related to sin and condemnation.<sup>153</sup> As one who so speaks and interprets the Word of God in relation to Jesus’ sacrifice and priestly ministry, the Holy Spirit is clearly involved in the work of life-transforming redemption on a very practical, interior level (heart, thought, motive, conscience).<sup>154</sup>

Reference to the new covenant promise of Jeremiah provides yet another glimpse into the Spirit’s role with regards to interior transformational aspects of redemption: “And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,’ He then says, ‘AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE’” (Heb. 10:15-17). This is the third time in Hebrews where the Holy Spirit is said to speak or reveal through Scripture (cf. Heb 3:7; 9:8). Jeremiah nowhere places the hope of this profound experience in the context of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel does, but not Jeremiah (cf. Ezek 36:23-27; 37:1-28; Jer 31:31-34). And yet Hebrews ascribes Jeremiah’s prophecy to the Holy Spirit:<sup>155</sup> and by implication the realization of the very experience to which the prophesy points. Evidently it is not only the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus that brings about such an interior change in humanity and the removal of sin. Such interior transformation and release from guilt falls within the Holy Spirit’s realm as well (cf. 6:4, 5), at least here in terms of the Holy Spirit bringing to one’s consciousness the conviction of the profound work of Christ and

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<sup>152</sup> As per the Greek *dēlountos tou penumatos*, i.e., to make something known by making evident what was either unknown before or what may have been difficult to understand (cf. Psa 50:6; Dan 2:5-47; 1 Cor 3:13). See Thompson, *Hebrews*, 184.

<sup>153</sup> Knight, *Exploring Hebrews: A Devotional Commentary*, 153.

<sup>154</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 243.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

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how with the completion of His sacrificial work the promised era of the new covenant has commenced—something each believer can experience, “Today!” If this is true, then any believer who responds to the Holy Spirit’s prompting on these matters can realize the full assurance of hope which Jesus alone brings (cf. Heb 6:11).

The individual who rebels against God during this time of new covenant opportunity rejects the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and the person of the Holy Spirit—thus placing themselves in spiritual and eternal jeopardy.<sup>156</sup> “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:29). The contrast posed between insults hurled (*enubrizō*) at the Holy Spirit and the grace granted by the Holy Spirit highlights the personhood of the Holy Spirit who can be intentionally insulted. This implies that any speaking by the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15) in relation to the incredible truths about Christ is done so personally. It is a Person who addresses persons—believers. And one’s response to this Person will ever be personal. The implication is that such personal insult can result in the loss of Holy Spirit’s personal work of grace in the life (cf. Heb 6:4, 5 where “been made partakers of the Holy Spirit” is set in the context of “falling away”).

*The Spirit of Grace*

The phrase “Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29) draws together for the first time two terms, each which points to the presence and power of God among humans.<sup>157</sup> In Hebrews, the Spirit speaks through Scripture (Heb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15). The Spirit is the source of the many gifts distributed to believers (Heb 2:4). One becomes a partaker of the Holy Spirit when he or she accepts Jesus Christ (Heb 6:4). Here the Holy Spirit and “grace” (*charis*) are connected. The Spirit is the source of grace (cf. Zech 12:10). The Spirit is an expression of divine grace.

When one traces the term *charis* through Hebrews this connection between the Spirit and grace becomes evocative. It was by the grace of God that Christ tasted death in behalf of all (Heb 2:9). Those who belong to Christ can “approach the throne of grace” and “find grace” to help in time

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>157</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 265.

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of need (Heb 4:16). There is warning against “falling short of the grace of God” which is the grace of an “unshakable kingdom (Heb 12:15, 28). One’s heart can be strengthened by grace (Heb 13:9). A benediction of grace rests upon every reader (Heb 13:25).

At the minimum, insulting the “Spirit of grace” would mean insulting everything that has come from God.<sup>158</sup> But on the other hand, welcoming the “Spirit of grace” would mean not just receiving all that comes from God, but actually opening one’s way via the Spirit to the very “throne of grace” where divine helping grace through our great High Priest is anchored, offered, and sure. It is there at the “throne of grace” via “the Spirit of grace” that the interior transformational work in relation to the new covenant experience is fully realized in the heart (Heb 10:15; 13:9).

*Falling Away or Holding Fast*

Pneumatology is integral in yet another discussion of how the enormity of apostasy is measured by the greatness of the experience of God it abandons.<sup>159</sup> “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away” (Heb. 6:4, 5, 6a). The series of aorist participles describes a singular event in the lives of the readers. The cumulative effect of this list is to recall the enormity of the conversion experience as personal participation in an unrepeatable event in which they became participants in the victory of Christ.<sup>160</sup> What lies behind all these images is the church’s claim to have received the Spirit of God.<sup>161</sup> To be a “partaker of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 3:14 “partakers of Christ”) is to receive the heavenly power of the new age. Again, the Holy Spirit is integral to profound spiritual realities of the most powerful and transforming interior experience. Sharing (*metochous*) in the Holy Spirit implies an experience that is realized in fellowship with other believers (6:4).<sup>162</sup> Implications for our understanding of the Holy Spirit in relation to empowering grace (Heb 4:16) and perseverance (Heb 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23) are obvious. Both

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>160</sup> Thompson, *Hebrews*, 133, 134.

<sup>161</sup> Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 85.

<sup>162</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 159.



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“falling away” and “holding fast” have obvious *pneumatological* significance.<sup>163</sup> People are capable of turning away from their own most powerful and transforming experience with the Holy Spirit. Likewise they are capable of holding it fast through continued faith in Christ.

*Interior Application of Christ's Atonement*

A possible reference to the Holy Spirit in partnership with Christ in providing an unblemished sacrifice for sin is found in a discussion of the unique saving work of Christ: “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:13, 14). Many suggest that the word “spirit” describes not the Holy Spirit, but the selfhood or person of Jesus, who, by virtue of His resurrection, is eternal (cf. Heb 7:16).<sup>164</sup> No doubt, the trajectory of the author’s argument does revolve around Christ’s eternal personhood in the context of the power of an indestructible life (Heb 7:16). It is because Jesus continues forever (does not die) that He holds His priesthood permanently (Heb 7:23). In the

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<sup>163</sup> While this is one of Hebrews’ hard statements, the conditionality of the Spirit’s possession should come as no surprise. Because the book’s warning passages seem to suggest that apostasy is a real danger (an not merely hypothetical), all the Holy Spirit related blessings enumerated in Heb 2:1-4 and Heb 6:4-6 can be lost. The gift and gifts of the Holy Spirit are not final for believers, since God’s continuing work among them through the Holy Spirit is contingent on their staying the course, i.e., holding to their profession of the exalted Christ and who they are in Him (Heb 4:14; 10:23). Nowhere in Scripture can the idea be found that the reception of the Spirit denotes an irrevocable transaction. This was true also in contemporary Jewish literature and Jewish “retributive pneumatology” of the Second Temple period and beyond (Martin Emmrich, *Pneumatological Concepts in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Amtcharisma, Prophet & Guide of the Eschatological Exodus* [University Press of America, 2004], 69).

<sup>164</sup> English translations that capitalize “Spirit” in v. 14 presuppose a Trinitarian reference. In the original Greek all the letters were written uniformly, so one cannot determine exactly what the author intended except by context. So what the author means by the expression “eternal spirit” is not clear. The absence of the article from *pneumatosaïōniou* could suggest that this is a power possessed by Christ—His own spirit. It could also suggest that while truly man, Jesus would remain in unbroken connection with God. It is also possible that the author intends to describe the mode of Christ’s offering, i.e., via the eternal Spirit. See Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 112; Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 235, 236; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 261, 262.

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immediate context the author speaks of “eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12) and “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Elsewhere he refers to “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), “eternal judgment” (Heb 6:2), and “eternal covenant” (Heb 13:20). Each of these adjectival references however, has personal dimensions in the context of the believers’ experience as well as the one mediating such an experience to individual and corporate life.

While the eternal personhood of Jesus is integral to the ensuing argument, so is the reality that the purification of the flesh by the blood of goats and calves or the ashes of a heifer does not adequately address the human dilemma of defiled conscience. What was lacking in earthly sacrifices was the perfection of conscience, i.e., interior cleansing (Heb 9:9-10). The “once for all” (Heb 7:27; 10:10; 9:26) Christ event however, provides an eternal redemption (Heb 9:12) which in effect cleanses one’s “conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14). But how is this so? Clearly this is interior heart work, which we have already seen Hebrews posits as facilitated by Holy Spirit in personalizing the better work of Christ. One does not become perfect in conscience merely because Jesus lives forever, i.e., is eternal. He or she experiences such profound cleansing on the deepest level of conscience and spiritual awareness: both because the eternal Christ who died for their sins lives forever, and because the Holy Spirit (or “eternal Spirit”) brings the effective power of Christ’s crucifixion and ascension (i.e., his mediatorial work at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens) to one’s inner most being.

We must catch the thread of inner and outer defilement and cleansing running throughout the discussion (Heb 9:13, 14, 22, 23; 10:2, 22). This cleansing is absolutely dependent on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The blood of Christ does that which the blood of goats and calves could not do. This is so because the Holy Spirit effects the application and implications of Christ’s blood to the soul.

Even though we could be more certain if the author had written “Holy Spirit” instead of “eternal Spirit,”<sup>165</sup> we know that Christ’s entire ministry was in partnership with the Holy Spirit.<sup>166</sup> Christ’s incarnation was a Holy

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<sup>165</sup> Compared with biblical references to “eternal God” (Deut 33:27; Rom 16:26; 1 Tim 11:17) the phrase would assert the Spirit’s eternal nature as part of the triune God.

<sup>166</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 205, 206; Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 251, 252.

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Spirit phenomenon (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35). Christ's baptism was a Holy Spirit anointing (Matt 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9-11; cf. Acts 10:38). Christ's ascension and coronation as High Priest was a Holy Spirit phenomenon as per Pentecost (Acts 2:1-39). Christ's entire ministry was Holy Spirit driven, Holy Spirit engaged, and Holy Spirit bathed (Luke 4:1-2, 18; cf. Isa 61:1; 42:1; John 3:34). While the four Gospels say nothing about the Holy Spirit's role in the sufferings of Christ, John's first epistle asserts that the Spirit gives testimony of each of significant turning points of Christ's life—baptism, death, and ascension (1 John 5:7).<sup>167</sup> Likewise Revelation affirms an organic link between the slain-but-resurrected and now exalted Christ and the partnering role of the Holy Spirit in each of these experiences, i.e., by its imagery of a Lamb standing as if slain having seven eyes and seven horns—which are the seven Spirit's of God sent out into all the earth (Rev 5:6).<sup>168</sup> As the Holy Spirit was at work during each of these Christ-events (baptism, crucifixion, and ascension as per 1 John 5:7), it is very likely that He played a profound role in the moments of Christ's offering Himself without blemish to God on the Cross. If so, the phrase "eternal Spirit" would hint of the spiritual mystery of how divinity could both die and come to life as well as to how Christ's offering would be both unblemished and bring in eternal redemption.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> See discussion below of 1 John 5:7 in this paper's section "The Holy Spirit in 1, 2, 3 John."

<sup>168</sup> Revelation unfolds Pentecost realities in apocalyptic imagery. The Lamb's horns and eyes are an organic part of who Christ is as the slain-resurrected-exalted Lamb. When you see the Lamb, the Spirit is present and evident. Wherever the Lamb goes, whatever the Lamb does, the Spirit is present and at work. The Spirit qualifies essential features of the Lamb's being and work. Likewise the Lamb qualifies essential features of the Spirit's being and work. The "sevenfold Spirit" is so closely identified with Christ that they are as if they are one. This does not diminish or blur the Spirit into the person of Christ or make them one in essence. Rather it accentuates the context in which the Spirit's work is envisioned in the Apocalypse. Christ and the Spirit work in the same way and do the same things in relation to the world even when the emphasis and role is different.

<sup>169</sup> Bruce suggests that while Christ's self-sacrifice is certainly described as being "a spiritual and eternal sacrifice," more is intended. Behind the author's thinking lies Isaiah's Servant of the Lord who yields up his life to God as a guilt offering for many, bearing their sin and procuring their justification (Isa 58:6-12) because the Holy Spirit has been placed on Him (Isa 42:1; cf. Isa 61:1). It is in the power of the Holy Spirit that the Servant accomplishes every phase of his ministry, including the crowning phase in which he accepts death for the transgression of his people (Bruce, *The Epistles to the Hebrews*, 251, 252).

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As with other New Testament documents explored in this article, Hebrews begins and ends with a Trinitarian thought context with all that that thought mix implies regarding the Holy Spirit (Heb 1:1f; 13:20, 21). Hebrews makes it clear that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the atoning work that stands behind our salvation (Heb 9:14; 10:29-31).<sup>170</sup> Hebrew's "Spirit" is the "Holy Spirit" (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15) further linking the Spirit with the essential nature of God and all that God seeks to bring into the lives of His people—holiness.

The person and work of the Holy Spirit is integral to the Book of Hebrews' explanation of what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now. Its mere seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) place pneumatology at the very heart of the Christocentric reality (worldview), which the book advances.<sup>171</sup> Through the Spirit the written Word still speaks ("Today") to heart, mind, and conscience—encompassing the interior work every believer must experience. The Spirit partners with Christ in realizing the hope of a cleansed conscience in keeping with the interior application of Christ's shed blood (Heb 9:14).

### **Conclusion**

The General Epistles together with the Book of Hebrews provide robust insight into the first century Church's pneumatology as its members encountered the challenges of the Greco-Roman world, the variety and ferment of its own expanding membership, the emergence within of subtle enervating heresies, and the articulation of its beliefs and praxis. The person and work of the Holy Spirit unfold against the backdrop of numerous (and interconnected) concerns, which these diverse yet complementary writings engage.<sup>172</sup> While references to the Holy Spirit are rare, brief, and

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<sup>170</sup> Coppedge, *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*, 42, 125.

<sup>171</sup> This is in keeping with how the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost enabled the early Church to envision, experience, and proclaim the benefits of the exaltation and coronation of Christ (Acts 2:1-36). The Spirit's coming shattered the church's understanding of reality with a new image of Jesus and discipleship. The Holy Spirit was a worldview transforming sign from heaven (Acts 2:16-22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30; Heb 2:4; 6:4, 5).

<sup>172</sup> I.e., Christology, orthodoxy, trials and adversity, church and state relations, revelation and inspiration, soteriology, spiritual warfare, the heavenly sanctuary in view of the passing away of the earthly, ecclesiology, the covenants, personal and corporate lifestyle (character and ethics), assurance, perseverance, spiritual disciplines, mission and message

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passing—seemingly more of an aside than a well-defined focus—they nevertheless reveal the Church’s profound pneumatology where the reality of the Holy Spirit was integral to every aspect of Christian thought, life, hope, and apologetics. They demonstrate how the possession of the Spirit as a mark of the new life in Christ forms part of the primitive gospel preached by the apostles. Throughout their evident “theology on the run” these writings reflect a larger New Testament Trinitarian thought context which is expressed with literary *inclusion* affirming the Holy Spirit’s crucial role in a triune experience:<sup>173</sup> from the standpoint of God—triune atonement, triune invitation, triune witness, and triune assurance; from the standpoint of the believer—triune understanding of spiritual things, triune abiding, triune growing in faith, triune experience of prayer, discipleship, spiritual gifts, ministry, and worship.

With only one possible (and much debated) reference to the Holy Spirit (James 4:5), James hardly ever appears in discussions of New Testament *pneumatology*. If he does have the Spirit in view, James provides an early insight into the interior work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace, which God gives to those who are humble. Nevertheless the book reflects the Trinitarian thought mix, which includes the Spirit in its purview.

First Peter begins with an extended Trinitarian structure (1 Pet 1:2). It places the person and work of the Holy Spirit squarely in the experience of salvation and what it means to become a disciple of the triune God (1 Peter 1:2, 23) as well as Christology (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), Gospel proclamation (1 Pet 1:11; 3:18), and suffering, perseverance, self-identity (1 Pet 4:14).

With clear Trinitarian nuance Peter’s second epistle’s opening begins with God and Jesus and ends with the Spirit and God (2 Pet 1:2, 21). The appearance of Holy Spirit in verse 21 provides an interpretive hinge relating both backward and forward in the author’s discussion regarding the accusations by false teachers who suggest God’s Spirit is speaking a fresh message through them. This second epistle powerfully nuances the Spirit’s relation to the origin and authority of Scripture (2 Pet 1:19-21). The Spirit continues to speak through the prophetic word, which He initiated. Genuine

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of the Church (worldview and identity), truth, etc.

<sup>173</sup> Every book but 3 John begins with at least two members of Triune God. Hebrews, 1 John, and Jude clearly express the Trinitarian literary *inclusio*. First Peter and Jude place all three members of the Triune God together in one thought unit in some of the clearest and strongest Trinitarian language in the New Testament.

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spiritual life is linked to the true voice of the Holy Spirit via the prophetic word. The Spirit brings spiritual resources for here and now via and alongside of God's Word (2 Pet 1:3).

John's first epistle exhibits a restrained pneumatology in light of its larger theocentric context and Christological focus. Nevertheless, it unfolds a *pneumatological* crisis in which the Holy Spirit's person and work become key. There are marks of authentic pneumatology in relation to the question of who Jesus really is (1 John 4:1-15). The Holy Spirit bears witness to the earthly life and sacrificial death of Jesus (1 John 5:5-8). He plays a key role in Christ's self-disclosure in the world—baptism (water), crucifixion (blood), and exaltation/coronation (Spirit, i.e., Pentecost). In keeping with the epistle's Fourth Gospel backdrop (both in structure and content) the Holy Spirit's role in the "new birth" experience (1 John 3:9) along with its genuine moral/spiritual fruitage is highlighted (1 John 3:7-24). The "anointing" (of the Spirit) engenders assurance of eternal life and confident hope of Christ's soon return as well (1 John 2:20, 27, 28; 3:24). One's ability to remain in the truth and discernment between truth and error (or true and demonic spirits) is likewise linked to the Spirit's work in both the individual and church community (1 John 4:1-3).

Jude's brevity belies its profound contribution to New Testament pneumatology. It contains one of the few, yet important, Trinitarian passages which mentions the three members of the triune God together (Jude 20, 21). In doing so the epistle unfolds spiritual growth as a "Trinitarian challenge." The Holy Spirit is seen in relation to Christian orthodoxy, unity, worldview, ethics (Jude 19, 20) as well as Christian spiritual discipline and growth (Jude 21).

Hebrews' mere seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) place pneumatology at the very heart of the Christocentric reality (worldview), which the book advances. The Spirit provides divine confirming witness of the preaching of Christ. Through the Spirit the written Word still speaks ("Today") to heart, mind, and conscience—encompassing the interior work every believer must experience. The Spirit unfolds insight and understanding into sanctuary typology and affirms the new covenant promises as realities to be personally experienced. The Spirit partners with Christ in realizing the hope of a cleansed conscience in keeping with the interior application of Christ's shed blood (Heb 9:14). As the "Spirit of grace" (Heb 10:29) the Holy Spirit is the active agent "at the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16) enabling the

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believer's reception of mercy and grace to help in the time of need. The person and work of the Holy Spirit is integral to the book's explanation of what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now.

These brief insights from some of the New Testament's earliest and latest first century documents reveal how integral the Holy Spirit is to every aspect of Christian thought, life, hope, and apologetics. Through the Holy Spirit "divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). In the gift of the Holy Spirit we have everything we need. Through the Holy Spirit we taste "the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5). There can be great assurance, hope, and spiritual life because "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

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## **Racial Segregation Practice in a Religious Context**

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### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Black-white segregation, a longtime and pervasive feature of America's socio-cultural landscape, is not limited to the often discussed spheres of housing, education, and employment, but penetrates America's religious life as well. This research takes a look at the practice of racial (particularly black-white) segregation of church people in America. I propose to examine this issue within Christianity, paying particular attention to the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church in America, as one of the many Christian denominations in the nation, and because of its longstanding practice of black-white structural segregation in the US. By taking a closer look at segregation and zeroing in on SDAs (in the US), a measure of understanding of the phenomenon of black-white segregation among churchgoers in America can be gleaned as well. Before proceeding, however, it is rather poignant to clarify that while the word 'race' and variations of it are used in this paper, it is solely for the purposes of conveying a socially constructed idea,<sup>2</sup> as acknowledged in academia, and not a biological reality.

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<sup>1</sup> This research was undertaken from a sociology of religion background, and features Seventh-day Adventism as somewhat of a centerpiece, while speaking to issues of religion and 'racial' segregation within broader Christianity in the US.

<sup>2</sup> For research work on notions of 'race,' see Cleran Hollancid, *Evolution Declassified* (Detroit, MI: Gold Leaf Press, 2012).



### *HOLLANCID: RACIAL SEGREGATION PRACTICE*

*Significance of Study.* The importance of this study lies in the manner in which it seeks to piece together an understanding of the phenomenon of religious black-white segregation. A paper of this nature also has implications for the wider US society, since the church remains an indispensable part of all social institutions. In other words, churchgoers make up part of the wider US society, and as such, an understanding of their social sphere including racial segregation practices and struggles with integration,<sup>3</sup> can also contribute to an understanding of interpersonal relations in the wider society.

*Theoretical Outlook.* Considering the intersection of religion and segregation, the theoretical outlook here, seen in terms of cultural toolkit theory, partially poses an explanation for the described phenomenon in conjunction with a sociopolitical, economic and historical trajectory of American religious and social life. Religion, in this discussion, can be looked upon as a values source that contributes to the formation of social meaning.<sup>4</sup> Tied to the nature of interaction between individuals, people's actions can be looked at in attaining an understanding of the construction of segregation as social reality. Based on this approach, racial segregation practices in the church can be seen in light of the way some think and act based on certain cultural tools provided by the surrounding 'culture,' but tied to feelings of identity and belonging in their social environment as well. From that standpoint, the idea is that particular religious cultural tools—i.e., points of reference wherein social meaning is developed (e.g. religious identity), are tied to the nature of interaction between individuals and used in the construction of social reality.

As one author explains, in what some refer to as Black Christianity, for example, one can see the power of church rituals or practices as cultural tools, thus enabling blacks to organize both inside and outside of the church.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the ardent use of prayer and encouragement that accentuate gatherings, along with gospel singing in secular events, illustrates the manner in which public and secular events and institutions

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<sup>3</sup> Christerson, et al., *Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Miller McPherson, et al., "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (January, 2001), 415-444.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Pattillo-McCoy, "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community," *American Sociological Review* 63/6 (December, 1998), 767-784.

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can be fused with religious themes.<sup>6</sup> In other words, affiliation also consists of interactional tools, including those with religious themes, used in forming one's identity and outlook on life. As such, the 'cultural' outlook of church people, including an understanding of God as active in earthly affairs—particularly seen in the 'black' church, as some see it, is part of what allows them to stick together inside and outside the church.<sup>7</sup> In a similar manner, Swidler<sup>8</sup> recognizes the influences of culture in shaping what she refers to as 'repertoire' or toolkit of habits and styles, which informs peoples' thought and action. This sheds light on the way in which religious practice such as black-white segregation in congregational worship takes place, as people tend to stick together, partly based on factors like—ongoing display of customs based on traditional practice. But a crucial aspect that is not to be neglected in consideration of religious black/white segregation, is the historical trajectory of racial prejudice and discrimination extended by 'whites' towards 'blacks'—inside and outside the church.

*Socio-historical Context for Religion and Racial Segregation in the U.S.* It is helpful to understand the historical context for segregation practices, particularly between black and white churchgoers, as part of the social landscape in the US today. To a great degree that can be understood against the backdrop of a racialized mentality embedded in American social life and dating back to the days of slavery (around mid to late seventeenth century) in America. In that racial and social framework, blacks were seen as situated in a position of servitude and separated (in terms of social status) from whites, who were considered their masters.<sup>9</sup> Between that time (seventeenth century) and now, a lot has transpired to contribute to the racial segregation of congregations; and in America today, many continue their religious expression based on a tradition of separation, group practice and group coherence (engaging in customs that promote group cohesiveness, for instance). This has occurred in the face of a racialized reality (including segregated schools and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review*, 51/2 (April, 1986), 273-286.

<sup>9</sup> Referencing John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, Seventh Edition (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1994).

### *HOLLANCID: RACIAL SEGREGATION PRACTICE*

neighborhood spaces, for example) pervasive in US society. Moreover, the practice of segregation is historically linked to social order in US history, whereby oppression of blacks and white privilege were essentially the norm in American society. It is in that light that issues of black marginalization and white economic dominance has also played out.<sup>10</sup> As such, in the context of racial segregation in the religious setting, socioeconomic marginalization of many blacks and the economic dominance of many whites in the general social sphere, for instance, have been reflected in the church.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the economic gap between whites and blacks has also been an acute phenomenon in church segregation as well.<sup>12</sup> This has had implications for the way in which black and white church people in the US see each other—i.e., as equals, or not.

The segregation issue can also be looked at in terms of the level of association between blacks and whites, based on some degree of a shared religious experience, since the gospel message shared by both hinges on a unity message.<sup>13</sup> In other words, one way of looking at the black-white segregation issue is from the standpoint of the gospel message itself, which does not promote segregation; and because of this, blacks and whites can find ways to associate with each other in church.<sup>14</sup> As mentioned before, however, particular customs and practices in church culture, for instance, remain an essential part of church life for some,<sup>15</sup> while others may choose to unite in church fellowship. Thus on the one hand, some have considered issues like desegregation as playing a crucial role in church—as well as the neighborhood and school, seeing that the time is “now” to address such issues, as a response is demanded from church people to act immediately and decisively.<sup>16</sup> But on the other hand, others uphold racial segregation in church, counting it more as a

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<sup>10</sup> From Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Newman, *Getting Right with God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945-1995* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> James F. Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Pattillo-McCoy, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Findlay, 1993.

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means of edification and a strengthening of the bonds of friendship for those with similar preferences.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that today, based to a degree on personal choices, many seem more interested in the immediate ‘cultural’ benefits of close-knit relationships in church – with those of like passions and ‘cultural’ habits, whereas others pursue the gospel call to unite.

*Background and Nature of Black-White Segregation in Seventh-day Adventism.* The SDA church is a Christian denomination found around the world, with a presence on all continents. This denomination is not only engaged in the spread of the gospel (Biblical teaching of Christ), but also operates major establishments such as publishing houses, and social institutions in areas such as education and the medical field.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps one of the best-known is Loma Linda University, run by the denomination, offering degrees in areas like public health, nursing, dentistry, and medicine. As a worldwide organization, the SDA church has central headquarters in Maryland, USA referred to as the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>19</sup>

The church has an organizational structure, beginning with a number of churches in a specific area joining together and administered by a local conference. A number of local conferences in turn are organized under a union conference; a number of union conferences are organized under a division, and all the world divisions come under one central head—the General Conference. The United States, Canada and Bermuda, for example, make up one division—the North American Division, which is one of thirteen divisions overseeing the SDA world church.<sup>20</sup> It is in this same North American Division that we find the church organization structurally segregated along a black-white divide.<sup>21</sup>

Structural segregation, here, refers to that which occurs at the local (SDA) church (congregation) level through to the local conference (administrative) level in the U.S. For example, in Michigan a ‘white’

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<sup>17</sup> In Patillo-McCoy.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Land, *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Don F. Neufeld, ed., “Regional Department and Conferences,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966).

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(Caucasian) SDA church falls under the administration of a ‘white’ conference, and a ‘black’ (African American or other blacks) SDA church falls under the administration of a ‘black’ (or regional) conference. That is not to say that blacks will not attend a white SDA church and vice versa (whether or not they’re in the minority). But there are predominantly white and predominantly black churches within this institutional framework; a framework which Adventists are still struggling with to this day.<sup>22</sup> Part of the reason for this is that black-white separation in the church setting and leadership (only up to the local conference level) actually mirrors the milieu of early nineteenth century American society, in which Seventh-day Adventism was born. In other words, issues of white-black racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation in the wider American society of the early nineteenth century influenced the church setting as well.<sup>23</sup> It is from that backdrop that SDAs (in the US) later developed separate conferences, beginning with a ‘Negro Department’ around 1910, which later worked its way to full blown black-white segregation (up to local conference level).

As such, the pressures of racial tension and separation in the wider society is seen to have seeped into the church.<sup>24</sup> This pattern of segregation, however, does not negate interaction between blacks and whites at both congregational and local conference levels. This is seen, for example, at the union conference level (as mentioned earlier) which is above the local conference level. That is the case since administrative meetings at the union conference level bring both black and white personnel together, from various local conferences. Thus, the point is reiterated here that black-white segregation does not permeate all levels of the Seventh-day Adventist church structure, nor is segregation (up to the local conference level) an absolute barrier to black-white interaction. In other words, it is still up to blacks in local areas whether or not they attend white SDA churches, and vice versa for whites, even if the conference administrative structure remains divided.

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<sup>22</sup> See online reference for: ‘Separate Black and White Conferences– Part I’—referring to the SDA quandary of what to do with its ‘racially’ segregated conference system in North America, <http://www.drpipim.org/church-racism-contemporaryissues-51/97-separate-black-and-white-conferences-part-1.html> (accessed 12/13/12).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen White, *Testimonies For the Church*, Vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948).

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The current black-white separation at the congregational level, then, is due, to a degree, to SDA member preferences. As Christerson, et al.<sup>25</sup> show, due to a wide range of choices and the freedom associated with those choices, it is not surprising that religious organizations are seen as the most segregated institutions in US society. Moreover, some also choose to be in a religious setting where they feel most comfortable with those around them.<sup>26</sup> In looking at what is referred to as black church culture, for instance, it has been pointed out that Black Christianity connects to a particular way of life that extends outside the church walls.<sup>27</sup> In other words, it has proven to be a source of power, wherever blacks seek God's will and respond to His leading.<sup>28</sup> For many church people, then, choice of church attendance or affiliation is also specifically linked to identity, which entails identifying with members of the same background and of like interests, while at the same time feeling a sense of belonging. While that may be the case, it is crucial to underscore and keep in mind that clearly, there are socio-historical factors and political indicators that have ravished the SDA ecclesiastical structure (since the 19<sup>th</sup> century), and have influenced the persistent racial division in the church.

### **Segregation Practice and Religion**

Research aiming at an understanding of the intersection of religious practice and segregation is rather informative and comes to bear on this current study; much of which sheds light on the ways in which segregation has played out in America with particular reference to black and white church people. In that regard, religion is seen as part of and mimicking aspects of the broader social life as well. As one author posits, religion is understood as part of society as a whole and as such, churchgoers are not immune to the society around them.<sup>29</sup> This means that in American society, for example, racial segregation is a real phenomenon which is also reflected in the church and the lives of

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<sup>25</sup> Christerson, et al., 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Patillo-McCoy, 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

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churchgoers.<sup>30</sup> In Gordon Allport's view, a link is seen between social meaning and religious racial segregation in the way religion finds itself tailored to the nationalistic, class and ethnic cleavages and outlooks, that sustain the prevailing social order.<sup>31</sup> Thus, racial segregation in the wider society can be seen playing out in like fashion within the halls of religion, seeing that religious practice reflects its wider milieu. As Allport sees it, this is understood as every congregation, more or less, being an assemblage of likeminded people, representing the ethnic, class and racial cleavages of society, over and beyond denominational cleavages.<sup>32</sup> This is actually a very salient point, seeing that factors such as skin color and even class can influence some (in religious circles as well) to coalesce around each other, at the exclusion of others. From that standpoint, churchgoing whites, for instance, find common ground among whites, and vice versa for blacks, mimicking the racial cleavage of the broader society. This reinforces the point that understanding the church, along with the practice of segregation, becomes inextricably linked to an apprehension of practices and patterns which are permissible (or present) in the wider society.

As it relates to religion and racial segregation, works such as Dobratz<sup>33</sup> speak to the issue of white racial identity, for example, including the role of religion in forming or solidifying such identity. As such, while notions of ethnicity form a major part of identity for some, religion also plays a role in terms of forming part of one's heritage;<sup>34</sup> i.e., the way one was raised and traditional practices upheld. Religion itself, from that angle, cannot be ruled out of social life, but rather, has become a mainstay in social affairs particularly since the church and society inhabit the same space. In this regard, many also look to religion as a coalescing force around which their social (and spiritual) lives find meaning, direction and purpose. Dobratz<sup>35</sup> zeroes in on the role of varying religious views as they intersect attitudes of white separatism or

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<sup>30</sup> Findlay, 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon W. Allport, "The Religious Context of Prejudice," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5/3 (Autumn, 1966), 447-457.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Betty Dobratz, "The Role of Religion in the Collective Identity of the White Racialist Movement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 40/2 (June, 2001), 287-301.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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white racialists, as well. This is seen in the manner in which some regard religion not merely in terms of spirituality, but also in terms of a segregated identity. This means, for instance, that one can find notions of whiteness and religious affiliation coincide with white socioeconomic privilege as well.

Furthermore, Dobratz not only shows how religion can be a crucial defining characteristic in ethnic identity,<sup>36</sup> but also a rallying point in social life. A key point here is that religion – as identity, is also wrapped up in the everyday experience of the individual. This tells of the way in which identity, religion, and upbringing, along with social interests can become enmeshed in the lived experience of people.<sup>37</sup> Another crucial point here is that when it comes to issues of segregation, religion or the practice of religion takes on the form of a shield, in a sense, as tied to custom and social milieu.<sup>38</sup> In other words, one's ties to racial segregation practice in the religious context can also be seen as linked to their social milieu—to include the justification or keeping of certain practices—as in the broader mentality of segregation, for example.

Taken from a slightly different perspective, Allport has more to say about the way in which religion intersects the cultural practices and mentality of the wider society. In stating his case, however, Allport<sup>39</sup> makes the point that religion can become the focus of prejudice since it usually stands for more than just faith; i.e., in the manner in which it is tied to the cultural milieu. In other words, though there may be spiritual ideals in a churchgoer's outlook on life, such outlook can also become secularized by taking on cultural functions; i.e. certain cultural practices (and prejudices) of the wider society.<sup>40</sup> This reiterates the point that the church, being part of the wider society in which it is situated, thereby patterns some of the same customs and practices of the immediate culture surrounding it, including segregation and separatist attitudes. It is from that backdrop that Allport adds, “when religious distinctions are made to do double duty, the grounds for prejudice are laid.”<sup>41</sup> That is to say, in

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> G. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1979).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 446.



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Allport's view, religious affiliation, cultural habit and cultural milieu can coalesce, for instance, and reflect practices like that of black-white racial segregation along with its related issues (like certain attitudes and prejudices) evident in the wider society.

This refrain of religion, cultural milieu and segregation is seen elsewhere, in a piece edited by Glenn Feldman. Accordingly, this work reveals that divine blessings have even been evoked among some Baptist leaders in the South, for instance, in sanctioning racial segregation, particularly between blacks and whites.<sup>42</sup> From that standpoint, segregation in the religious setting is seen with respect to relationship between the divine and human. This speaks to the expansion and daring nature of the segregation phenomenon, even surpassing the human realm. Readily expressing such segregation sentiments, and resounding in overtones, it has been clearly stated, "That which God hath put asunder, let not man attempt to join."<sup>43</sup> This is a very acrimonious statement and one mischaracterizing the very character of God. Such an audacious and biased statement lucidly expresses the attitude, as some see it, that not only should blacks and whites remain separate in church, but that such sentiments are seen as sanctioned by God Himself; from the very throne of God, if you please. This is painting the picture of a racist God; one that is prompt to justify the prejudices of some, just because they think so.

That such is the case is also seen in the way in which racial division has been looked at by some in America; i.e., racial segregation as within the norms of society.<sup>44</sup> Such thinking and mannerisms, while evolving from America's socio-historical trajectory of segregation, are interpreted and understood by some to be part of a framework of adaptation. Nonetheless, either way, the practice of religious racial segregation is not only a glowing reality among SDAs and other denominations, but is given strong endorsement by some who consider it a God-given mandate. Thus, many seem to be caught between two worlds—the one which references notions of "cultural" solidarity in religious worship, marked by black-white hyper segregation—seen as an act of God (for

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<sup>42</sup> In Glenn Feldman ed., *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Massey and Denton, 1993.

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some) and experienced as the norm, because everyone else seem to be following this trend; and the other world is one characterized by an urgent call to unity—‘brown,’ ‘black,’ ‘white,’ all God’s children.

Taking a look, however, at the notion of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘racial’ diversity in religious practice, Jenkins<sup>45</sup> notes that the formation of small ‘racially’ or ‘ethnically’ mixed groups appear to be a factor in the construction and maintenance of congregational life. Although not in a major way, researchers like Jenkins recognize some shift towards ‘racially’ diverse congregations apart from all-white and all-black churches, for instance. This contributes to what Jenkins identifies as “intimate diversity,” seen as a “valuable and rising commodity in our U.S. religious economy.”<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, on this same token, McPherson et al. offer a critical look at the manner in which groups, whether religious or not, tend to stick together, particularly from a ‘racial’ and social network standpoint.<sup>47</sup> The idea is that many tend to stick together on a ‘racial’ (i.e., skin color/physical characteristics) basis, forming a social network (i.e., connecting with those sharing similar interests) among themselves in the process. They live in that manner, attempting to maintain a sense of (racial) continuity and friendship.

Elaborating on the nature of social networks, McPherson, et al., posit that people remain close-knit, based on the type of significant contact they have with others like themselves, including similar ‘racial’ contact.<sup>48</sup> In that sense, similarity tends to breed togetherness. This has implications for the way in which similarity or what the authors call “homophily”—meaning ‘love of the same,’ limit the social worlds of people, in terms of having powerful implications for the information received and the interaction experienced.<sup>49</sup> Here, the limitation to the social worlds of people is thus understood on the basis of social interaction linked to factors such as ‘racial’ biases, friendship and similar interests. From that standpoint, the nature of the experienced interaction and the information transmitted among members of a network, impact

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<sup>45</sup> Kathleen E. Jenkins, “Intimate Diversity: The Presentation of Multiculturalism and Multiracialism in a High-Boundary Religious Movement,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42/3 (September, 2003), 393-409.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>47</sup> McPherson, et al., 2001.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

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the way in which the individual sees the world. ‘Racial’ segregation, in that sense, is seen as likelihood in the religious setting, as an attempt is made by some to engender communities of sameness.

As a Christian denomination, the attendance of whites in white SDA churches and blacks in black SDA churches can be understood in a similar light; i.e., segregation based on ‘cultural’ practice and notions of group identity. Again this is an attempt to engender communities of sameness, also connected to factors such as preference for particular worship or preaching styles. But to be sure, the actual ‘racial’ segregation practice within Adventism (in both church and school, for instance) has been buttressed by racial prejudice, and in many cases discrimination (against blacks), within the ‘racial’ segregation structural outlook of black/white Adventism. Given those factors, as a consequence, many SDAs (blacks, for example) may advocate black-white unity while others may not, as segregation for many is seen as a means of upholding the maintenance of ‘homophily.’<sup>50</sup>

Taking this a step further, black/white segregation is also understood by some in relation to the way God is perceived via particular ‘cultural’ reckoning; for example, ‘black’ worship and ‘white’ worship may invoke God for various reasons—i.e., one may see God as deliverer, for instance, whereas the other may tend to see God more as sustainer. Along a related line of thought, the point has been made that in connection with the notion of group identity, shaped by racial exclusivity, “Homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal environments.”<sup>51</sup> A conspicuous point like this is important in understanding how similarity ties, such as that involving ‘racial’ identity, are stronger than ties between nonsimilar individuals, which also helps in setting the stage for local niches within social space. Such a view, coupled with what has already been shown here in terms of cultural identity and the socio-religious history of prejudice and segregation, helps in gaining insight into the nature of the segregation patterns among churches, and the SDA church in particular.

On this trend of thought regarding ‘racial’ exclusivity, Martin Katz offers some insight into the motive for racial exclusiveness. In a study of a group of SDA high-school students, with regards to attitudes towards

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<sup>50</sup> Referencing notion of ‘love of the same.’

<sup>51</sup> McPherson, et al., p. 415.

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blacks, Katz shows how the desire for acceptance can lead members of a racial group to be intolerant to others.<sup>52</sup> The idea is that to be part of a particular group, one may be willing to put on behaviors that seem to reinforce attachment to the group. This also ties in with the point of adherence to cultural preference, customs and identity. This is seen in the way that the white students in Katz's study, for example, were seen as being influenced by their association with whites.<sup>53</sup> Association is another way of thinking about the term 'homophily' as seen above. This connects also with the idea of similarity, so that the more time one spends with a group seeing her/himself as similar to other group members while learning their customs and behavior, the more s/he may become influenced by the group's way of thinking and acting. Thus, it is not farfetched to see how the concept of *homophily* and the notion of *association* or 'racial' association can also be linked to racial segregation in a religious context.

Sharing insight on the nature and consequences of segregation, Massey and Denton, however, show how racial (particularly black-white) segregation has been the source of many social problems, including the maintenance of black poverty and the creation of a black underclass.<sup>54</sup> This is an argument telling of the social impact and implications of racial segregation. It shows how black-white segregation in America can perpetuate black poverty, whether inside or outside the church. Along the same lines, it was Edgell and Tranby who made the point that the pervasive outlook of high socioeconomic status among whites versus low socioeconomic status among blacks (in the U.S.) on average, suggests that wealth is disproportionately concentrated in the hands of whites.<sup>55</sup> But despite any economic disadvantage that may be present, many blacks are still willing to be segregated in church, since their 'church-cultural' affinity is not influenced by mere economics alone, but by the very group practices and traditions of separateness that have evolved through generations. In other words, segregation in church for many seems to be

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<sup>52</sup> Martin R. Katz, "A Hypothesis on Anti-Negro Prejudice," *American Journal of Sociology*, 53/2 (September, 1947), 100-104.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Massey and Denton, 1993.

<sup>55</sup> Penny Edgell and Eric Tranby, "Religious Influences on Understandings of Racial Inequality in the United States," *Social Problems*, 54/2 (May, 2007), 263-288.

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more in line with the capitalization of some sort of shared historical identity.

In looking at contributing factors to religion and segregation, although touched on slightly, some emphasis should be placed on the historical connection with slavery. Particularly from a religious standpoint, it is shown that (southern) slaveholders not merely persisted in the defense of slavery, but consciously regarded it as necessary in the social order.<sup>56</sup> It is in that mode of thinking that racial segregation was later advanced (by blacks) and justified in the religious context, seeing that blacks were not given the full freedoms to worship how they chose to, or not allowed to participate in worship and leading church roles like whites were. Moreover, the defenders of slavery regarded such an institution (i.e., slavery) as a strong bulwark against the decaying and un-Christian impact of industrial capitalism.<sup>57</sup> Thus, early on in American history, a justification for slavery in conjunction with a form of black-white segregation in church (i.e., still segregated in the same church building) was heavily pursued by many whites; but that was still in keeping with the oppression of blacks and the subjugation of blacks in church roles (as well as in the wider society). As such, church segregation, which developed later on (late nineteenth and twentieth centuries), was advocated by blacks who saw that increasing autonomy in religious practice was better suited to addressing their social life and conditions.<sup>58</sup> This has come to influence the longstanding custom of black-white segregation also seen in religious practice today. Furthermore, today, the black church with a strong tradition of addressing social ills and injustice, is still largely seen as a rallying point and the epicenter (particularly within the black community) of the call for social justice and progress in America.

Historically, though, black-white segregation in American society as well as the church has also been countered. One of the ways in which this was accomplished is through local publication. For example, there was a magazine publication featuring two preschoolers—one white and

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<sup>56</sup> Refer to crucial work on the topic by: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholder's World View," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 55/2 (Summer, 1987), 211-233; and Franklin and Moss, 1994.

<sup>57</sup> Genovese and Fox-Genovese, 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Franklin and Moss, 1994.

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one black girl who were friends, but had to separate into Jim Crow carriages on a train when it reached the South. As the mother of the black preschooler tried to explain the mentality and system of segregation which required them to move into an inferior carriage, the child became perplexed.<sup>59</sup> By illustrating the harmful and demeaning effects of segregation, such publications tended to appeal not only to reason and logic but to the emotive domain as well.

Taken from another angle, considerations on the justification of religious black-white segregation have played out in the way the battles over race and civil rights have been waged in US society;<sup>60</sup> and also in the manner in which civil rights leaders' appeals to (southern) racists and segregationists have been ignored.<sup>61</sup> In other words, this speaks of resistance to racial integration in the religious context. It shows how racial ideology and segregation attitudes, along with the actual practice of racial separation in church worship can become reified. Thus, racial segregation among the religious and in the social system has been perpetuated, as segregationists have attempted to justify the racialization of society not just 'culturally,' but politically and intellectually as well.<sup>62</sup>

Newman, for example, shows how in the Civil Rights era around the 1950s and 1960s, there was a struggle against southern white resistance to desegregation;<sup>63</sup> and this was evident in both church and school arenas. At that point, the biblical defense of segregation was challenged and refuted in laying the path for desegregation, as black-white integration in church as well as in society was advocated.<sup>64</sup> This speaks to the nature and level to which segregation became widespread and accepted in the church, as it was pervasive in society. In that atmosphere, as a pivotal point of discussion, an appeal was made to those inside and outside the church, not only for blacks to be granted equal facilities and

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<sup>59</sup> In Mark Newman's piece—*Getting Right with God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation*, 2001.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Harvey, *Religion, Race, and the Right in the South, 1945-1990*. In Glen Feldman ed., *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 101-123.

<sup>61</sup> David L. Chappell, "Religious Ideas of the Segregationists," *Journal of American Studies*, 32/2 (August, 1998), 237-262.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Newman, 2001.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

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justice, but courtesy and respect as well.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the church was marked as a point of contention in the discussion on racial integration in US society, in terms of equality and justice issues.

In other religious circles such as within American Catholicism<sup>66</sup> and among Protestants such as United Presbyterian Church-USA and United Church of Christ,<sup>67</sup> there have been calls to address the ills of black-white segregation, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. Here, the call was seen as a matter of addressing inconsistencies between social or church segregation practice and the gospel. This is in particular reference to matters of social equality and justice as mentioned above.

Today, as a pervasive (North American) practice, SDA members and the church administrative structure advance ‘segregationism’ (seen by some as condoned by the General Conference), as they continue to congregate with others like themselves. Historically, however, among American SDAs the pattern of segregation along black-white racial lines,<sup>68</sup> also coincided with the general outlook of racial struggles and injustices that have engulfed US social and political life. Black-white structural segregation at the regional administrative and local (SDA) church levels, have thus been established in conjunction with the historical trajectory of US institutionalized racism.<sup>69</sup>

In the past, nonetheless, there have been challenges to segregation within American Seventh-day Adventism. An example of the challenges of structural black-white segregation in American Seventh-day Adventism can be seen in the manner in which students attempted to have their voices heard at a ‘black’ college within the denomination. This experience involved organized demonstrations by students of Oakwood College (American SDA only historically ‘black’ college) over civil rights and social injustices.<sup>70</sup> The attempt here, going back to around the early to mid-twentieth century, was to combat racially

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> See McGreevy, 1996.

<sup>67</sup> See Findlay, 1993.

<sup>68</sup> In Neufeld, 1966.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Holly Fisher, “Oakwood College Students’ Quest for Social Justice Before and During the Civil Rights Era,” *The Journal of African American History*, 88/2 (Spring, 2003), 110-125.

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discriminatory practices both inside and outside of the denomination.<sup>71</sup> Thus, segregation and racial tensions were brought into the spotlight (as in this example) in the denomination's past. This actually goes further back and is linked to the opposition to slavery by white SDA leaders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sensitive era of racial tensions; but in that same breath those same leaders embraced the practices of segregation and doctrines of white racial superiority, pervasive in the post-Reconstruction period.<sup>72</sup>

In the same way, referring to the American black Adventist college, Peterson<sup>73</sup> attempts to issue a rationale on Seventh-day Adventism and 'race' relations. This is seen in the way he describes the SDA segregation issue, particularly in terms of the historical development of the only SDA (American) black college—Oakwood College. With students from both inside and outside of the US attending this college, and with a handful of whites there as well, Peterson's piece shows how Adventist education zeroes in on the home, the school and the church to work hand in hand in training the youth for spiritual matters. As such, the philosophy upon which the SDA educational system is built points to the idea that true education means more than pursuing just a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the current life. Further, in establishing black schools such as Oakwood College as a 'Negro college,' the idea was that blacks should be trained as well as whites in their own sphere of influence,<sup>74</sup> to train and develop leaders for the service of God and the church.

Note here the term, 'sphere of influence' used in a type of cause and effect relationship—i.e., segregation used to justify the end or effect of segregated spiritual activity and outcome. This, in both a telling and chilling sense, proclaims that the ends justify the means; i.e., in the broader (American) SDA experience, segregation is deemed as justifiable by many, if suited toward a particular end goal. What's critical to note here also is that Peterson, also writing to the tune of the times (around the 1960s' Civil Rights era), recognized, in his view, the legitimacy of a color line even in the training of black and white students, as part of a

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> F. L. Peterson, "Why the Seventh-day Adventist Church Established and Maintains a Negro College (and Schools for Negroes Below College Grade)," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 29/3 (Summer, 1960), 284-288.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



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thrust to develop leaders for church service. But many have questioned this type of legitimacy, placing a type of guilt and troubled conscience as to whether or not such (segregated) decisions are actually sanctioned by God. In other words, does church leadership, members or anyone for that matter, assume that God sanctions segregation practices because a board or committee approves it? Some may argue that, in fact, rather than serving God, Seventh-day Adventists are really serving themselves, when due to social circumstances they fall prey to divisive techniques, which seem to make life easier.

#### **Conclusion**

Through it all, as seen in this paper, black-white segregation in the religious context and as seen in the SDA church is something that has been filled with negative ‘racial’ overtones. Today, while some argue for church ‘racial’ segregation based on personal preference, referencing factors like worship style, besides others as discussed in this paper, a reflexive mood and dark cloud still hangs over the church like an unrelenting ghost. Further, in America, racial segregation practices in the religious context arose out of a social milieu in which racial prejudice, subjugation, separation and discrimination were not only rampant but overt and accepted as well. That milieu made its way into the (SDA) church.

Today, as the clock ticks, this struggle not only ensues, but continues to define Seventh-day Adventism; this sore spot in the soul of the Adventist Church. The divisive shackles that bind and weigh down Seventh-day Adventism are relentless and can be unforgiving if left unchecked. While this paper made particular reference to the American SDA church, the degree to which there is, or has been a link (or some commonality) between racial segregation practices and US religious groups, in general, has also been implicit. Hence the church and society lives on in a bubble—with a troubled soul, intertwining this worldly and the otherworldly, where characteristics between the secular (sometimes blazing the path for the spiritual) and the spiritual seem forever blurred.

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## **The Rise of the New Apostolic Reformation and Its Implications for Adventist Eschatology**

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### **Introduction**

There is a new religious movement emerging on the American religious landscape that, if successful, could have major ramifications for the nation and the Adventist view of eschatology. Almost five hundred years after the Protestant Reformation, this new religious movement calls itself the New Apostolic Reformation and is claiming to usher in the most significant changes in Protestantism since Martin Luther. The stated goal of the new movement is to eradicate denominations and form a unified church that will be victorious against evil. They have repudiated the “secret rapture” held by the majority of mainline Protestants. “Instead of escaping the world (in the rapture) prior to the turmoil of the end times, they teach that believers will defeat evil by taking dominion or control over all sections of society and government, resulting in mass conversions to their brand of charismatic evangelicalism and a Christian utopia or “Kingdom” on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

They believe in the coming of Christ, but that it is long after they have prepared the earth for his coming. This is not a new idea but a new reformulation of Post-Millennialism. The major difference between them and traditional Post-Millennialism is in their strategy and methodology to

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<sup>1</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “The Ideology and History of the New Apostolic Reformation,” in *Talk to Action*, August 12, 2011. Available online: <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/8/12/1713/01915>>, accessed 11/25/11.

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achieve their objectives. Their core theology of Dominionism is not new either, but rather, echoes the Reconstructionist view of Rousas Rushdoony<sup>2</sup> and others.

The purpose of this study is to present a brief overview of the movement examining its theology, principal proponents, history, strategies, methodologies, and its implications for Adventist eschatology.

Some of the questions I will seek to answer are: Who or what is the New Apostolic Reformation? How do they define themselves? How do Christian groups and secular media perceive them? How are they organized? Who are the major leaders of the movement and how do they see their roles as leaders? What are their strategies and methodologies? How do they see themselves in the stream of Christian history? How do they compare with other modern movements within Christianity? What are the implications and ramifications of their teachings for the nation and Adventists as a Christian group?

**Definitions**

The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is a Protestant Christian movement consisting of charismatics and Pentecostals. There is also a movement of charismatic Catholics that identify with their beliefs. NAR is growing at a rate of 9 million per year. The High Priest of NAR is Dr. C. Peter Wagner, former professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary of World Mission. He is also founder of Global Harvest Ministries and presiding apostle and founder of the International Coalition of Apostles and cofounder of World Prayer Center. . . . “There is a hierarchy in NAR that resembles the Roman Catholic Church. Once world domination is accomplished, those at the top will have apostolic authority over the ministries. According to one source the coalition includes several hundred apostles, across the US and about 40 nations, international training centers, and prayer warriors communication networks in the 58 states and worldwide.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rousas Rushdoony was a leading theologian of Reconstructionism/Dominion theology. Dominion theology is a curious blend of Reformed/Calvinist theology and Charismatic influence. Dominion theology teaches that before the second coming of Jesus believers will take dominion over every area of life in preparation for the coming of Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> Marsha West, “Damnable Heresies Invading the Church, *Conservative Crusader*, May 25, 2010, <<http://www.conservativecrusader.com/articles/damnable-heresies-invading-the-church>>, accessed 11/25/11.

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Rick Warren, one of the most influential religious leaders of our time and author of the best selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, is also associated with this movement. On Sunday, April 17, 2005, speaking before 30,000 at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, California, Rick Warren announced his plan: “The bottom line is that we intend to reinvent mission strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As I stated, this will be a new reformation. The first Reformation returned us to the message of the original church. It was a reformation of doctrine—what the church believes. The second reformation will return us to the mission of the original church. It will be a reformation of purpose—what the church does in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

Martha West writing in the *Conservative Crusader* calls it a “damnable heresy” that many Christians are not yet aware of, labeled “The New Apostolic Reformation, (NAR) a.k.a. Dominionism, Replacement Theology.” NAR is not a new movement at all, only the name has been changed to fool people into thinking this is a new wave or paradigm shift taking place in Christendom. Over the years they have used names like “Joel’s Army,” “Latter Rain,” and “Manifest Sons of God.” Their goal is to usher in a reformation greater than the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation.<sup>5</sup>

What makes the movement so dangerous? It is the divine mandate that they think they possess. One liberal pundit described it by sharing that the NAR has a mission to “take control of communities and nations through large networks of ‘prayer warriors’ whose spiritual warfare is used to expel and destroy the demons that cause societal ills. Once the territorial demons, witches and generational curses are removed, the born again Christians . . . take control of society.”<sup>6</sup>

This is no fringe movement, but a rapidly institutionalizing entity larger than most Protestant denominations. The leadership is forged from several elements of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity and is often referred to as the Third Wave. Under the convening apostle, C. Peter Wagner, they have forged an international entity encompassing thousands of independent, Pentecostal, charismatic churches worldwide, as well as hundreds of cross-denominational, para-church organizations

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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with their own educational and accreditation systems, conventions, media and business.<sup>7</sup>

### **Self Definitions**

C. Peter Wagner, the recognized founder and leader of the movement, gave it the name New Apostolic Reformation. He describes it by writing that “the New Apostolic Reformation is an extraordinary work of God at the close of the twentieth century which is to a significant extent changing the shape of Protestant Christianity around the world.”<sup>8</sup> He further describes it as a blanket term for churches in the Second Apostolic Age which he says is in an “adopter phase,” which means that many churches have not yet heard of the movement and those who have heard of it, are not yet ready to participate.<sup>9</sup>

John Benefiel, one of the so-called apostles of the movement, describes it not as a fringe movement but a rapidly united prayer reformation network. The movement differs greatly from the traditional Evangelical and Pentecostal movement in its make up. Bruce Wilson describes the movement “as multi-racial and includes women in positions of both apostles and prophets. At first glance many of their organizations might appear to be promoting the social gospel but their message is quite the opposite—while they participate in charitable activities, societal transformation is to be a supernatural event that can only take place as the demons are expelled and society is purged of evil influence such as homosexuality, religious pluralism, and separation of church and state.”<sup>10</sup>

### **How is the Movement Organized?**

There is no central organization with an identifiable name, because the New Apostolic Reformation is a coalition of church groups and churches. Their so-called apostles and prophets head up a series of

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<sup>7</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “Killing Mother Theresa with their Prayers”, *Talk to Action*, Oct 20, 2008 <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2008/10/20/195730/89>>, accessed 11/25/11.

<sup>8</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake: How The New Apostolic Reformation is Shaking Up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1999), 5.

<sup>9</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion: How Kingdom Action can Change the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, Baker Publishing Group 2008), chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce Wilson, “Harvard Social Transformation Conference to Feature Avowed Witch Hunters,” *Talk to Action*, March 24, 2011, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/3/24/153323/148>>, accessed 11/25/11.

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organizations that provide leadership, direction, strategies, methodologies and theology for the movement. The recognized and authorized leaders are called apostles and prophets. The apostles are the highest authorities and the ones who provide leadership and direction to the group. Using Ephesians 4 as a biblical justification, they assert their leadership role based on the spiritual gifts identified by Paul who ranks apostles as the highest gift. Next to the apostles are the prophets who are God's spokesmen, setting forth God's counsel and wisdom to their people. These prophets, however, are to be subjected to the apostles while working alongside to carry out the mission of the movement.

There are some apostles called market apostles—a work place apostle. Their emphasis is evangelism in the workplace and the eventual "Christian dominion over the mountain of business and finance. Os Hillman, based in Atlanta, heads the International Coalition of Workplace Ministries and Market Leaders. Apostles who are already heavily invested in business are urged to merge ministry with business.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Proponents**

Who are the recognized leaders in the movement? The leading apostle is Dr. C. Peter Wagner (founder of the movement); others among the illustrious group of apostles are Doris Wagner (wife of Peter Wagner), Samuel Rodriguez, Ed Silvano, Jim Ammerman, Cindy Jacobs (top ranking woman apostle), Os Hillman, Julius Oyet, Pat Francis, Bill Haman, Lou Engle, Harry Jackson, Lance Wallnau, and John Benefiel. Some of the leading prophets are Todd Bentley and Rick Warren.

#### **Organizations**

There are a number of organizations and ministries that have various responsibilities. Some of those organizations are:<sup>12</sup>

1. International Coalition of Apostles (ICA). This is the network of several hundred apostles in the United States and about 40 other nations formed by the convening apostle, C. Peter Wagner. Each of these apostles has ministries under him/her.

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<sup>11</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, "Resource Directory for the New Apostolic Reformation," *Talk to Action* January 20, 2010, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2010/1/20/131544/037>>, accessed 11/25/11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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2. Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders (ACPE). It is the inner circle of about two to three dozen apostles.
3. International Association of Healing Ministries (IAHR). This is the Kingdom Health Care System, an international network of healing centers headed by Carl Pierce, an apostle of C. Peter Wagner, a faith healer and demon exorcist. According to Pierce, “healing is the undergarment that God’s army will wear to support the armor for battle.”
4. International Society of Deliverance Ministries (ISDM). Headed by Bill and Janet Sadduth, this is a ministry that exists for the purpose of expelling demons that cause physical and emotional pain.
5. Apostolic Council for Educational Accountability (ACEA). This organization acts as an accrediting system to ensure that all the various organizations and ministries are in line with the ideology and goal of NAR. It is under the apostolic authority of Leo Lawson.
6. Eagle Vision Apostolic Team (EVAT). This is a secretive inner circle group whose membership list is not publicized.
7. Wagner Leadership Institute (WLI). Under the leadership of apostle Carl Pierce, this is an international network of faith-healing centers.
8. Heartland Apostolic Network (HAN). Under the directorship of apostle John Benefiel and based in Oklahoma, this is a coordinating center for prayer networks in the United States.
9. Global Harvest Ministries. This is the personal para-church ministry of C. Peter Wagner and Doris Wagner. It is also the legal parent entity of many of the other NAR organizations listed above including ACEA, ACKW, EVAT, ICA, ISPM, and WLI.<sup>13</sup>

**History of the Movement**

When, where and why did this movement emerge? Since the movement sees itself as the second great Protestant Reformation, it traces its beginnings back to that event, but its more immediate antecedent may be found in the Second Great Awakening. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, America experienced what became known as the Second Great Awakening, considered the most profound and pervasive religious revival in the history of the nation. American evangelicalism was born out of this great revival. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a new wave of revivalism growing out of the Second Great Awakening would sweep

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



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the nation, resulting in the birth of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is considered as the major fountainhead for this new movement.

The NAR was founded through the effort of C. Peter Wagner, noted church growth expert and former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. Since its formation, he has developed an international network of apostles and prophets that has spawn a series of networks and organizations all across the globe.

The New Apostolic Reformation sprang primarily from the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Hector Torres traces the roots of the NAR to the beginning of the Pentecostal movement under William T. Seymour. A revival movement broke out in Azusa, California that soon spread worldwide. Speaking in tongues and a Pentecostal spirit that would radically change the structure of the evangelical church characterized this movement.<sup>14</sup> The movement was, in essence, the beginning of a process of exchange and restoration that would continue through the rest of the twentieth century and into the twenty first century. First, “various doctrinal changes were restored to the church... Among these were prophetic Presbytery for ordination to the ministry, personal prophesy, the restoration of praise, dance, the arts, drama and different expressions such as laughter, wailing and being slain in the spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

The principles of deliverance and controversy over demon possession of believers were also reestablished. In the seventies, the church experienced restoration of the doctrine of blessing, inheritance and prosperity of saints through faith. Torres here speaks of the prosperity gospel used often by televangelists, some of whom have gone to the extreme and profited financially and have forgotten to proclaim the gospel. In the 1980's and 1990's the restoration of the personal prophetic word to the church, cities and nations brought a renewed understanding of the ministry of prophecy and of its role in spiritual warfare for the end times.<sup>16</sup> Below we see a historical chronology of the movement as it is traced by Torres who was quoting from Bill Haman's book, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*:

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<sup>14</sup> Hector Torres, *The Restoration of the Apostles and the Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

**Chronology of the Movement**

Restoration<sup>17</sup>

Year	Movement	Major Truth Restored
1517	Protestant	Salvation by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9).
1600	Evangelical	Water baptism, separation of Church and state.
1700	Holiness	Sanctification, the Church set apart from the world.
1800	Faith Healing	Divine healing for the physical body, healing in the atonement.
1900	Pentecostal	Holy Spirit baptism with speaking in tongues, gifts of the Holy Spirit.
1950	Latter Rain	Prophetic presbytery, singing praises and melodious worship.
1950	Deliverance	Evangelist ministry and mass evangelism. Evangelism reactivated.
1960	Charismatic	Renewal of all restored truth to all past movement churches.
1970	Faith	Faith confessions, prosperity and victorious attitude and life. Teacher ministry reestablished as a major fivefold minister.
1980	Prophetic	Prophetic, activating gifts, warfare praise, prophets to nations. Prophet ministry was restored and a company of prophets brought forth.
1990	Apostolic	Miraculous signs and wonders, apostolic ministry, and unity, great harvest of souls. Apostle ministry being restored to ring divine order and structure, finalize restoration of fivefold ministers.

**Theology of the Movement: Dominion Theology**

The New Apostolic Reformation can now be defined as a distinct movement with a unique ideology. The leaders of the movement, called apostles and prophets, claim that this is the most significant change in

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9.

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Protestantism since Martin Luther and the Reformation. The stated goal of the NAR is to eradicate denominations and form a unified church that will be victorious against evil in the end times. Like many American fundamentalists, the apostles teach that the events of the end times are imminent, but unlike fundamentalists, the apostles see this as a time of great victory for the church. Instead of escaping the earth during the rapture, prior to the turmoil of the end times, they teach that believers will defeat evil by taking dominion, or control, over all sectors of society and government, resulting in mass conversions to their brand of charismatic evangelicalism and a Christian utopia or “Kingdom” on earth.<sup>18</sup>

In a 2007 letter, C. Peter Wagner, founding apostle of the NAR, stated his views in the following way: “our theological bedrock is what has been known as Dominion theology. This means that our divine mandate is to do whatever is necessary by the power of the Holy Spirit to retake the dominion of God’s creation, which Adam forfeited to Satan in the Garden of Eden. Our goal is transformation. . . . We want to see whole cities and regions and states and nations transformed to support the values of the kingdom of God. This will happen only as kingdom focused saints become the head and not the tail of each of Lance Wallnau’s seven mountains or molders of culture. Here in America we have done fairly well in leading the religious mountain, but not the other six.”<sup>19</sup>

The theological basis for this dominion theology finds support in Deut 28:13-14; Gen 1:28; Ps 24:1. Dominion theology proposes the view that Christians gain complete authority over the earth before Jesus comes. Charismatic Dominionists are found within the Reconstructionist camps of Rousas Rushdoony. This is the partnership of dispensationalists and the Dominionists camp that projected the 17 Christian worldview documents, *The Manifesto of the Christian Church*. Charismatic and non-Charismatic covenant and dispensational theologians have joined arms in prayer and hard work to see revival, renewal and reformation in

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<sup>18</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “Who are the Apostles? What is the New Apostolic Reformation? Seven Mountains Campaign?” *Talk to Action*, March 30, 2011, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/3/30/134253/237>>, accessed on 11/25/11.

<sup>19</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “The Head and Not the Tail Battle Cry for the Seven Mountains Campaign,” *Talk to Action*, September 13, 2010, <<http://talk2action.org/story/2010/9/13/11834/9878>>, accessed on 11/25/11.

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the church and American culture. Since 1980 much of Pentecostalism has begun to adopt aspects of Dominion theology.<sup>20</sup>

“Dominion theology is predicated upon three basic beliefs: 1) Satan usurped man’s dominion over the earth through the temptation of Adam and Eve; 2) The Church is God’s instrument to take dominion back from Satan; 3) Jesus cannot come or will not return until the Church has taken dominion by gaining control of the earth’s government and societal institutions.”<sup>21</sup>

Dominion eschatology is the examination of future events through the lens of the dominion mandate in Gen 1:28 and in Matt 28:19-29. The church will increase until Jesus returns and stands against opposing views that see the church waning in influence in the last days. This view does not imply absolute dominion as in a sinless world but a preparatory dominion as in the earth being prepared for the return of the King.<sup>22</sup>

There are three key points that must be understood: 1) God’s covenant people take dominion of the earth—this is the main theme of every covenant God has made with mankind, and the covenant with the church is no different; 2) the Covenant consists of a two-fold process in which humans blessed by God are given a mandate to take dominion of the earth for purpose of blessing it; 3) the first advent of Christ created the blessed seed on the earth namely, the church. The Second Coming of Jesus will take place after the blessed seed has completed the dominion process.<sup>23</sup>

The gospel of salvation is achieved by setting up the kingdom of God as a literal and physical kingdom to be advanced on earth in the present age. Some dominionists liken the New Testament kingdom of the Old Testament Israel in ways that justify taking up the sword, or other methods of punitive judgment, to war against enemies of their kingdom. They assign to the church duties and rights that belong scripturally only to Jesus Christ. This includes the esoteric belief that believers can incarnate Christ and function as His body on earth to establish His

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<sup>20</sup> Fredrick Clarkson, *Eternal Hostility, the Struggle between Theocracy and Democracy* (Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>21</sup> Al Dager, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion* (Redmond, WA: Sword Publication, 1990), 87.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Pfeifer, “The Dominion Process” in *Reclaiming the Seven Mountains of Culture*, <<http://www.reclaim7mountain.com/pages?pageid=63709>>, accessed on 11/25/11.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

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kingdom rule. There is a great emphasis placed on man's efforts, which results in a diminishing of the doctrine of God. A great wealth transfer from the ungodly to the godly facilitates the rapid expansion of the kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

Dominion theology, as I indicated earlier, is not a new theology for it finds its roots in Reconstructionist Christianity. Others have traced its roots back to American Puritanism. Thomas Ice, quoting Peter Leithart says, "Reconstructionist Christianity is more than a resurrection of Puritanism. It is refined Puritanism, tried in the furnace of opposition and hence more consistent to the basic premises of Calvinism than Seventeenth century Puritanism." The writer suggests that there was the possibility of a fusion with old-time dispensational eschatology, creating a new fundamentalism.<sup>25</sup> It appears that is precisely what has happened with the rise of the New Apostolic Reformation. There is now a fusion of Dominion theology with Dispensationalism. However, this union is not equal, for those who embraced the secret rapture are now willing to put that view on pause and embrace a "victorious eschatology," where they will not be secretly raptured from the earth but will remain here to transform and rule over it.

#### **Teachings and Roles of Apostles**

One of the central teachings of the NAR is the restoration of apostles and prophets to the overcoming end time church. These leaders would provide direction and counsel to the end time church. Hector Torres in his book, *The Restoration of the Apostles and Prophets*, finds support for the restoration of apostles and prophets in Acts 3:19-21 where God promises to restore all things. Torres describes the last days as "a moment of refreshing revival as a result of genuine repentance. This is a necessary precursor to Christ's coming and in order for this to happen there must be a restoration of all things."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Sarah Leslie, "Dominionism and the Rise of Christian Imperialism," *Discernment Ministries*, <<http://www.discernment-ministries.org/ChristianImperialism.htm>>, accessed on 11/25/11.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology Blessing or Curse? An Analysis of Christian Reconstructionism* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press 1988), 373-377.

<sup>26</sup> Hector Torres, *The Restoration of the Apostles and the Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 1.

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During the Christian era, apostasy infiltrated the church and robbed it of many of its spiritual gifts and brought in false doctrines. Starting with the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, God began a process of restoration (See restoration chronology). Peter Wagner says: “we are living in the midst of the most epochal changes in the structure of the church. He calls it the ‘Second Apostolic Age.’”<sup>27</sup>

The restoration of the apostolic ministry, according to Torres, began in the 1990s “with the purpose of the church entering the new millennium in the fullness of Christ having the five ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. This new movement, called the New Apostolic Reformation by C. Peter Wagner, is described as “generating the most radical changes in church government since the sixteenth century.” Torres describes these changes as God’s work “to restructure the government of the church and to reveal new strategies. In order to accomplish his objective of establishing the kingdom of heaven here on earth, God is restoring all the truth that had been lost. Those who refuse to accept the movement of the Spirit, with its new and marvelous strategies in the end will cease to produce fruit and disappear.”<sup>28</sup>

In Bill Hamon’s book, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God: End Time Plan for his Church on Planet Earth*, Wagner, in the forward to that book, speaks of a paradigm shift in traditional Christianity.<sup>29</sup> What is this paradigm shift? Hamon further explains the nature of this new paradigm in October 1999 at a meeting of the International Gathering of Apostles and Prophets, where he says that “we are seeing prophets and apostles coming forth for a strategic reason . . . we are being positioned to lay new foundations for the dawning of a new kingdom age. We are in the throws of birthing a whole new order dispensation . . . we are about to move from this dispensation of grace to the dispensation of dominion.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles Today: Biblical Government for Biblical Power* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006) 6-8.

<sup>28</sup> Torres, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Bill Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God: End time Plan for his Church on Planet Earth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishing, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> Hamon’s speech at the Oct 19,1999 International Gathering of Apostles and Prophets, available online at <<http://www.elijahlist.com/words/textonly.html?ID=300>>, accessed on 11/25/11.

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Noteworthy is that they claim to hear directly from God and many claim that Jesus visits them in person. Like the true biblical apostles who established the early church, these so-called restored apostles believe they are called to lay the foundation and government for the new kingdom (one world church). Their goal is complete and utter control of the church and subjugation of the current governance to them. They want power, dominion and total control.<sup>31</sup>

The restoration of the apostles has tremendous implications for Christianity and the world. When these apostles are restored, it will mark the greatest harvest of souls, for more souls will be saved in the last one hundred years than all the previous years of the church's existence. The whole world will also be affected because the supernatural prophetic and apostolic words of the apostles will signal the rise and fall of many nations and people. They will distinguish the sheep and goat nations so that when Jesus comes each will receive its due reward.<sup>32</sup>

#### **The Seven Mountains Mandate**

This is the mandate for bringing the kingdom of God to earth and taking dominion over seven key spheres of society including government, arts and entertainment, media, education, forms of religion, and business. The mountain of business is considered key to taking dominion over others. The promotion of these seven mandates is done by market apostles such as Os Hillman and Lance Wallnau, who is the major motivational speaker in Africa, Asia, South America and Europe.<sup>33</sup>

One of their key theological terms is "Social Transformation." A conference on "Social Transformation" took place at Harvard featuring leading New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) apostles Lance Wallnau, Bill Hamon, Pat Francis, and Os Hillman. All four travel internationally promoting the "Reclaiming the Seven Mountains" campaign and are considered to be experts on "workplace" or "marketplace apostles." Transformation is not a generic term to the NAR but a brand used in the

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<sup>31</sup> Mishel McCumber, "A Strong Delusion: the New Apostolic Reformation" *Deception Bytes*, <<http://adeepdeception.com/new-apostolic-reformaton-aposltolic-network-movement/1230-a-strong-delusion-the-new-apostolic-reformation>>, accessed 11/25/11.

<sup>32</sup> Hamon, *Apostles*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, "Quotes from the Apostles on Social Transformation in Context of the 7M Campaign," *Talk to Action*, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/4/3/94532/19039>>, accessed 11/25/11.

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title of training videos, books, conferences and organizations. As seen in the following quotes from leading apostles, promoting “social transformation” equates with gaining political and societal power or “Christian dominion.” They advertise their charitable activities, but these are secondary to their primary purpose—the mandate to take dominion over society and government, a mandate that includes driving out those they believe to be (literally) under the control of demons.<sup>34</sup>

Lance Wallnau is the motivational guru for the Seven Mountains. Speaking on Pat Kings Extreme Prophetic TV broadcast, Lance Wallnau says, “the Seven Mountains are almost a template for warfare because the church so frequently does not have a language for how it goes about taking territory.”<sup>35</sup> The Seven Mountain mandate is an NAR strategy designed to take control of the power centers of the world. The Ohio Reformation Prayer Network has an abbreviated list of these seven areas on their promotional video:

**Family:** where generational blessings or curses are passed on to our children

**Education:** where little truth or lies about God and his creation are taught

**Government:** where evil is little restrained or endorsed

**Business:** where people build for the glory of God or the glory of man

**Media:** where events, news, information are interpreted and passed on to people through the lens of good and evil

**Arts & Entertainment:** where values and virtues are little celebrated or distorted

**Religion:** where people worship God in “spirit and truth” or settle for religious rituals

The New Apostolic Reformation is a movement with well-organized international campaigns. The apostles speaking at Harvard all promoted the “Reclaiming the Seven Mountains” campaign. Bill Hamon, Pat Francis and Lance Wallnau spoke, for instance, at the 2009, Give Me

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “Heads and Not Tails,” *Talk to Action*, September 13, 2010, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2010/9/13/11834/9878>>, accessed 11/27/11.



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This Mountain conference, advertised it with the phrase “Possess your promised inheritance in government, family, business, education, arts & entertainment, media and religion.”<sup>36</sup> The Seven Mountain mandate is the most explicit expression and implementation of dominion theology. As their seven mountain website declares, these seven mountains are the pillars of society and here was the battlefield where a culture was won or lost. The NAR intend to train agents who will scale those mountains and conquer them for God.

In Apostle Bill Hamon’s 2010 book titled, *Prophetic Scriptures Yet to Be Fulfilled*, he describes the fascinating transformation of the seven mountains of culture and how every nation will become either a sheep or a goat nation. In the end, the restoration of all things spoken of by the apostles and prophets will supposedly release Jesus to return and set up His domain over all the earth.<sup>37</sup>

In Wagner’s 2008 book, *Dominion: How Kingdom Action can Change the World*, it is stated: “We have now shed our inhibitions over theologizing about taking dominion. Dominion theology is not a flashback to Constantinian triumphalism, but it is a new call to action for a triumphant Church. . . Satan has polluted the land and cursed it. Satan has deployed high-ranking demonic powers to darken the spiritual atmosphere over society and to block the freedom of heaven flowing to earth. Both of these arenas need to be and can be cleansed spiritually. We have the tools to do it, we have the gifted personnel to do it and we have the power of the Holy Spirit to do it. It will be done!”<sup>38</sup>

In Wagner’s book, *The Church in the Workplace: How God’s People can Transform Society*, he writes, “Now that we have social transformation on our evangelical agendas, it is time for action. I regard ‘social transformation’ as the concept term. However, the action term that will best set us on the road toward that goal is ‘taking dominion.’”<sup>39</sup>

Charismatic evangelicals have shifted from a dispensationalist to a dominionist theology, from passive theology where believers are

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. (Bill Hamon, *Prophetic Scriptures Yet to Be Fulfilled* [Shippensburg, PA : Destiny Image Publishers, 2010]).

<sup>38</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2008), 37.

<sup>39</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *The Church in the Workplace: How God’s People can Transform Society*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 7-15.

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raptured to escape imminent apocalypse horrors, to a politicalized theology in which believers must take control of government and society. A new reality has been created where a more potent movement has emerged like a phoenix from the ashes of Darby's dispensationalism. It is the triumph of Dominion theology and the gradual unleashing of a new breed of spiritual warriors from the restraints of dispensational theology and the transformation of much of the charismatic evangelical world. Different from previous white dominant fundamentalism, this is a more progressive multi-cultural movement. Women apostles and prophets focus on societal transformation, not a social gospel but a full blown "Kingdom Now" theology which is sweeping the globe and impacting churches across the spectrum of Christianity.<sup>40</sup>

### **Methodology and Strategy of the Movement**

What are some of the strategies and methodologies of the New Apostolic Reformation and how do they believe they should proceed in their task of conquering the Seven Mountains of society? NAR is quite open in stating that its grand plan is total world domination. But how do they intend to gain dominion of America and eventually the world?

NAR has unveiled an array of strategies, action plans, and methodologies to achieve their ultimate goal. Some of these are deliverance centers, breaking demonic strongholds and strongmen, breaking general curses, spiritual mapping, kingdom health care systems, great wealth transfers, intercessory prayers for business, the Seven Mountain mandate, transformations, prayer and transformation conferences, evangelical reconciliation programs and organizing young militants who will be willing martyrs for the kingdom. From this list of strategies and methods, we can see that the NAR is deadly serious about their objective of world domination. They have big dreams and grandiose visions and the scope of their strategies and methodologies speak to this.

One of the major strategies of the NAR is using spiritual warfare tactics to achieve ultimate control. They do this through deliverance centers, breaking demonic strongholds, spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare (SLW). The NAR believes that much of the world is under demon control, which includes many individuals, people groups,

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<sup>40</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, "The Rise of Charismatic Dominionism," *Talk to Action*, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/8/15/9328/35473>>, accessed 11/25/11.

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nations, territories, false religions and ideologies. All these must be conquered. Its demons must be cast out, the territories must be dispossessed and given back to God's people. These demons are described as obstacles to the envisioned kingdom on earth. "They are the source of corruption, illness, poverty, and homosexuality. Purging these demons would result in mass evangelization and eradication of social ills." The apostles teach that their followers are currently receiving an outpouring of supernatural powers to help them fight these demons through what they call "strategic level spiritual warfare."<sup>41</sup>

### Spiritual Mapping

Spiritual Mapping is a method used to identify and purge both demons and their helpers. "This technique is a key component in strategic level spiritual warfare and prayer strategy. . . . This includes discovering the location of demons, their activities, their names, their power."<sup>42</sup> Spiritual mapping gives us the military intelligence that we need in order to "bring the Gospel of the kingdom in an area effectively."<sup>43</sup>

Strategic Level Warfare is a term that pertains to intercessory confrontations with demonic powers concentrated over given cities, cultures, and people.<sup>44</sup> According to C. Peter Wagner, there are various levels of spiritual warfare. The most basic level is ground level spiritual warfare in which demons are cast out of individuals. The second level is described as occult level spiritual warfare in which there are confrontations with demons operating through witchcraft and esoteric philosophies (examples Free Masonry and Tibetan Buddhism). The highest level of Spiritual warfare is Strategic Level Warfare, which

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<sup>41</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, "Who Are the Apostles? What is the Reformation? Seven Mountain Campaign?," *Talk to Action*, <<http://www.talkaction.org/story/2011/3/30/134253/237>>, accessed 11/25/11.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See an excellent critique of NAR by Michael S. B. Read, *Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare, a Modern Mythology?: A Detailed Evaluation of the Biblical, Theological, and Historical Bases of Spiritual Warfare in Contemporary Thought* (Fairfax, VA: Michael S. B. Read Publications and Xulon Press, 2002).

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consist of confronting territorial principalities (high order demons) that control communities, ethnic groups, religions and nations.<sup>45</sup>

Binding the strongmen is a part of the demonic dispossession of the NAR in which the deceptive hold and demonic power over their human subjects are broken. Apostle Caballeros points out that strongmen are not just demons but people who harbor the demons.<sup>46</sup>

Prayer is a major weapon within spiritual warfare. These are “petitions, entreaties and thanksgivings made on behalf of another. Intercession also involves the act of standing between the object of prayer and spiritual forces.” There are also prayer expeditions which are “long-distance, trans-territorial prayer walks along strategically developed routes. Intercession is made for entire countries and regions.” There is also prayer walking which is the “practice of onsite, street level intercession” based on “immediate observations and researched targets.”<sup>47</sup>

The NAR structure includes networks in each state that were originally called spiritual warfare networks, but are now referred to as “spiritual warfare strategies.” Prayer networks and the Global Apostolic Network are under the supervision of leading apostles.

### **Identification, Repentance and Reconciliation Program**

“The reconciliation program was originally coined by John Dawson and the technique is thought to give Christians the power to heal the past. It involves the recognition that the nations and the cities can and do sin corporately and if such sin is not remitted, the iniquity can become worse in each succeeding generation. This cycle can be stopped by corporate or identificational repentance, which effectively removes the foothold Satan has used to hold populations in spiritual darkness and social misery. It is claimed that this will open the way for the revival of churches and unprecedented harvest of souls.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: Strategies to Combating the Rulers of Darkness* (Crowborough, England: Monarch Publications, 1997), 18.

<sup>46</sup> See Harold Caballeros, *Victorious Warfare: Discovering Your Rightful Place in God's Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Tabachnick, “Who Are the Apostles?”

<sup>48</sup> Cited from Rachel Tabachnick, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Glossary,” *Talk to Action*, August 6, 2010, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/20108/6/135752/1937>>, accessed 11/27/11; For more on reconciliation programs see for example, Cindy Jacobs,

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Demons are believed to take control of both the villains and the victims of corporate sin. The purpose of many of the “reconciliation” events that have been held by the movement is to remove barriers to proselytizing various ethnic and religious groups. It is believed that if corporate repentance is done, for instance, repentance for the treatment of Native American Indians, then the demons are removed, opening up the way to mass evangelism of these groups which are considered to be blocked from salvation by territorial demons.<sup>49</sup>

### **Social Transformation**

Rachel Tabachnick defines social transformation as “A condition of dramatic socio-political renewal that results from God’s people entering into corporate vision, corporate repentance and corporate prayer. During these extraordinary seasons, the kingdom of God pervades virtually every institution of human endeavor.”<sup>50</sup> This work of transformation is already taking place all over the world and is demonstrated through a series of transformation movies.

### **Transformation Movies and Conferences**

This area of NAR is under the leadership of George Otis. This sentinel group promotes the spiritual warfare and orthodox evangelizing methodologies of NAR. The series features prototype of ethnic communities, critics, and nations claimed to be a part of a wave of transformation in advance of the utopian kingdom on earth. Transformation has become the buzzword for the evangelization of entire communities and nations. There has been a tremendous growth of transformation ministries, transformation organizations, and transformation conferences all over the world. Two of the most famous conferences took place in Hawaii in 2007 and Harvard University in 2011.

Edgardo Silvano, one of the market apostles, remarks in his book: “Now we are going for entire nations, in fact for all the nations of the world. The discipling of nations is our primary task on earth. To disciple

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*Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2009 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1991]).

<sup>49</sup> Richard Twiss and John Dawson, *One Church Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way He Made You* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000).

<sup>50</sup> Tabachnick, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Glossary.”

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someone means to turn that person into a follower of the teachings you espouse.”<sup>51</sup> He continues further, “The Romans “discipled” nations conquering and imposing on them Pax Romana. Lenin and his followers “discipled” Russia and the Soviet Union by molding them in a regimented and all-encompassing way the lives of millions with Communist philosophy. Mao did the same in China, the largest nation on earth. Militant Muslims actively take over nations and disciple them à la Ayatollah Khomeini; and even though they don’t use the term disciple, they are making entire populations into followers—disciples—of Mohammed.”<sup>52</sup>

### **The Great Wealth Transfer**

One of the seven mountains that NAR intends to conquer in society is the mountain of business. Connected to this concept is the idea of a great wealth transfer. This is where the resources of the wicked will be transferred to the Christians. C. Peter Wagner’s book, *Dominion! How Action Can Change the World* summarizes his strategies of taking over dominion of the earth within a democratic framework. “He views the great wealth transfer and workplace apostles as key to this transformation.” At the apostles’ yearly summit many of the sermons focus on how to take back the mountain of business and finance which is considered the “key mountain” in order to control the other six mountains.<sup>53</sup>

### **Organizing Young Militants**

The NAR is preparing for the future by training young people to become change agents for the organization, in their own words, “Our goal is to enlist one billion foot soldiers for the kingdom of God, who will permanently change the face of international mission to take on those five global giants for which the church can become the ultimate

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<sup>51</sup> Edgardo Silvano, *Transformation: Change the Market Place and you Change the World* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 42.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “Generational Curses, Deliverance Centers and the Kingdom Care Health System” *Talk to Action*, November 23, 2009, < <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2009/11/23/2349/5841>>, accessed 11/27/11; See also C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion: How Kingdom Action can Change the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, Baker Publishing Group, 2008).

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distribution and change agents to overcome spiritual emptiness and self-serving leadership, poverty, disease and ignorance (illiteracy).<sup>54</sup>

Bill Hamon's book, *Prophetic Scripture Yet to be Fulfilled*, describes the final or third reformation of the church and its purpose: "To fulfill God's original mandate to subdue all things, to take dominion and fill the earth with a mankind race in God's own image and likeness."<sup>55</sup>

Sometimes called "the new breed of men" or Joel's army, these young people will be trained for their tasks by modern apostles and prophets and will execute God's judgment on earth. Hamon makes reference to this "army of the Lord movement," wherein "God is preparing His church to become an invincible unstoppable unconquerable, overcoming army of the Lord that subdues everything under Christ's feet. There will be a sovereign restorational move of God to activate all that is needed for his army to be and to do what he has externally purposed. . . . God's great end-time army is being prepared to execute God's written judgments and Christ's victory and divine judgment decrees that have already been established in heaven. The time is set when they will be administered and executed on earth through God's saintly army. All that is destined and needed will be activated during God's restorational army of the Lord's movement."<sup>56</sup>

George Warnock wrote in "The Feast of the Tabernacle" that this generation of overcomers or manifest Sons of God would have powers like Jesus.

The overcomer, therefore will live the same life of the only begotten Son of God. . . many more miracles than we have mentioned or even imagined possible shall be performed by the Sons of God in the day of their manifestation. They will even require a glorified body to do these things.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, "The NAR Apostles and Manifest Sons of God Theology: Training the Army of God," *Talk to Action*, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/4/5/141110/1743>>, accessed 11/27/11.

<sup>55</sup> Bill Hamon, *Prophetic Scripture Yet to be Fulfilled: During the Third and Final Reformation* (Destiny Image Publ. 2010), 25.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> George Warnock, *The Feast of the Tabernacles* (Springfield, MO: The Church in Action, 1951), chapter 14.

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Warnock describes this generation of overcomers or manifest sons as being of the royal priesthood of Melchizedek. He claims that nothing will hurt them, not even the most powerful atom or hydrogen bomb.<sup>58</sup>

Rene Holvast lists the three leading advocates of the manifest sons of God theology: Bill Hamon, Paul Cain and Rick Joyner. Holvast quotes Joyner to say:

Angelic appearances will be common to the saints and a visible glory upon some of them for extended periods as power flows through them. There will be no plague, disease or physical condition including loss of limbs, Aids, poison gas or radiation which will resist the healing and miracle gifts working in the saints during this time. . . . Here again, the task is to take action aggressively in order to obtain dominion over the earth. The church is to be guided by the spiritual elite who are supposed to be able to wield a technique like spiritual mapping with extraordinary effectiveness.<sup>59</sup>

According to Casey Sanchez, a young militant group is on the rise within the NAR under leaders like Todd Bentley, a thirty-something “heavily tattooed, body pierced, shaved head, Canadian revivalist preacher.” These young militants, called Joel’s army, are to become a “military form of young people with a divine mandate to physically impose Christian dominion on non-believers.” Bentley declares that his end time army has one purpose and that is “to take ground for the kingdom of God under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Dread Champion.” Many of these young people consider themselves to be the final generation to come of age before the end of the world.<sup>60</sup>

### **Deliverance Centers**

The NAR is busily developing demon deliverance centers around the world. An example of this is the cleansing stream mountain network. These centers are located not only in the United States but in Canada, Hong King, the Netherlands, and Germany. In their 2009 brochure for

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Rene Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989-2005: A Geography of Fear* (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), 164.

<sup>60</sup> Casey Sanchez, “Arming for Armageddon,” *Intelligence Report*, 131, Fall 2008: 38, Also available online <<http://http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2008/fall/arming-for-armageddon>>.



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the International Society of Deliverance ministries annual conference there were sessions advertised on witchcraft and curses, mental disorders versus demons and sexual and identity issues.<sup>61</sup>

#### **Generational Curses**

The NAR is obsessed with the removal of demonic forces and generational curses from society. “Many personal problems are attributed to sins of ancestors. For example, the involvement of a grandparent or great grandparent who were Free Masons can supposedly cause many types of physical and mental problems for their descendants.”<sup>62</sup>

Those who specialized in the removal of generational curses made it clear that they are not talking about character weakness, but about demonic control over a person due to the sins of their ancestors, or even an attack on their ancestors, which allowed demons to enter the family line. They claim that demons can jump from person to person in the family.<sup>63</sup>

“The pitch and intensity of the militancy and rhetoric of this branch of the global Dominionist movement has increased since the beginning of 2008” writes the Discernment Research group that tracks what they call heresies or cults within Christianity. One can only wonder how long before this transforms ends in real warfare with actual warriors.<sup>64</sup>

#### **Comparisons with Other Christian Groups**

What is the relationship of NAR with other Christian groups, especially the Emergent Church, which has also been a popular label in recent times?

The New Apostolic Reformation is of Pentecostal and Charismatic origins and as has been explained before, sees itself as the continuation and culmination of the Protestant Reformation. Most are Evangelical Protestants and although they do not fit neatly in either the right or left of the religious traditions of Protestantism, judging by their theology and those who they support, they are far more comfortable on the Religious Right. Their theology has been connected to Kingdom Now Theology.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Sanchez, “Arming for Armageddon,” 38.

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They are criticized by both the Right and the Left, but the Left has greater concerns about them than the Right. Marsha West Writing for the Conservative Crusader calls the movement, “Damnable Heresies Invading the Church.” A writer on the Left calls them, “America’s Own Taliban.” Neither of these writers is positive in their critiques of the movement and both seem to be sounding a warning to the American public of the danger of this group. I have quoted from these writers earlier in the paper.

Regarding their relationship to the Emergent Church, there are some similarities with this group but the dissimilarities are much greater. Both see themselves as a post-Evangelical protest movement against the way evangelicalism is currently practiced. They both seek to transform society, the Emergent Church through the individual lives of believers living out Christ’s life and ministry to the world; for them orthodoxy is not that important—rather, they prefer orthopraxy.<sup>65</sup> The New Apostolic Reformation, on the other hand, seeks to transform society through the control of the major institutions and structures of society (Seven Mountain Mandate: religion, family, education, government, media, arts and entertainment and business.) Both movements use an inclusive approach to attract various groups, so both communities consist of groups across the entire religious spectrum. Their worship styles, although not always similar, tend to depart from the traditional evangelical style and are likely to be more creative, innovative, emotional and at times dominated by the “Spirit Presence.”

The differences are much greater than the similarities. The Emergent Church is focused on the post-modern generation and how to make the gospel more appealing and accessible to them, even at the cost of doctrinal orthodoxy. They see Jesus’s words, “then shall men know that you are my disciples when you have love for one another,” as the most important mandate of the believer. For them nothing is more important than relationships. However, the focus of the NAR is not on this generation in particular, but the whole world and the ages to come. They want to establish God’s kingdom here on earth. It is a macro and global view that necessitates the control of the major influence centers of the world. In matters of church governance the Emergent Church is very

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<sup>65</sup> Matt Slick, “What is the Emerging Church?” <http://carm.org/what-emerging-church>, accessed 7/6/2012.

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democratic and allows room for each community to decide how to govern themselves. NAR views on church governance, on the other hand, go back to Paul's counsels on gifts in Ephesians 4:11,12. They take literally Paul's words that Apostles and Prophets should govern the church, so they have a system based on Apostolic hierarchy<sup>66</sup> (see my previous explanation on this). The Emergent church leans left politically, as they seem to be very concerned about poverty, justice, and environmental issues, inclining many of them to vote Democratic in the U.S. The NAR leans to the political right as they tend to support Republican conservative candidates and are typically more concerned about moral and traditionally conservative issues.

#### **Eschatological Implications of the New Apostolic Reformation**

If the NAR achieves its goal of conquering the Seven Mountains of culture and gains religious dominance over America, how would that impact Seventh-day Adventists and their unique understanding of end time events? The implications would be consequential and far-reaching. Seventh-day Adventists are premillennialists who believe that this world will not get better but worse, according to 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Evil men and seducers will get worse and worse. The social, political, economic, and spiritual conditions of our planet will deteriorate more and more as we near the end of time. The Church will not be able to do anything to control this deteriorating condition. Only the dramatic intervention of Jesus can save the planet. The preparation that the Church makes is not making the planet a utopian *political* kingdom for Jesus to come back to. The preparation of the Church is the sharing of the Gospel to the entire world so that everyone will have an opportunity to make a personal choice to become part of Christ' *spiritual* kingdom. When Jesus was standing before the temporal rulers of the time, He said: "My Kingdom is not of this world." The idea of "spiritual transformation" of the church is fundamentally at odds with the "political dominion agenda" of the NAR.

A columnist for *Al Jazeera*, Paul Rosenberg, calls the New Apostolic Reformers, "America's own Taliban" because of the radical nature of their goal and strategy. He describes their ultimate goal as the

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<sup>66</sup> C. Peter Wagner, "The New Apostolic Reformation is not a Cult," <http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/31851-the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-not-a-cult> 8/24/2011, accessed 7/6/2012.

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replacement of secular democracy both in America and the world with a Christian theocracy (Dominionism) and to purify the world for Christ's return by strikingly similar ultimate goals compared to what the Taliban believe, but "significantly at odds with more common long standing Christian beliefs about the end times, as well as the nature and purpose of prayer and the role of human and divine power."<sup>67</sup> Rosenberg may have overstated the case in comparing NAR with the Taliban because the differences between the groups are much greater than the similarities. Right now the NAR is not engaged in a violent revolt against any government, using suicide bombers to kill innocent civilians, or publicly executing those who break the Divine laws and denying women their basic human rights. Why then this comparison? It lies only in the theocratic intent of the NAR and their proposed mission to combine church and state and impose their brand of religion on all.

The goal of the NAR to eliminate denominationalism, forming a unified Church that will be politically victorious against evil in the last days contradicts Adventist ideology of religious freedom and separation of church and state. How will NAR relate to groups like Adventists, groups that will refuse to join with their religious confederacy and also refuse to submit to their religious authority and doctrine? Failure to do so will certainly jeopardize the peaceful existence of Adventism. This movement seems to be a fulfillment of Adventism's own understanding concerning the confederacy of apostate religious groups in the end time that will seek to impose their brand of religion on the world.

The NAR vision of the last generation, contrary to those of Adventism, is not those who are perfecting their characters after the example of Jesus Christ and who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel to dying men and women. Their version of the last generation is of militant young people (Joel's army) who will take over the world, conquer the Seven Mountains, exorcize demons and do whatever it takes to accomplish this task.

The NAR version of the last day triumphant church is not the remnant church being persecuted by the beast powers of Rev 13 and who nonetheless are proclaiming the final message to a world that is on the brink of total destruction. No, their version is a militant triumphant

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<sup>67</sup> Paul Rosenberg, "America's Own Taliban," *AlJazeera* <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/07/20117259426336524.html>, accessed 11/25/11.

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church that is on the march defeating demons, taking territory, and taking the seven major areas of culture (education, business, media, arts, entertainment, business, home and religion). Although there is a grain of truth in the NAR' view of the future triumphant church, according to the Bible, God's true Church will not be fully triumphant until Jesus comes and Prince Michael rises to delivers his people from the final persecution of the wicked (Dan 12:1).

Rachel Tabchnick has identified six reasons why Americans should care about what has been happening recently in Uganda concerning religious liberty. I believe these also have relevance for the Adventist view of the end times.<sup>68</sup>

1. Although this could mean life or death to some gay Ugandans, this issue is not limited to gay and lesbian citizens nor is it limited to Ugandans. Soon other noncompliant groups like Adventists can easily be targeted and thus the beginning of religious persecution.
2. Uganda is viewed as a prototype for merging church and state. The NAR is working out some of the kinks of their grand plan and Uganda maybe a testing ground for this emergence of church and state and as students of history we are well aware of the dangers. Adventists see danger for the believers when the power and goals of church and state unite.
3. The religious/political onslaught in Uganda is a multi-faceted effort by several groups that promote Christian dominionism over society. The religious dominionism is being worked out in places like Uganda to see how it will function. Uganda is a laboratory to test some of these ideas.
4. Dominionism is packaged in progressive terminology that sounds almost like liberation theology or the social gospel, but has a very different agenda. Dominion theology is promoted using the language of love and compassion so that it can be made more palatable—as it were, devils appearing as angels of light to deceive many in the last days.
5. “Reconciliation” events promoted by the movement are about conversion, not acceptance or religious pluralism. Reconciliation events are intended to draw in historically oppressed groups within the umbrella of the movement but the ultimate goal is the conversion of all to the

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<sup>68</sup> Rachel Tabachnick, “Six Reasons Why Americans Should Care About What is Happening in Uganda,” <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2010/10/14/154827/99>.

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NAR vision of the Christian message. This could be the beginning of one world religion that Adventists predict will come.

6. The Transformation movement is not just about religious supremacy but also about taking dominion over all aspects of society.

These transformational events, movies, and the movement itself, are not necessarily about the fundamental transformation of people and society from bad to good, but rather, about the transformation of society and individuals into the NAR's version of what they think is good. This transformation does not emphasize a personal conversion to Christ and growth in holiness, but focuses more on a corporate societal transformation. How is that possible when sinful men are still in charge even though they may call themselves Christians?

Os Hillman, one of their leading prophets, has suggested that, instead of using the word Dominionism, a better choice would be influence, which comes as a result of our love and obedience to God. Hillman explains: "Jesus never sought to have dominion; rather, He encouraged others to love and obey God. It is better that we avoid the word dominion in our culture today due to the connotation that comes with this word of control and manipulation of others. It also reminds people of a flawed movement in the body of Christ called dominion theology that caused great harm to many."<sup>69</sup> While Hillman may take this position *in words*, the vast majority of the other leaders take a different, and more aggressive stance. They are quite explicit about what dominion means and they make no apologies about it.

Thus, too many negative aspects of the movement remain. There seems to be little focus on the cross of Christ as central to the Christian gospel. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of the individual is not emphasized. There seems to be an obsession with demons, demon possession, and the need to expel demons. Most of the ills and problems of the world are attributed to demons. While from even a traditional Christian perspective there is some truth to this assertion, the NAR view is far too simplistic in explaining human problems. If all the demons were expelled, would the human problems of poverty, crime, violence, war, and sickness be solved? It is doubtful. An overemphasis

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<sup>69</sup> Os Hillman, "Reclaiming the 7 Mountains - Is it Dominionism?" *Reclaiming the 7 Mountains of Culture*, <[http://www.reclaim7mountains.com/articles\\_view.asp?columnid=4347&articleid=76021](http://www.reclaim7mountains.com/articles_view.asp?columnid=4347&articleid=76021)>, accessed 11/27/11.

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on demonic causation has lost sight of the human culpability in many of the problems that afflict humanity.

One of the most unsettling things about this movement is their militancy and their stridency. Much of the language used to describe their taking back and having dominion is devoid of the compassionate love of Jesus. A good picture of this strident call to arms can be seen in the words of one of their prophets, "We are coming to the time when passive Christianity and passive Christians will cease to exist. There is maturity, a discipline, and a divine militancy coming upon the people of God. Those who have succumbed to humanistic and idealistic theologies may have a hard time with this, but we must understand that God is a militant God. The title that he uses ten more times than any other in Scripture is the "Lord of Hosts," or "Lord of armies." There is a martial aspect to his character that we must understand and embrace for the times and the job to which we are coming."<sup>70</sup>

This kind of thinking clearly seems contrary to the teachings of Jesus, who clearly said my kingdom is not of this world. Matthew Henry captures this thought beautifully in these words: "Christ never intended that His gospel should be propagated by fire and sword or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praise of God is in our mouth with them we will have an olive branch of peace in our hands. Christ's victories are by the power of His gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The Word of God is the two-edged sword (Heb 4:12), the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17).<sup>71</sup> Spurgeon supports this idea by saying, "The kingdom of this world is not of this world, or otherwise would his servants fight! It rests on a spiritual basis and is to be advanced by spiritual means. Yet Christ's servants gradually slipped down into the notion that His kingdom was of this world and could be held by human power."<sup>72</sup> Christians are called to be Salt and Light to the world, through their

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<sup>70</sup> Rick Joyner, "TAKING THE LAND—We are Establishing Our Eternal Place and Position Here on Earth," *Elijah List*, <[http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display\\_word.html?ID=3617](http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=3617)>, accessed 11/27/11.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew Henry, *Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, 3 vols. (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1828), 2:467.

<sup>72</sup> Rev. Charles Spurgeon, "Christ Universal Kingdom and How it Cometh," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons*, vol. 26 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1881), 262.

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loving and obedient lifestyle believers will seek to persuade others to their loving Savior. This a methodology based solely on love, not force or power or compulsion. The views of these latter day apostles and so-called prophets are at odds with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faithful believers must sound the alarm and warn the world that in the last days false prophets and false Christ's will arise to deceive many.

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## **The Emerging Church–Part 4: Levels of Change**

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In this series of articles I am considering the changes Protestantism is experiencing at the beginning of the twenty first century and its implications for the future of the Evangelical movement in America. In previous articles I have presented a brief historical and theological background, description, and evaluation of the broad changes presently taking place under the Emerging Church umbrella designation. In this article I will identify the major levels where these changes are occurring and some of their implications for the future theological and ministerial task of Evangelical Christians.

As we proceed, I will deal briefly with the nature and consequences of the changes experienced by the Emerging Church sector of the Evangelical movement. Specifically, are we to see these changes as a passing fad affecting the level of praxis (evangelism, mass media communication, music) where the gospel is packaged, or, as reaching deeper into the level of thinking (philosophy and theology) and life (ministerial paradigm) where the Gospel is interpreted and experienced? In other words, is the Emerging Church a minor or a major evolutionary mutation in Evangelical history? We need to ascertain this point because partial evidence suggests Evangelicals are divided on it. We will also keep in mind the question about whether the changes underway are signaling the end of the Protestant Reformation.

### Epochal Change?

Change belongs to the fabric of American life. During the last part of the twentieth century American Evangelicalism experienced rapid changes in worship and ministerial styles in a desperate effort to reach an ever increasingly secularized culture.<sup>1</sup> On the surface the Emerging Church movement appears to be a new passing fad in youth ministry. However, parallel to these seemingly superficial changes in ministerial style the old conservative-liberal controversy was simmering across denominational lines<sup>2</sup> creating conflicts at ministerial and grassroots levels.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, the inerrancy of Scripture and the apologetical efforts of previous Evangelical generations were not enough to produce an Evangelical synthesis able to generate unity within denominations.

With the passing of time an increasing number of Evangelical leaders began to realize “that this conflict was not your average, everyday schism, but a paradigm shift of seismic proportions.”<sup>4</sup> This conviction led emergent leaders to reexamine critically their denominations’ “assumptions of what it means to be church. Some suggest that this ‘Great Emergence’ is part of a cyclical pattern of upheavals in the church, on a par with the ‘Great Schism’ or the ‘Great Reformation.’”<sup>5</sup> To gain a sense of the proportions and depth of the changes presently underway consider Phyllis Tickle’s suggestion that Brian McLaren is the new Luther and his book *A Generous Orthodoxy* is

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<sup>1</sup> See the first article of the series.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emerging Frontier*, 18-21.

<sup>3</sup> “We learned that major paradigm shifts are almost always accompanied by turmoil and disorder. Take science, for example. The primary mission of science is the discovery and integration of new knowledge. Yet studies have shown that when confronted with data that conflicted with the dominant paradigm, scientists reacted anxiously. Warring camps developed: ‘liberal’ camps prematurely proposed new paradigms based on insufficient data, while ‘conservative’ camps defended the old paradigm by attacking the new data and the proposed paradigms. Eventually, the old paradigm always fell, yet neither camp really won. Some aspects of the liberal camps’ proposals found their way into the new paradigm; many did not. Some aspects of the old paradigm, which the conservative camps were protecting, remained standing; many did not. Because their vision was still limited by the old paradigm, both camps were blind sided.” Howard, *A New Middle Way? Surviving and Thriving in the Coming Religious Realignment*, 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

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the equivalent to Luther's 95 theses.<sup>6</sup> This comparison may help us to understand that for many observers something epochal is underway. According to Tickle's socio-historical interpretation, a new form of Christianity is being born and will be added to the old forms.<sup>7</sup> This seems to suggest that the Emerging Church movement may be unleashing deep paradigmatic changes not only in American Evangelicalism but also in Protestantism and Christianity as a whole. To consider the validity of this claim we need to examine the nature and content of these paradigmatic changes. But before we do so, let us ask "why" such an "epochal" change is underway. Something inside and outside Christianity must be at work making such a change desirable and even necessary.

### Dissatisfaction

A growing discontentment seems to have been brewing within the broad Evangelical coalition for a long time. Causes of dissatisfaction are many and as varied as Evangelicalism. For instance, some are dissatisfied with the way ministers and the churches conduct their everyday business.<sup>8</sup> Others feel frustrated when they see churches playing an institutional game voided of spiritual meaning.<sup>9</sup> Many, probably overstating their case, believe "modern" Evangelical Churches are dead.<sup>10</sup> But dissatisfaction runs even deeper. Numerous evangelical believers experience a growing confusion about Christian doctrines as

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<sup>6</sup> "In the same way that Martin Luther became the symbolic leader and spokesman for the Great Reformation, so too has Brian McLaren become the symbolic leader and spokesman for the Great emergence. His 2005 volume, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Harper: San Francisco) is both an analog to Luther's ninety-five theses and also a clearly stated overview of many of the parts of post-Constantinian Christian theology that are now undergoing reconsideration." Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, 162. Interestingly, on Pentecost day 2005, the same year *A Generous Orthodoxy* was published, Matthew Fox, a former Dominican priest turned Episcopalian posted a new set of 95 theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg Germany, the same place where Luther had posted his 95 theses that unleashed the Protestant Reformation. See, Matthew Fox, *A New Reformation: Creation Spirituality and the Transformation of Christianity* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Liederbach, *The Convergent Church: Missional Worshipers in and Emerging Culture*, 22-23.

<sup>9</sup> J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 13.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance, Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emerging Frontier*, 4-5.

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presented by the fragmented views of the Evangelical community.<sup>11</sup> “On the front end of analysis one could argue that the ECM is merely reacting to a perception of dead religiosity, hoping to breath life into the body of Christ. But a closer analysis shows that its reaction to established ministry and typical church life (what some of them call the ‘modern church’) involve deep theological issues and metaphysical challenges. Its response entails systemic issues much more than mere aesthetic preferences.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Emerging Church leaders the cause of this crisis can be traced back to Evangelical apologetical responses to modern philosophy understood as epistemological foundationalism. Not without reason they blame the rise of the liberal conservative controversy that divides Evangelicals across denominational lines on the Fundamentalist response to Modernity. Liberals responded to modernity by constructing their theological project “upon the foundation of an unassailable religious experience while conservatives look to an error-free Bible as the incontrovertible foundation”<sup>13</sup> for their theological project.

This assessment reveals that both Evangelical and Emerging Church leaders fail to realize that at a deeper and more foundational level the crisis they confront stems from the underdevelopment and limitations of Protestant thought and the failure to produce an alternate synthesis of Christian theology and praxis based on Scripture alone. The very existence of the “Evangelical coalition” flows from and witnesses to this fact. By implication Phyllis Tickle, clearly points to this foundational absence when noting, “American religion had never had a center before, primarily because it was basically Protestant in its Christianity; and Protestantism, with its hallmark characteristic of divisiveness, has never had a center.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 23.

<sup>12</sup> Liederbach, *The Convergent Church: Missional Worshipers in and Emerging Culture*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> John R. Franke, “Generous Orthodoxy and a Changing World: Foreword to *a Generous Orthodoxy*,” in *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a missional + evangelical + post / protestant + liberal / conservative + mystical/poetic + biblical + charismatic / contemplative + fundamentalist / calvinist + anabaptist/anglican + methodist + catholic + green + incarnational + depressed-yet-hopful + emergent + unfinished Christian*, ed. Brian McLaren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, 134.

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What Protestant leadership was unable to produce laity sought to find on their own around the so-called water cooler conversations during the 80's. Tickle argues that out of these informal conversations taking place in the context of cultural epochal change a center was emerging. "But what was emerging was not longer Protestant. It was no longer any 'thing,' actually. It was simply itself, a *mélange* of 'things' cherry-picked from each quadrant and put together—some would say cobbled together—without any original intention and certainly with no design beyond that of conversation."<sup>15</sup> In the process, dissatisfaction with the *inherited church* grew strong. For many the "inherited church was that from which they had come and to which they, literally, now had no means of returning, let alone any desire at all to do so."<sup>16</sup>

Not surprisingly, by the end of the twentieth century the Evangelical coalition was no longer able to hide the deep theological, ecumenical, and cultural divisions present in both the leadership and laity of American Protestantism.<sup>17</sup> "Evangelical leaders became highly concerned about the future of the evangelical movement, Evangelicals began to look for clarity and unity of focus in the midst of what appeared to be an unwieldy diversity. Questions such as. 'What is evangelicalism?' 'Where is its center?' and 'Where are we going?' began to emerge."<sup>18</sup>

The inner spiritual, theological, and hermeneutical crisis brewing in Evangelicalism during the last two centuries can explain the need and even possibility for epochal change yet, by itself, it cannot explain its generation. Something more was needed to generate an epochal mutation in Evangelical Christianity. Even when we all know that any epochal change involves a multiplicity of interrelated factors, arguably the advent of "postmodernity" provided the trigger to the rise of the Emerging Church.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>17</sup> Commenting on the rise of evangelical diversity during the period that spanned from 1960-1990, Robert Webber concludes that during this period "evangelicalism, became subject to the rise of diversity and branched out in man different ways to address the growing cultural pluralism." Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing The Challenges of the New World*, 33. Diversity spread in the areas of theology, ecumenism and social action.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

### Postmodernity

Prior to and parallel with the growing spiritual, theological, and philosophical dissatisfaction brewing inside the Evangelical movement during the last two decades of the twentieth century epochal changes were taking place at the very core and foundations of Western civilization, which we identify as postmodernism.<sup>19</sup> As the “Emerging Church” label the “postmodern” label is also an umbrella designation<sup>20</sup> involving various issues and levels. For this reason Emerging Church leaders sharing a growing sense that the world as we knew it is changing<sup>21</sup> understand postmodernity also in various ways. Arguably, these changes precipitated the rise of the Emerging Church movement we are considering in this series of articles.

Conservative Evangelicals evaluating the Emerging Church movement correctly point out that to grasp it we need to “identify and understand the underlying ideas and assumptions of what has come to be called the ‘modern’ worldview, which has dominated Western culture for the past few hundred years.”<sup>22</sup> It is also important to become familiar with “the postmodern ideas, which have become dominant in the early twenty-first century.”<sup>23</sup> This being so, let us review briefly two main levels involved in the epochal changes Emerging leaders identify as postmodernity. They are: the cultural and philosophical levels.<sup>24</sup> Since we are exploring the way in which Emerging Church leaders understand postmodernity, in what follows in this section I will quote selectively from them.

Sociologically, “postmodernity” names the cultural mores of western civilization at the turn of the twenty first century. For instance, the term *postmodern*, according to Leonard Sweet, denotes “a 40-year transition from an Information Age to a Bionomic Age that will begin no later than 2020.”<sup>25</sup> Although he likens the force these cultural events unleash to a

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<sup>19</sup> For a brief introduction to the origin and use of the word “postmodernity” as a cultural label see, for instance, Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> For a brief introduction to the history of the term “postmodernity” see, for instance, *ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> Liederbach, *The Convergent Church: Missional Worshipers in and Emerging Culture*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

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

<sup>24</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in the New Millennium Culture*, 17.

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tsunami, as a tsunami they are of short duration and will be replaced by others in the future. Along the same line and among others, Stanley Grenz identifies, informatics (computer age), centerlessness, pluralism, multivalence, impurity, juxtaposition, eclecticism, the refusal to place “high” art above “pop” art, and, belief in the supernatural and extraterrestrials, as some of the characteristic traits of postmodern culture.<sup>26</sup> These values are embraced, embodied, and disseminated through television and rock music.<sup>27</sup> At the sociological level, then, postmodernism describes western society at the turn of the twenty first century.

Philosophically, “postmodernism” names changes in the area of epistemology. Epistemology is the philosophical discipline that studies the way human beings know what they know especially in the field of scientific research. These changes that were a long time in the making involve the demise of “foundationalism” and the impossibility human beings could experience “objective” and “universal” knowledge. Thus, postmoderns think “the world is not simply an objective given that is ‘out there,’ waiting to be discovered and known; reality is relative, indeterminate, and participatory.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, “they contend that the work of scientists, like that of any other human beings, is historically and culturally conditioned and that our knowledge is always incomplete.”<sup>29</sup> Clearly, this conviction leaves postmodernism without a foundation for universal knowledge, that is, a knowledge that is valid and true for all human beings. To avoid cognitive individualism and the total fragmentation of society postmoderns resort to the “community” or “society” as the basis (foundation) for rational agreements and the

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<sup>26</sup> Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 8-9; 19-33.

<sup>27</sup> “The pop culture of our days reflects the centerless pluralism of postmodernity and gives expression to the antinationalism of postmodernism. As evidenced in the cloths they wear and the music they listen to, postmoderns are no longer convinced that their world has a center or that human reason can perceive any logical structure in the external universe. They live in a world in which the distinction between truth and fiction has evaporated. Consequently, they become collectors of experiences, repositories of transitory, fleeting images produced and fostered by the diversity of the media forms endemic in postmodern society.” *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

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definition of values.<sup>30</sup> Of course, by definition, society changes and so will reason and values. Consequently, to achieve some stability, communities need to stand on their own respective traditions. In this way, “regional” truth replaces “universal” truth. Philosophically, then, “postmodernism” names the switch from objective and universal reason to a communitarian and traditional reason.

But postmodernity involves an even more radical change at the metaphysical level few Emerging Church leaders have considered. To appreciate what this change involves we need to bring to mind, briefly, what metaphysics is about and how it relates to theology and the sciences. Let us say that metaphysics is the philosophical discipline that interprets the nature of reality as a whole. As such it includes general and regional ontologies, the former dealing with the general characteristics of any and all things real, and the latter with the general characteristics of specific entities, notably, God, humans, and the world (theology, anthropology and cosmology respectively). Finally, metaphysics also includes the interpretation of the interrelation among all things real (the system of reality as a whole).

To grasp the hermeneutical and methodological role of metaphysics we need to bear in mind that it provides the necessary context for understanding any and everything. As a matter of fact, philosophical, theological, and natural sciences always assume a general interpretation of the nature of the reality or realities they interpret.<sup>31</sup> More specifically, Metaphysics provides the ground for theological and biblical hermeneutics. This being the case, we can easily understand that changes in the interpretation of metaphysical concepts automatically change the content of the assumed principles of interpretation which, in turn, sooner or later will require changes in the way other philosophical sciences, theology, and natural sciences interpret their sources, arrive at their conclusions, and construct their teachings. A minor change in metaphysical concepts may generate broad hermeneutical changes that

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<sup>30</sup> “The postmodern view operates with a community-based understanding of truth. It affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth is dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern world view affirms, that this relativity extends beyond our *perceptions* of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, truth is relative to the community in which we participate.” Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, NY: Harper and Collins, 1962), Int., 3 (p. 30).



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will reverberate across the sciences and the culture they generate. In short, as Thomas Aquinas remarked, a small error in the metaphysical beginnings could become a large one at the end.<sup>32</sup>

Although a radical rethinking of metaphysics had been underway at least since John Locke's publication of *An Essay on Human Understanding*,<sup>33</sup> it came to full expression and articulation in the work of Martin Heidegger, one of the leading postmodern philosophers. In great detail and with scholarly clarity Heidegger confirmed and further articulated Nietzsche's "overturning of Platonism" which has been the ruling metaphysical view since the beginnings of western civilization.<sup>34</sup> Heidegger calls this the "destruction" and "overcoming" of metaphysics.<sup>35</sup> The "destruction" of metaphysics means the criticism and abandonment of the Platonic–Aristotelic–Augustinian–Thomistic–Kantian–Hegelian–Schleiermacherian traditional approach to philosophy and theology, and, the "overcoming" means a new interpretation of metaphysics Heidegger advanced throughout his many works.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Aquinas agrees, "A small error at the outset can lead to great errors in the final conclusions, as the Philosopher says in I *De Caelo et Mundo* cap. 5 (271b8-13), and thus, since being and essence are the things first conceived of by the intellect, as Avicenna says in *Metaphysicae* I, cap. 6, in order to avoid errors arising from ignorance about these two things, we should resolve the difficulties surrounding them by explaining what the terms being and essence each signify and by showing how each may be found in various things and how each is related to the logical intentions of genus, species, and difference." St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. M.A. Armand Maurer C.S.B, Ph.D., L.M. S. (Toronto, Canada: Garden City Press Co-Operative, 1949), Prologue.

<sup>33</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894).

<sup>34</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 1: 200-20. For this reason Alfred North Whitehead appropriately remarked that "the safest general characterization of European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffing and Donald W. Sherburne, Corrected ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1978), 39.

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*: Int., 6 (pp. 41-49). The going back to the forgotten ground of metaphysics may bring about a "transformation of metaphysics" (The Way Back 209-13 passim). This "transformation" or "restoration" of metaphysics was already pointed at in *Being and Time* Introduction, 2.7 as destruction." Later, in *The Question of Being* (New York: Twayne, 1958) Heidegger calls it "overcoming" (*Überwindung*).

<sup>36</sup> See for instance, *ibid.*, and; ———, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959).

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To put it briefly, the new metaphysics of postmodernity abandons the notion that real or ultimate reality is timeless<sup>37</sup> and replaces it with the view that real or ultimate reality is temporal and historical.<sup>38</sup> Heidegger understood the magnitude of the changes involved in his metaphysical investigation into the history and nature of metaphysics and expressed it in a series of poignant rhetorical questions. “Do we stand in the very twilight of the most monstrous transformation our planet has ever undergone, the twilight of that epoch in which earth itself hangs suspended? Do we confront the evening of a night which heralds another day? Are we ‘precursors of the day of an altogether different age?’”<sup>39</sup>

In short, even though postmodernity brought about epochal changes in the areas of culture, epistemology and metaphysics Emerging Church leaders and their Evangelical critics have been able so far to relate only to the cultural and epistemological levels seemingly impervious to the deep metaphysical change postmodernity has brought about. This is strange because the epistemological and ontological changes postmodernity has brought about belong together. Moreover, the epistemological changes stand on and correspond to the metaphysical changes. We will come back to this point later.

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<sup>37</sup> Briefly commenting on the beginning of Western philosophy in the fragments of Parmenides Heidegger comments, “What sorts of answers are given to the as yet undeveloped guiding question, the question as to what being is? The *one* answer—roughly speaking, it is the answer of Parmenides—tells us that *being is*. And odd sort of answer, no doubt, yet a very deep one, since that very response determines for the first time and for all thinkers to come, including Nietzsche, the meaning of *is* and *Being*—permanence and presence, that is, the eternal present.” ———, *Nietzsche: 2: 200*. What Heidegger describes from the perspective of his own temporal metaphysics of historicity as “eternal present,” Parmenides described as timeless. Specifically, Parmenides described the meaning of Being by way of various “signs” or characteristics, among them Being “. . . never was, nor will be, because it is now, a whole all together, one, continuous...” Parmenides, “The Way to Truth,” in *Ancilla to the pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. Kathleen Freeman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948), Fgs. 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> “In *Being and Time*, Being is not something other than Time: ‘Time’ is called the first name of the truth of Being, and this truth is the presence of Being and thus Being itself” Martin Heidegger, “The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics,” in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. William Barret and Henry D. Aiken (New York: Random House, 1962), 213-14.

<sup>39</sup> ———, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. Daved Farell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisc, CA: Harper, 1975), 17.

**Embracing Postmodernity?**

Christians have always experienced and shared the gospel from within their diverse and always changing cultural, philosophical, and scientific settings. Why, then, have evangelicals changed their relation to culture from rejection to embrace? Why are Emerging Church leaders more positive about cultural trends, philosophical doctrines, and scientific views than their predecessors? Is there something new and better in the culture and philosophy of our days? Are culture, philosophy, and science coming closer to biblical teachings? More precisely, why do Emerging Church leaders embrace postmodern culture as part of their Christian experience? Finally, we need to ask why most Emerging Church leaders and their Evangelical critics miss the deeper ontological level of the postmodernity.

At the practical level Emerging Church leaders embrace postmodern culture to shape the forms of liturgy and device methods to attract believers to the worship services. An obvious internal motivation for the “turn to culture” is the low attendance to church services. New generations of Evangelicals are not attending Church. Something needs to be done to attract them. According to Philip Clayton “mainline churches are simply not attracting significant proportions of the younger population in America and there are no signs that this pattern is about to change. If for some reason all the persons in mainline churches today who are over the age of sixty-five were to disappear, *two thirds* of current church attendees would be gone.”<sup>40</sup> This indicates that the secularization of western culture that emptied churches in Europe during the twentieth century has finally arrived to America. The pragmatic motivation to fill the churches, however, may be the trigger but not the ground for the Emerging Church’s turn to culture.

I would like to suggest that the grounding reason for the Emerging Church’s embrace of postmodern culture is the charismatization of Protestantism during the second half of the twentieth century we noted in the first article of this series. In other words, the Emerging Church is the logical outcome of the Charismatization of American Evangelicalism. We should keep in mind that “Charismatization” is the label we use to speak about the process of Pentecostalization of Christian worship during

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<sup>40</sup> Clayton, *Transforming Christian Theology: For Church and Society*, 46.

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the second part of the twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> Because Pentecostalism adapted to culture with ease simultaneously attracting large numbers to worship services it became a model for Evangelicals and Catholics alike who eventually adopted and followed the Pentecostal liturgical model. It was through the so-called second (1960's-1970's) and third (1980's) 'waves' of the Holy Spirit that Pentecostal worship permeated most Evangelical denominations producing a Charismatic renewal. Not surprisingly, Charismatism has led mainline churches to adopt "new and informal worship styles, and explosion in 'worship songs,' a new concern for the dynamics of worship, and an increasing dislike of the traditionalism of formal liturgical worship."<sup>42</sup>

The question now becomes, what makes Pentecostalism especially fitted to embrace the cultures and philosophies of the day? To answer this question we should keep in mind the central claim of Pentecostalism that "it is possible to encounter God directly and personally through the power of the Holy Spirit. God is to be known immediately and directly, not indirectly through study of a text."<sup>43</sup> The direct communication of the transcendent God facilitates cultural accommodation because at best it neglects and at worst rejects the principle of divine incarnation in the cultural forms of the words and the human body of Jesus Christ. When the cultural forms of divine revelation presented in Scripture are neglected or rejected cultural accommodation not only ceases to be a problem but it becomes an essential part of Christian experience.

In short, Charismatism stands on the conviction that God relates to humans outside the realm of history and culture. Consequently, culture does not belong to the worship encounter with God but to the doxological and liturgical expressions it generates. This explains why the Emerging Church movement welcomes all cultural forms of liturgical expression as acceptable forms of Christian worship. So we can see that the Emerging Church movement's openness to postmodern culture does

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<sup>41</sup> "The term 'charismatic' is now used to refer to movements within the mainline churches based upon the ideas and experiences of the Pentecostal movement." McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, 419.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 420. "Pentecostalism began a new phase of expansion after the Second World War, paving the way for its massive froth in the second half of the twentieth century. Even in the United States, Pentecostalism has overtaken most of the mainline denominations that dominated the American religious landscape from 1800-1950." *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

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not flow from the specific characteristics of postmodern culture but from the Charismatic openness to human culture.

Readers familiar with modern theology cannot miss the basic coincidence that exists between the Pentecostal conception of worship as encounter and Schleiermacher's theological interpretation of Christian experience. This coincidence is the reason why Pentecostals,<sup>44</sup> Charismatics, and Emerging Christians share the same pluralistic/eclectic approach to biblical interpretation, liturgy, and spirituality; hence, the great resonance that the Emerging Church movement has achieved in a very short time.

At the philosophical level a possible reason why Emerging Church leaders embrace postmodern epistemological relativism and the so-called non-foundationalism advanced by Grenz may be the fact that they help them to justify their rejection of modernity and dismissal of biblical inerrancy and doctrinal authority. Simultaneously, postmodern epistemological relativism helps Emergents to justify the existence of theological disagreements and doctrinal pluralism. In a way, the relativistic version of postmodern epistemology helps to account for the endemic fragmentation of Protestantism through the centuries. Better than that, it shows that Evangelical pluralism and eclecticism was unavoidable. Seen in this light, the Emerging Church may be the best expression of the Evangelical experience.

At the ontological-metaphysical level Emerging Church leaders may be intuitively inclined to neglect and even reject the postmodern ontological turn because it challenges the ground on which tradition stands. As we briefly explained in our previous section, Postmodernity, calls for the rejection and replacement of the ontological-metaphysical system on which Christian theology stands (we will return to this point later in our series).<sup>45</sup> To accept this view implies not only that the

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<sup>44</sup> "Pentecostalism's resonance with postmodernism is probably best seen in the field of biblical interpretation. Pentecostals, while affirming the traditional Protestant notion of the accessibility of the Bible and the right of every believer to interpret this text, stress the multiple dimension of meaning that arise—not on account of the indeterminate nature of the text, but on account of the 'leading of the Spirit' into the nature of the true meaning of the text, which that same Spirit originally inspired." Ibid., 437-38.

<sup>45</sup> Postmodernity "overturns" the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophical perspective to ontology and metaphysics on which Christianity has been built, see for, for instance, Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume I: The Will to Power as Art: Volume II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, vol. 1 & 2 (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1979, 1984), I: 200-10.

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metaphysical assumptions of Christian tradition are wrong but also that we should replace them with new ones. To do so unavoidably questions the reliability of tradition and the nature of the Charismatic experience of God as trustworthy foundations for Christian theology and worship.

Additionally, the limited capabilities of postmodern reason seem to indicate that a universal metaphysics might be unreachable. As Emerging Church leaders, together with their Roman Catholic and Evangelical colleagues, built on the “Grand Tradition” they implicitly assume the classical metaphysical framework embraced by the church fathers. This fact may help us to understand their failure to integrate the postmodern ontological turn.

More specifically, Emerging Church leaders may be prone to ignore the postmodern ontological turn because of the domino effect that would follow from abandoning the implicit Platonic ontological foundations of Christian tradition and replacing them with an alternate ontological understanding. Such epochal change in the hermeneutical foundations of Christianity would require an all-inclusive reinterpretation of Christian theological and liturgical traditions. Because these traditions play a central role in the self-identity of Evangelicalism and the Emerging Church movement we can understand why both Evangelical and Emerging Church leaders may not see any practical usefulness in the postmodern ontological turn.

The postmodern ontological turn obviously leads us into an unfamiliar territory most of us seem unwilling to explore. Could it be that this seldom traveled path might open the way back to Christ?

### **Taxonomy of Change**

As our analysis so far indicates, the Emerging Church movement springs from a combination of multiple internal and external factors. Internally, the inherited doctrinal fragmentation of Evangelicalism<sup>46</sup> and the inner sense of dissatisfaction cannot be ignored. Externally, major changes in postmodern culture, epistemology and ontology play a

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<sup>46</sup> Zondervan’s *Counterpoints* series provides a well documented and organized testimony to the theological fragmentation of Evangelicalism at the present time. The following remark that “ambiguities within Scripture’s testimony to providence as well as massive conflicts in world views, then, have led theologians of all ages to advocate diametrically opposed conceptions of providence” seems to apply to other issues and doctrines as well. Dennis W Jowers, “Introduction,” in *Four Views on Divine Providence*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 22.

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decisive leading role. Emerging leaders generally agree that the changes they face are massive and epoch making. Their effects will be felt for a long time. Be this as it may, to answer the question about the nature and direction of the changes Evangelicalism is experiencing in the Emerging Church movement we need to analyze in more detail the depth, range, and implications of the changes postmodern culture, epistemology, and ontology are pressing on Evangelicalism in particular and Christianity in general.

Since the decisive leading role of postmodernity takes place at the cultural, epistemological, and ontological levels, it seems reasonable to expect that changes advanced by Emerging Church leaders will involve the same levels. Consequently, we should expect that cultural changes, would generate methodological innovation in ministry and liturgy, epistemological changes would give rise to doctrinal modification, and ontological changes would bring about hermeneutical and systematic revisions.<sup>47</sup> Let us consider each one of these levels, briefly, to better understand the nature and implications of the changes advanced by the Emerging Church movement.

Changes in method produce modifications in the way we do things. Changes in epistemology alter the way in which we understand the origin and nature of the sources on which we base our beliefs. Changes in ontology affect our understanding of the basic ideas we assume to understand the sources of our beliefs. Consequently, in Christian theology, changes in method affect mainly, though by no means exclusively, the area of ministry, mission, and liturgy. Changes in epistemology impact mainly the area of doctrines. Changes in ontology touch mainly the area of understanding and meaning.

Although we distinguish these levels for the purpose of analysis we should in no way imagine they stand asunder or unrelated to each other. All to the contrary, they are intimately interconnected as inseparable components of the complex reality of the church. Thus, for instance, pastors concerned with liturgy and proclamation assume the areas of

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<sup>47</sup> This taxonomy of change coincides and enlarges Ed Stetzer's taxonomy of the Emerging Church movement. His "relevants" (change in liturgical and ministerial methodology), and "revisionists" (change in ecclesiological methodology), belong to my "methodological" level. Stetzer's "revisionists" coincide with my "theological-doctrinal" level. My "hermeneutical" level is implied but not explicitly recognized in Stetzer's "revisionist" level. See, Stetzer, "The Emergent/Emerging Church: A Missiological Perspective," 72-73.

doctrines and meaning, in a way similar to theologians who assume ontological foundations and ministerial practice. The intra-systematic relation that exists between them implies that modification in one level or area implies and/or requires changes in the other levels as well. Finally, we should keep in mind that these levels are also helpful for analyzing the different theological disciplines we find in Christian theological seminaries. Let us consider, briefly, each area of change as experienced by representative leaders in the Emerging Church movement and by their Evangelical counterparts.

### **Methodological Change**

For Emerging Church leaders, change in ministerial and liturgical methodology centers in “recovering the gospel from the clutches of a consumer culture” by using postmodern deconstructionist methodologies.<sup>48</sup> At this level, changes in the church take place in the areas of ministry, liturgy, and mission. In these activities Emerging Church leaders want to distance themselves and overcome the practices of the traditional and pragmatic evangelicals of the twentieth century. This level closely relates to the cultural level of postmodern change described above.

The equivalent rubrics “Vintage Christianity”<sup>49</sup> and “Ancient-Future”<sup>50</sup> capture the essence of the methodological level of change in the Emerging Church movement. “Ancient-Future” and “Vintage Christianity” name the method by which emerging leaders face the future with the resources of ancient church traditions. In this sense the Emerging Church movement is conservative even while embracing methodological change.<sup>51</sup> Its application brings the past into the future by

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 56. For an introduction to the postmodern approach to cultural studies and issues, see for instance, Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*, 145-58.

<sup>49</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, 223.

<sup>50</sup> Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing The Challenges of the New World*, 239-40.

<sup>51</sup> “The truth is that the younger evangelicals are conservative in that they believe the road to the future runs through the past. They definitely are not returning to a fifties past. Instead, they are returning to the Wesleyan past, to the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and to the ancient past of the first three centuries of the church, for inspiration and wisdom.” Ibid., 239.



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“drawing on the wisdom of the ages for the current work of the kingdom.”<sup>52</sup>

As pointed out earlier, dissatisfaction with the apologetical and market driven approaches to ministry by twentieth century Evangelical leadership triggered changes at the methodological level.<sup>53</sup> Emerging church leaders and even some Evangelical leaders<sup>54</sup> believe Postmodern times require them to make deep changes in the method of ministry especially in relation to spirituality and discipleship.<sup>55</sup>

Although one may assume that changes at the methodological level are disconnected with theology and doctrines Robert Webber’s summary of the main components involved in the Emerging Church movement reminds us that such disconnection is impossible. According to him, the main components of Emerging Church change at the methodological level are (1) a missiological understanding of the church, (2) spiritual formation, (3) cultural awareness, and, (4) theological reflection. By explaining that these components are interdependent and mutually condition each other Webber makes clear that any attempt to isolate the methodological level from theological reflection naively ignores reality. He correctly links methodological changes with theological ones. On the one hand, then, the actual content that new methodological views on ministry and liturgy may bring into the church is directly conditioned by the theological ideas pastors assume. On the other hand, to make methodological changes at the ministerial and liturgical levels without simultaneously making changes at the doctrinal-theological level is impossible.

This interconnectedness requires that when considering the methodological level of change advanced by the Emerging Church writers we should keep in mind that they view theology not as the investigation of and the spiritual feeding from Scriptures as the Word of

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, Ed Stetzer and Mark Devine suggest Evangelicals should be open to Emerging Church methodological changes that do not challenge the classical doctrines of Evangelicalism. For instance, According to Stetzer, Dan Kimball advancing the vintage church approach to discipleship and spirituality belongs to emerging leaders who do not advance doctrinal changes in their agendas. Stetzer, “The Emergent/Emerging Church: A Missiological Perspective,” 73. Mark Devine sees the Ancient-Future approach popularized and articulated by Robert Weber as very hopeful feature of the Emerging Church Movement. Devine, “The Emerging Church: One Movement—Two Streams,” 40-42.

<sup>55</sup> Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, 213-25.

God. Instead, in harmony with Grenz and Webber, they assume theology to be “a communal reflection on God’s mission that arises out of God’s people as they seek to discern God’s work in history and his present actions in the life of the community.”<sup>56</sup> According to them, it is not the Bible but the deep past of Christian tradition that should open the future of Evangelical Christianity. Additionally, because “the practice of ministry is already theology—theology in action,”<sup>57</sup> Emerging leaders are able to articulate the inner link between classical and modern theological traditions, on one side, and the experiential nature of Charismatic Christianity on the other. They see this combination to be pregnant with possibilities and ecumenical promise. We need to turn our attention, now, to the theological level of change.

### **Theological Change**

The theological and doctrinal level of change in the Emerging Church centers on the role Scripture plays in the understanding of Christian belief and practice. At this level changes take place mainly as reinterpretation of the role of Scripture and the teachings of the church. In this area Emerging Church leaders want to distance themselves and overcome the theological approach of American Evangelicalism during the last two centuries based on the inerrancy of Scripture advanced by the Old Princetonian theologians. This level is deeper than the methodological one and consequently produces a more significant mutation in the Evangelical community. This level closely relates to postmodern changes in epistemology we considered above.

A notable characteristic of the Emerging Church often missed by both their Evangelical detractors and emulators is the focus on theological reflection at the grassroots level. An increasingly educated and sophisticated society wants to know what they believe. They want to know the basis on which pastors teach them what is truth. Emergent leaders are getting the message and responding to the challenge. However, most of them are working at great disadvantage because their Evangelical denominations have prepared them for such a task neither spiritually nor theologically. Besides, many have experienced Christianity as part of their own denominational culture rather than from serious theological and philosophical reflection on biblical teachings.

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<sup>56</sup> Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing The Challenges of the New World*, 241.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

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Doctrines are part of their cultural and religious “inheritance” but not of their thinking and spiritual patterns.

As emerging leaders attempt to explain their beliefs to others they discover the obvious inconsistencies of their own biblical and doctrinal understandings, as well as, the theological divisions existing within the Evangelical community. Moreover, they realize the need to link doctrines, biblical understanding, and experience into a unified net or system of meaning and experience. In their personal and ministerial search for theological meaning they are not prepared to accept without question or explanation dogmatic answers from their mentors or denominations. Instead, they are learning for the first time the exhilarating feeling theological discoveries bring to themselves and the community. Not surprisingly, at times their theological writings resemble a diary of their theological pilgrimage. Brian McLaren’s writings give testimony to this “testimonial” or “conversational” method of doing theology. Such a procedure is more than a way to communicate truth. It is a path leading to the discovery of truths other Christians before them had embraced. As we noted earlier in this series, through this conversational methodology Emerging Church leaders are reaching conclusions on doctrinal issues, like for instance, the Atonement, Justification by Faith, the Kingdom of God, and, Hell that their Evangelical peers regard heretical and therefore unacceptable.

Doctrinal change in the Emerging Church movement, however, goes deeper than mere doctrinal divergence. It involves a paradigmatic shift in the role Scripture plays in the construction of Christian teachings. In her historical and sociological analysis of the origins and direction of the Emerging Church, Phyllis Tickle correctly estimates that at the center of all paradigmatic shifts lay the perennial question of authority.<sup>58</sup> In the Protestant Reformation authority shifted from the Pope to the *sola Scriptura* principle. But Scripture required interpretation that led to denominational and theological fragmentation. And, as we saw earlier, theological fragmentation eventually generated theological and spiritual dissatisfaction.

Throughout the nineteen and twentieth centuries a number of interrelated factors contributed to a progressive questioning of the

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<sup>58</sup> Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, 45.

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viability of the *sola Scriptura* principle among Evangelicals.<sup>59</sup> They caused many of the most diehard Protestants to grow suspicious of the ‘Scripture and scripture only principle.’<sup>60</sup> Besides, in an ecumenical age, Evangelicals are weary of the perennial theological fragmentation of Protestantism and becoming convinced that Christianity couldn’t stand on Scripture alone.<sup>61</sup>

An important factor accelerating the shift from the Protestant *sola Scriptura* as principle of authority to the Roman Catholic spiritual experience guided by tradition principle advanced by the Emerging Church movement is the rise of Pentecostalism. Remarkably, Evangelical responses to the Emerging Church surveyed in an earlier article ignore this factor. However, Phyllis Tickle explains that Pentecostalism directly contradicts the *sola Scriptura* principle of the Reformation thereby providing Emerging Church leaders with a strong religious base to question and dismiss the *sola Scriptura* principle.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Among them for instance, the emergence of evolution (64-66), psychoanalysis (66-68), Heisenberg principle of uncertainty (p. 79), and, the quest for historical Jesus starting in middle eighteenth century (p. 80), Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “We question what the words mean—literally? Metaphorically? Actually? We even question which words do and do not belong in Scripture and the purity of the editorial line of descent of those that do. We begin to refer to Luther’s principle of “*sola scriptura, scriptura sola*” has having been little more than the creation of a paper pope in place of a flesh and blood one. And even as we speak the authority that has been in place for five hundred years withers away in our hands.” Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>61</sup> “Failure to agree on the meaning of Scripture rendered its function as epistemic norm inoperative, thus leading not only to a conflict of interpretations and a plethora of denominations but also to the wars of religion in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.” Vanhoozer, “Scripture and Tradition”; Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, 33.

<sup>62</sup> “Pentecostalism assumes that ultimate authority is experiential rather than canonical. This is *not* either to say or to imply that there is denial of the Holy Scripture. It is to say, rather, that forced into a choice between what a believer thinks with his or her own mind to be said in the Holy Scripture and an apparently contradictory message from the Holy Spirit, many a Pentecostal must prayerfully, fearfully, humbly accept the more immediate authority of the received message. The same thing is true when the contradiction occurs between a received message and the words of a pastor or bishop. Pentecostalism, in other words, offered the Great Emergence its first, solid, applied answer to the question of where now is our authority. Probably just slightly more than a quarter of emergent Christians and the emergent Church are Pentecostal by heritage or affinity, and they have brought with them into the new aggregate this central belief in the Holy Spirit as authority.” Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, 85.

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This experiential base fits well with the sheer frustration growing out of centuries of theological fragmentation motivated by the absence of an overall philosophical and theological synthesis of Protestant theology and practice. To Emerging Church leaders this fact unavoidably indicates that a genuine theology from Scripture alone is impossible.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, to overcome theological and ministerial fragmentation a new comprehensive way to do theology had to be found. To this end Pentecostalism became instrumental because by fitting well with the Evangelical experience, modern and postmodern epistemologies, and Roman Catholic theological tradition, it naturally emerged as the efficient cause bringing them together in a new synthesis for a new age.

In this context, the criticism of reason and the non-foundationalist epistemology of postmodernity became scholarly tools Emerging Church leaders use to deconstruct and reject the Evangelical belief in an inerrant Scripture they view as the *sola Scriptura* principle of authority. The same tools point them to the community and its tradition as the new locus of authority for the Church.

The implications of this epistemological change are momentous. They seem to corroborate the rapidly spreading assessment that the changes underway in the Emerging Church movement are of epoch making magnitude.<sup>64</sup> Besides, by accepting tradition and community as the principle of authority the Emerging Church is embracing the same authority on which the Roman Catholic Church stands. This seems to indicate that, at the theological level the Emerging Church movement

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<sup>63</sup> Carl Raschke puts it clearly, “The Bible is not a system of arguable and debatable propositions. A genuine systematic theology forged from the Bible is impossible. The *sola* in *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* is not a qualifiable adverb. As Kierkegaard says, the paradox of the Incarnation demands faith more than assent. For faith is the total surrender of one’s heart, mind, and body to the infinite and Almighty God, who calls us into relation. Scripture is the voice that calls us into that relation.” Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*, 210.

<sup>64</sup> “The concept of emergence can also be applied to broad and dramatic cultural developments. Phyllis Tickle has recently argued that “emergence” best describes the great shift in human thinking and believing currently underway, a shift she believes will have the same historic status as the Great Reformation and the Great Schism. We are in fact in the middle of what she is calling “The Great Emergence.” Every five hundred years, church and society undergo a major transformation and we happen to be lucky enough to be here to watch this one happen. Post-Christendom, globalization, interconnectivity, and so on, are all dimensions and evidences of this Great Emergence.” Stucky, “Anabaptism and Emergence: Collision or Convergence,” 22.

heralds the end of the Protestant Reformation. Nonetheless, the end is not here yet.<sup>65</sup>

Initial Evangelical reactions to the Emerging Church movement considered in an earlier article indicate that the strongest Evangelical opposition to the Emerging Church focuses precisely on the role of Scripture in theological construction. However, Tickle thinks history is on the side of the Emerging Church movement away from the *sola Scriptura* principle. She predicts the eventual demise of the *sola Scriptura* principle.<sup>66</sup> A new principle of authority will emerge. Yet, when we realize that the alternative to the *sola Scriptura* principle is tradition and community it is difficult to envision them as “new” principle of authority. Instead, it seems that the “old” Roman Catholic principle from which the Reformation emerged is carrying the day after five centuries of controversy. But, even if the Emerging Church may come to define the new Evangelical center from tradition instead than from Scripture, thereby bringing the Protestant Reformation to an end, would there a remnant of biblical Protestantism survive?

### **Hermeneutical Change**

The hermeneutical level of change in the Emerging Church centers on the role that philosophy plays in the interpretation of Scripture and the understanding of Christian beliefs and practices. At this level changes take place mainly as reinterpretation of the basic ontological and metaphysical ideas exegetes, theologians, and ministers assume when they engage in their respective trades. In this area Emerging Church leaders seek for the interpretive perspective they need to construct their

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<sup>65</sup> “For so long as it does, however, the debate among the contending candidates for the right of final authority will be a major as well as a bitter one. It is nonetheless possible to sketch in with broad strokes where the argument is and something of the battleground on which it will be fought.” Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, 148.

<sup>66</sup> “When it is all resolved—and it most surely will be—the Reformation’s understanding of Scripture as it has been taught by Protestantism for almost five centuries will be dead. That it is not to say the Scripture as the base for authority is dead. Rather it is to say that what the Protestant tradition has taught about the nature of that authority will be either dead or in mortal need of reconfiguration.” *Ibid.*, 101. Actually, Tickle predicts that the death of the *sola Scriptura* principle will take place when Evangelicals lose the battle on homosexuality. The gay fight is the last one. “Of all fights, the gay one must be—has to be—the bitterest, because once it is lost, there are no more fights to be had. It is finished. Where now is the authority?” *Ibid.*

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theological and ministerial views. Because it guides their conclusions, the hermeneutical level of change is deeper even than the theological and methodological ones. In spite of its grounding role, most Evangelical and Emerging Church leaders fail to directly and critically engage with the ontological and metaphysical issues the hermeneutical level involves. The few of them that do engage with ontological issues attempt to broaden the traditional perspectives main line Protestantism and American Evangelicalism embraced throughout their histories. This level closely relates to the ontological level of postmodern change described above.

Robert Webber testifies to the existence of an anti-philosophical bias in American Fundamentalism. The “all you need is the Bible” appropriation of the *sola Scriptura* principle translated in the absence of philosophical education in Evangelical seminaries.<sup>67</sup> Neo-Evangelical pragmatism did not do much to revert this state of affairs. Emerging Church leaders, then, react against the Evangelical neglect of the philosophical foundations of their faith. By so doing they grant a positive role to philosophy that contradicts the *sola Scriptura* principle on which Evangelicalism stands.

As we enter the hermeneutical level of analysis a fateful methodological inconsistency within Evangelicalism comes to view. On one side, what appears to be a large number of Evangelicals believe their doctrines and hermeneutical principles stand on the basis of Scripture alone. Wayne Grudem, an often quoted representative of this approach, maintains that “systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic.”<sup>68</sup> Within his methodological matrix, the role of philosophy in systematic theology is minimal. “Philosophical study helps us understand right and wrong thought forms common in our culture and

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<sup>67</sup> “This was true of my fundamentalist college education, which was marked by a distinct negative attitude toward things intellectual. For example, the fundamentalist school where I was educated did not have a philosophy department because ‘all you need is the Bible.’ They offered one course in philosophy to meet state requirements for students in the educational department, but this was a course designed to show why all philosophical speculation was foolish and should be avoided.” *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 21.

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others.<sup>69</sup> On the other side, a large sector of leading Evangelical theologians believes that their understanding of Christian doctrines stand on a multiplicity of theological sources among which philosophy and science play important hermeneutical roles.<sup>70</sup>

Interestingly, both Emerging Church and neo-Evangelicals leaders agree in their disapproval of Grudem's approach. From the Emerging Church perspective Stanley Grenz sees it as sidestepping the thorny issues of tradition, culture, and method.<sup>71</sup> From the neo-Evangelical viewpoint John Blot argues against Grudem's approach with the express purpose of battling against Carl Raschke's philosophical position we will explore in the next article. According to Bolt "evangelical theological method should not be restricted to summarizing biblical doctrine. Such an understanding of the theological task today fails as claim to *truth* about God, a universal claim desperately needed today."<sup>72</sup>

These confronted positions beg the question about whether neo-evangelicals embrace the *sola Scriptura* principle as the principle of authority in doctrinal and practical matters. If they do, then, we are facing the existence of different views of understanding the same principle. Be it as it may, we cannot dismiss either position by using slogans and labels. They require careful reflection, especially for Evangelicals facing epochal change in this generation.

The agreement between neo-Evangelicals and Emerging Church leaders about the multiplicity of theological sources is momentous and has a long history. Arguably, the Evangelical theological synthesis articulated by Luther and Calvin never stood on the *sola Scriptura* principle but rather implicitly on the multiplicity of sources matrix.<sup>73</sup> Their implicit dependence on Greek ontological categories did not affect

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Donald A.D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason & Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), See for instance, Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1991).

<sup>71</sup> Grenz, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> Bolt, "Sola Scriptura as an Evangelical Theological Method?," 89.

<sup>73</sup> Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), 244-52. This book correctly argues that the Reformers did not use Scripture independently from tradition as interpretive principle. What neo-Evangelicals call *sola Scriptura* Mathison characterizes as *solo Scriptura*. According to him, theology cannot stand on *solo Scriptura* because this procedure takes a common interpretive viewpoint. Consequently, it leads to private interpretations creating theological and ecclesiological fragmentation.



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only peripheral issues or the “communication” of the gospel to their culture. On the contrary, as Bruce McCormack as correctly underlined the implicit assumption of Greek ontological categories also conditioned their understanding of the central doctrine of Justification,<sup>74</sup> the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.<sup>75</sup>

As they drew heavily on Augustine their theological synthesis unintentionally assumed the general ontological and metaphysical principles of Neo-Platonism a reality neo-Evangelicals tend to deny strongly. Perhaps the so-called Radical Reformation came closer to building on the *sola Scriptura* principle, yet, it never generated a philosophical and theological synthesis. However, the continuity of Protestant theology with medieval Roman Catholic Theology transpired soon after the reformation during the period of Protestant Orthodoxy (1560-1620) when Protestant theologians adopted scholastic methodology strongly influenced by Aristotle’s philosophical thought<sup>76</sup> and the medieval theological tradition heavily committed to Greek ontological categories.<sup>77</sup> These simple historical facts cast suspicion over

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<sup>74</sup> Recently Bruce L. McCormack has recognized that Luther and Calvin “... were not in a position to explore the ‘*theological ontology*’ that was implied in their understanding of justification. And this left their articulation of the doctrine vulnerable to criticism” Bruce L. McCormack, “What’s at Stake in Current Debates over Justification?,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 104. He suggests that Calvin was unwilling to address the ontological questions directly *ibid.* Correctly, McCormack assesses the lack of ontological reflection as a serious weakness in Protestant Theology. “The problem with refusing to engage ontological questions as an essential part of the dogmatic task is that we all too easily make ourselves the unwitting servants of the ontology that is embedded in the older theological rhetoric that we borrow—an so it was with Calvin.” *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Luther, “The Disputation Concerning Justification,” in *Career of the Reformer*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1960), Introduction.

<sup>76</sup> Alister McGrath, “Reformation to Enlightenment,” in *The Science of Theology*, ed. Paul Avis, *The History of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 154-55.

<sup>77</sup> “In their attempt to show that the Protestant tradition was a consistent and defensible interpretation of the catholic tradition, the Protestant thinkers of the post-Reformation era had recourse both to the great medieval systems of Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and others, and to the ongoing philosophical tradition (J. Zabarella, F. Suárez) that linked them to those systems. Protestant Scholasticism, however, should not be viewed as identical with the medieval systems nor as a reduplication of the theology of the Reformers. Granting developments in logic, rhetoric and metaphysics which took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Protestant Scholasticism was ‘a form of Protestant theology in its own right’ (R.A. Müller).” Willem J. van Asselt, “Protestant Scholasticism” in *The*

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the neo-Evangelical claim that its doctrines spring from the *sola Scriptura* principle.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps neo-Evangelicalism owes more to the Radical Reformation than to the Magisterial Reformers such as Luther and Calvin.<sup>79</sup> And yet, they are also dependent on the latter for their main doctrinal trusts.

Be it as it may, this context helps us understand why John Bolt, a critic of the Emerging Church approach to theology, questions whether “the Reformational slogan *sola Scriptura* is an appropriate *methodological* framework for evangelical systematic theology today.”<sup>80</sup> Finding it to be “unduly restrictive” and “potentially harmful to the proclamation of the gospel’s truth” he argues that an appropriate approach to theological method “must also be characterized by an explicit metaphysics that though it cannot arise directly from the biblical data—the Bible is not a book of metaphysics—is nonetheless consistent with Scripture and perhaps even coinheres with it.”<sup>81</sup> Viewing *sola Scriptura* as a “necessary but no sufficient condition for Christian theology” Bolt proceeds to show correctly that “our greatest theologians—from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas to Francis Turretin to Herman Bavinck—where no strict biblicists in their theologizing but also serious metaphysicians.”<sup>82</sup> Ironically, on this point, Bolt agrees with Carl Raschke, an Emerging Church thinker who also believes that “a genuine Systematic theology forged from the Bible is impossible.”<sup>83</sup>

However, Bolt’s thrust is not against neo-Evangelical biblicists as Grudem who fail to recognize “the role of confessional and philosophical presuppositions.”<sup>84</sup> Instead, his lengthy scholarly evidentiary exposition

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*Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 512.

<sup>78</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), Introduction. Bolt, “*Sola Scriptura* as an Evangelical Theological Method?”

<sup>79</sup> On this point see, for instance, Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*, 131.

<sup>80</sup> Bolt, “*Sola Scriptura* as an Evangelical Theological Method?,” 62.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*, 210.

<sup>84</sup> According to Bolt a strictly biblical doctrinal method “fails to do justice to the broader human experience of God outside the church, overlooks the key role of the church itself in any normative interpretation of Scripture, avoids addressing the key role of confessional and philosophical presuppositions, and does not account for theology’s need to be contemporary, relevant, and able to speak to the issues of ‘today.’” Bolt, “*Sola*

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on the use of classical metaphysics by influential representatives of the Christian Evangelical tradition is designed to argue against the postmodern relativism of the Emerging Church movement.

Bolt sees the revival of classical metaphysical and epistemological views he proposes as the indispensable antidote to Carl Raschke's postmodern proposal that "the entire Evangelical faith must be *dehellenized*"<sup>85</sup> and the propositional view of Scripture abandoned. Rasche's new "*dehellenized*" metaphysics, he has drawn from Lévinas,<sup>86</sup> supports a functional/sacramental view of Scripture according to which the words of the Bible mediate the believer's encounter with the infinite One.<sup>87</sup> Bolt correctly perceives the hermeneutical effects that Rasche's attack on classical metaphysics has on the traditional propositional view of biblical inspiration and theology. To respond to the Emerging Church postmodern assault on the propositional view of Scripture Bolt calls Evangelicals' attention to the hermeneutical role of classical metaphysics and epistemology.

Underneath the conflict of biblical interpretations, therefore, we find a deeper conflict of metaphysical interpretations. This is the level and the question Aquinas had in mind when he stated that a small error in the beginning is a large one at the end. The ontological ideas we implicitly or explicitly assume condition not only our view of inspiration but also the interpretation of Scripture and the construction of Christian doctrines. Change at the ontological level, then, is the foundation on which doctrinal and methodological changes stand.

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*Scriptura as an Evangelical Theological Method?,"* 89.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 91; Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*, 131-34.

<sup>86</sup> ———, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*: 139.

<sup>87</sup> "In the postmodernist argot we can say that Scripture is not a system of 'facts' but 'traces' of the divine fullness. Claims about biblical 'facts' are idolatrous claims to ultimacy. Traces are the medium through which the ultimate and infinite exhibits itself in a penultimate and finite manner as ultimate and infinite. The trace is a finite signal that the infinite One has been there. And if the infinite One has been there, the 'fact' becomes far less of an issue. Inerrancy is an idolatry of the text. It is bibliolatry plain and simple, inasmuch as it cannot see beyond the logical lattice of the text to encounter the Other who is ever calling us into his kingdom and before his throne." Ibid., 135.

### **Conclusion**

The all too partial survey of selected evidence presented in this article suggests that the changes American Evangelicalism is experiencing at the beginning of the twenty first century are not superficial but deep and paradigmatic touching its nature and destiny. These changes stem from deep grass-roots dissatisfaction with the spiritual, doctrinal, and ministerial status of Evangelical denominations. Because Evangelical theology and ministry are not reaching young generations of churchgoers their growing dissatisfaction goes far beyond aesthetic issues to include theological, metaphysical, and systemic topics. This situation uncovers a long crisis of theological and ministerial leadership that can be traced back at least to the failure to produce a theological synthesis of Biblical philosophy and theology that could answer the questions and challenges presented by classical philosophies and modern science.

While the Evangelical experience is slowly but surely cracking under the pressure of inner spiritual, theological, and hermeneutical crises, the world around it is crumbling under the pressure of philosophical, scientific, and technological changes. Without inner or external anchors to guide its destiny and mission rapid changes threaten to further fragment the never cohesive existence of the Evangelical movement.

To save Protestantism and advance its mission Emerging Church leaders believe, unlike their predecessors, that Evangelicals should let go of the Bible and reason as their anchors and embrace postmodern social, epistemological changes. In their minds this amounts to the postmodern reformation of the Church even the next reformation. In this process the Protestant Reformation based on Scripture appears to be vanishing before our eyes.

Is there an alternate way to face the challenges that in our days Modernity and Postmodernity level against Protestantism and Christianity at large? Is there a path (method) that could lead to the formulation of the elusive synthesis of Biblical Christian theology and practice? Could it be that besides the way back to tradition advanced by the Emerging Church and Roman Catholicism, a way back to Scriptures, made possible by a renewed understanding of the Protestant *sola Scriptura* principle, is also possible? To this end we need to briefly review the philosophical foundations of the Emerging Church movement.

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## **Adventist Eschatology in Relation to the Religious Left and the Religious Right**

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### **1. Introduction**

It is commonly understood that Seventh-day Adventist eschatology predicts that a Sunday Law in homage to Papal authority will be enacted in the United States and other nations in the final period of earth's history preceding the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, despite its ultimate inevitability according to the sure word of prophecy, prior to such an enactment we are obligated to do all we reasonably can to delay this law by uplifting the importance of religious liberty.<sup>2</sup> I affirm these beliefs. The

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<sup>1</sup> For a collection of Seventh-day Adventist thought leader Ellen White's comments on this, see Donald Ernest Mansell, *The Shape of the Coming Crisis* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), 58-82. As White herself put it, "The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict in which all the world will act a part," Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church Volume Six*, 352.

<sup>2</sup> "A time is coming when the law of God is, in a special sense, to be made void in our land. The rulers of our nation will, by legislative enactments, enforce the Sunday law, and thus God's people [will] be brought into great peril. When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land; and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin. We see that those who are now keeping the commandments of God need to bestir themselves, that they may obtain the special help which God alone can give them. They should work more earnestly to delay as long as possible the threatened calamity. If, in our land of boasted freedom, a Protestant government should sacrifice every principle which enters into its

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question this article will explore is what politically oriented religious groups and ideologies have 21<sup>st</sup> century Adventists identified as encouraging a union of church and state that could be expected to prepare the groundwork for a Sunday Law? The thesis of this study is that some Seventh-day Adventists have (unintentionally) fallen into a trap, for a variety of reasons, of replacing epistemology with eschatology. This has possibly caused some of us to be near-sighted as we analyze present events and developments in the religious and secular world in our desire to predict the future and delay a Sunday Law. In other words, to replace one's epistemology with an eschatology is to see the present with an anticipated future as an overlay; we know the dots or major events, thus we are tempted to fill in the lines in our "overlay" between the dots with a detailed version of events of how our predicted eschatology will come about. In doing so, one is no longer analyzing the present objectively or honestly, but with "eschaton-tinted glasses." On the one hand, this would seem a good thing to many Adventists, as will be demonstrated below. However, I hope to demonstrate why this approach has some potentially serious pitfalls and consequences that should be avoided. Nevertheless, the need for remaining apocalyptic in our focus as Adventists is important,<sup>3</sup> which is the reason why I feel this subject needs to be addressed.

Some additional important motives for this study revolve around the central evangelistic problem Adventism faces in regard to the Old/New

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Constitution, and propagate papal falsehood and delusion, well may we plead, 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law.' Some may think that because it has been revealed in prophecy that our nation shall restrict the consciences of men, it must surely come; and that if we make an effort to preserve our liberty, we shall be acting the part of unfaithful servants, and thus come under the condemnation of God.

"This peril now threatens the people of God; and what are we going to do? Can we not assist in lifting the standard, and in calling to the front those who have a regard for their religious rights and privileges? God calls upon us to awake. We know the end is near. We know that the prophecies are fast fulfilling which show that we are living in the close of this world's history," Ellen White, "David's Prayer," in *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 18 (1888).

<sup>3</sup> I concur with George R. Knight's central theme that Adventism is in danger of being "neutered" when we forget about the centrality of our apocalyptic message. George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism: Are We Erasing Our Relevancy?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009).

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Covenant question, which has at its heart the Sabbath.<sup>4</sup> Central to Adventism's concerns about the Sabbath is its realization as an eschatological matter of importance, where it ultimately becomes a matter of religious liberty. Thus, the reasons for understanding how Adventist eschatology will manifest itself in the world of political theories and ideologies actually might shed some light on our understanding of our fellow Sunday Christian believers. They often struggle to understand why they should worship on Sabbath instead of Sunday, so exploring anew how the Sabbath relates to eschatology may in turn grant us insights into forming better evangelistic methods to reach them intellectually. For many Sunday Christians, it seems as if we are calling them *back* to a Jewish/Old Covenant understanding of salvation by legalistic works, whereas they currently live under a New Covenant of grace with Sunday as part of their symbol of liberation from Judaism and sin.<sup>5</sup> There is a direct irony the Adventist must confront in this understanding by Sunday keepers and our view of eschatology, and that is, why would one of the symbols of the New Covenant of grace<sup>6</sup> ultimately manifest itself in a *coercive, forced* Sunday observance? Would not such a forced Sunday worship *look* like a new version of the Old Covenant they rejected, which was a covenant of legalism and works, a perspective which they often accuse Adventists of having? We can appear to be *doing* what we accuse of them of *going* to do, and that is to encourage the idea that we are saved by observing a certain day with legalistic rigidity, and urging it upon others.

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<sup>4</sup> Appreciated in this respect is the work of Skip MacCarty, who has connected beautifully the Sabbath's relationship to the Gospel and the Law. Skip MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Covenants Reveal About the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 219-233.

<sup>5</sup> Representing a common perspective, see Kevin L. Cunningham, *The Sabbath, the Law, and the New Covenant* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2013), 144. Cunningham comments that "It seems that each covenant has a day that is set aside for God's people to remember deliverance from bondage, the bondage of slavery in the old covenant and the bondage of sin in the new covenant," Ibid. He continues, "when John says "the Lord's day," he is undoubtedly referring to the day that we have been delivered from our sins, the day that Jesus Christ was resurrected, which is the first day of the week," Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Kurt Litwiller, *New Covenant Living: Released to Live by the Spirit* (Apopka, FL: Reliance Media, 2010). After studying the Sabbath with Adventists (for whom he says nice things about), he still found greater joy in the New Covenant that excluded the Sabbath.



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As such, there are two reasons for studying contemporary Adventist perspectives and attitudes concerning the identification of groups that might encourage Sunday Laws. In line with the above observations, the first is that I perceive an error in Adventists crying “wolf” too frequently when and where there is no wolf, while the wolf may emerge from within groups that we did not foresee, making us look ignorant of current events. This is undesirable for a movement that sees prophecy as a central component of our reason to exist presently. Secondly, our overzealous efforts to identify the wolf have caused us to damage our corporate witness and splinter our evangelistic message by alienating various groups we accuse of being “wolf-like” who are sincere Christians despite their observance of Sunday. Stated plainly, continuously criticizing various Christian groups who worship on Sunday, and who feel it is important to *encourage* Christian values through sound public policy, is hampering our witness to moderate Sunday worshipers who are sympathetic to the more political groups, but are personally lenient in how they go about advancing Christian values. Insisting or implying that every Sunday worshiper has a goal of uniting Church and State to create a Sunday law with a desire to persecute Sabbath keepers is patently false.<sup>7</sup> Many Sunday worshipers are simply ignorant of

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<sup>7</sup> I do not fault Ellen White, who had a very balanced perspective overall, but nevertheless, she can be cited by those who wish to do so for agitating people toward extreme views and to expect it “around the corner” in an unhealthy paranoiac manner. Some 100 years since her death, that “around the corner” attitude has encouraged us to make many false predictions and accusations against Sunday keepers, which, when they fail, cause many Adventist believers to become skeptical of our teachings. For example, Ellen White wrote, “The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude. The agencies of evil are combining their forces, and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.” Ellen White, *Testimonies Vol. 9*, 11. She also noted, with reference to the historical context, “We see that efforts are being made to restrict our religious liberties. The Sunday question is now assuming large proportions. An amendment to our Constitution is being urged in Congress, and when it is obtained, oppression must follow. I want to ask, Are you awake to this matter? and do you realize that the night cometh, when no man can work? Have you had that intensity of zeal, and that piety and devotion, which will enable you to stand when oppression is brought upon you?” Ellen White, “David’s Prayer,” in *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 18, 1888. C.f., “The testing time has not yet come. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman

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the truth as we see it, but sincerely desire the preservation of religious liberty with a passion that matches any Adventist. Many Sunday worshippers regard the individual's conscience as sacred, the same as we do.

With the above in mind, the study will proceed in section 2 by examining some relatively recent published works by influential conservative Adventist pastors, authors, and scholars to see how they understand our contemporary situation and identify who they see advancing any union of Church and State where Sunday observance might be enforced. Following this, in section 3 I will then turn toward describing how other non-Adventists who are also concerned about a Roman Catholic Church-State and religious liberty see contemporary events, noting the distinct differences they see in comparison with the expressed Adventist perspectives. Section 4 will conclude by providing a few tentative suggestions for Adventists as we move forward and remain engaged in contemporary events around the world in anticipation of a Sunday Law.

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Catholic communion. None are condemned until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. But when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.

“With rapid steps we are approaching this period. When Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin,” Ellen White, *Evangelism*, 234-235. Additionally, and of note, “But Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—‘the mark of the beast.’ And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive ‘the mark of the beast,’” Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 449.

## 2. Contemporary Adventist Perspectives On Religious Liberty and Sunday Laws

Numerous Adventists, and others, have commented upon Sunday Laws and the groups that have pushed for them over the past centuries in both the United States and elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> I will not review their details here, aside from noting that they vary from more polemical arguments<sup>9</sup> to detailed and well-reasoned historical treatises tracing the history of Sunday Laws back to pagan Rome.<sup>10</sup> Responses by outsiders have been decidedly mixed to the Adventist perspective overall. The issues have become far more complicated in the years following Ellen White's death in 1915 than they were during the early period of American and Adventist history. While Sunday Laws in earlier periods of history were typically both motivated and sustained exclusively on religious grounds,<sup>11</sup> this is no longer necessarily the case. A variety of complex socio-economic factors are now at play, affecting both the positive and negative sides of the debate

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<sup>8</sup> David N. Laband and Deborah Hendry Heinbuch, *Blue Laws: The History, Economics, and Politics of Sunday-Closing Laws* (Lexington Books, 1987); Warren LeRoi Johns, *Dateline Sunday, U.S.A.: The Story of Three and a Half Centuries of Sunday-Law Battles in America* (Pacific Press Publishing, 1967); Alonzo T. Jones, *The National Sunday Law: Argument of Alonzo T. Jones Before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Dec. 13, 1888* (TEACH Services Facsimile Edition, 1996); Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law* (AT Publications, 2010); Vance Ferrell, *Enforced Sunday Law Coming Soon to America* (Harvestime Books, 2008); Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Pacific Press Publishing, 1992); <http://www.sundaylaw.net/books/other/standish/liberty/litb19.htm>; <http://www.libertymagazine.org/index.php?id=1281>.

Note: All websites cited were accessed between January 2012 and December 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Russell R. Standish and Colin D. Standish, *The Pope's Letter and Sunday Law* (Hartland Publications, 1998), <http://www.remnantofgod.org/sabatak.htm>; <http://glenburnie.netadvent.org/sabbath/sundayhistory.html>; and <http://dedication.www3.50megs.com/sundaylaw.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Abram Herbert Lewis, *Sunday Legislation: Its History to the Present Time and its Results* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902); Ann Warner Odom, *Sunday Laws: A History and Survey* (University of Mississippi, 1962); Miriam Cho, *Sunday Laws: A State-by-State Review* (2002); Craig Harline, *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007); David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2011); Robert L. Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism* (TEACH Services, 2003); and Alexis McCrossen, *Holy Day, Holiday: The American Sunday* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Sunday Legislation*, xii.

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concerning the usefulness and validity of any Sunday legislation.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, during the past, there were several times when actual Sunday legislation was being actively discussed at various national or local governments in the United States. Since World War II, however, such discussions have been absent altogether or gathering insignificant attention by government officials in the United States. This makes the traditional Adventist presentation of the future more challenging for outsiders to accept in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The present focus of this study, however, are the attitudes of prominent conservative Adventist perspectives from the past 15-20 years in relation to their non-Adventist peers. To fulfill this objective, I will first focus on individuals who have been employed by official or influential Adventist institutions of ministry or education. To clarify, by no means am I implying that their views, or anyone's views, are to be understood as "official" positions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Rather, I merely want to sample the perspectives of prominent and respected contributors to contemporary mainstream Adventist thinking that are or have been connected with various official branches of the church at one level or another, and who have contributed noteworthy scholarly contributions to the issues of religious liberty and Sunday Law legislation in light of 21<sup>st</sup> century events. As such, minority voices within Adventism which are challenging the future reality of the Sunday Law are exempted from the present study.

### **2.1 Adventist Perspectives from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Several Adventists have written articles or books that address the possibilities of Sunday legislation in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context. Abiding by my intent to focus on particularly influential individuals with official connections to Adventist institutions, Norman Gulley,<sup>13</sup> Marvin Moore,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Laband and Heinbuch, *Blue Laws*, 157-164.

<sup>13</sup> Norman Gulley, longtime Professor at Southern Adventist University and past President of the *Adventist Theological Society*, well represents a centrist Adventist perspective. He has written numerous articles and books that have been well-received during his academic career on a wide variety of theological and historical issues.

<sup>14</sup> Marvin Moore, for many years the editor of the *Signs of the Times* periodical, a mainstream magazine originally founded by James White, a cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist church, is well acquainted with the contemporary issues Adventism is facing. He

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and John V. Stevens,<sup>15</sup> adequately represent both professional scholars, pastors, and popular authors who have dedicated significant portions of their time to studying religious liberty in America and in particular Sunday legislation. Collectively and individually, their credentials are solid. Each of them has written a book-length treatment on eschatology, noting both the biblical and historical evidence, which includes an examination of the identification of groups that would encourage Sunday legislation. These three will constitute the focus of this chapter of the study. I examine them in the chronological order of the appearance their major works.

## **2.2 Norman Gulley on the End Game in the End Time**

Gulley's views on eschatology are extensive, covering both the relevant biblical passages and writings from Ellen White. His views in these areas are in overall harmony with traditional understandings from Adventist leaders, including White's. Gulley as such sees the Sunday/Sabbath crisis as the final religious question confronting the world at the end of time.<sup>16</sup> Concerning the origin of Sunday veneration in the Christian church, he views it as a Catholic invention, evidencing the Catholic view concerning the authority of the early Church apart from Scriptural teachings.<sup>17</sup> Gulley describes the purpose for Sunday veneration as simply Satan's hatred for Christ and God's Law. Satan "hates the law, because he hates Christ."<sup>18</sup> These positions match the historic positions of Adventist teachings which

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has also written numerous articles and books on a wide variety of religious and biblical topics, and has also served in pastoral ministry.

<sup>15</sup> John V. Stevens has more than 40 years of experience working directly as an advisor with government officials from several countries on matters of religious liberty. Stevens served for 20 years in the church with the Pacific Union Conference as the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director. He has also authored several articles, including a number for *Liberty* magazine which promotes religious freedom, and written a book focusing on prophecy and religious liberty in the United States.

<sup>16</sup> Norman Gulley, "The Battle Against the Sabbath and its End-time Importance," in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* Vol. 5 #2 (Autumn 1994), 79-115.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Gulley, *Christ is Coming! A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998), 347-349. He summarizes the data by sharing, "We see no attempts to prove Sunday from the New Testament here. Rather the change to Sunday demonstrates the authority of the Catholic Church above Scripture. That should tell us something about the church and Sunday. The day does not have divine credentials," *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>18</sup> Gulley, "The Battle Against the Sabbath and its End-time Importance," 81.

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have been held since near the beginning of the Sabbatarian movement that developed into Seventh-day Adventism.<sup>19</sup> Gulley's studies on eschatology include an extensive overview of the issues that are confronting our postmodern age. These issues include the state of the dead,<sup>20</sup> New Age spiritualism,<sup>21</sup> relativism,<sup>22</sup> evolution,<sup>23</sup> and many others, including different understandings of millennialism.<sup>24</sup> I saw nothing to critically examine or dispute here, as I essentially agree with all of his points on these various issues as they mislead and deceive people, leading them away from the truth as it is in Scripture and Jesus. Where Gulley discusses contemporary movements, however, is where the present interest is focused.

Constituting both a chapter in one of his books<sup>25</sup> as well as a reprint in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*,<sup>26</sup> Gulley's contemporary perspective on Sunday movements is clearly articulated and emphasized through his choice to publish it twice. Gulley holds back no punches, as he begins his article by stating, "In America, bastion of religious liberty, forces are at work to tear down the wall of separation between church and state." He continues, "There is a relentless attack against the first amendment of the Constitution, and leading the fight is the Christian Coalition."<sup>27</sup> That

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<sup>19</sup> That the Seventh-day Sabbath was changed by the Catholic church has been the position of Adventists since the founding of our denomination, and backed up by numerous historical studies. E.g., see P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1977, 1995), 137-138; and Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: An Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 309.

<sup>20</sup> Gulley, *Christ is Coming!*, 253-282.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-210.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-39.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 375-409.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 438-457.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-225. The chapter is entitled, "The Christian Coalition and the Endgame."

<sup>26</sup> Norman Gulley, "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* Vol. 8, #1-2 (1997), 120-136.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 120. Gulley adds that "According to the historicist reading favored by Adventist interpreters, prophecy tells us that America will exercise 'all the authority of the first beast' (Papacy) and will make 'the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast' (Rev 13:12, NIV). In fact, America will set up an image of the Papacy. The Papacy is a union of church and state, so the image in America will be a union of church and state (Rev 13:13-14.) When church and state unite in America, then the church will use the government to enforce its agenda, for the issue in Revelation 13 is worship (vss. 4, 8, 12, 15). Whoever

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leads to a question: What is the Christian Coalition? Founded in 1989 following religious broadcaster and political commentator Pat Robertson's failed Presidential bid in 1988 in the Republican Party, they sought to "Christianize America" through political activism.<sup>28</sup> This much is certain. Robertson has provided some of the sharpest statements in recent decades advocating a closer relationship between religion and government. Gulley notes several articles and books that Robertson and his allies penned, expressing their desire to tear down the wall of separation between church and state that Gulley sees in the first amendment of the Constitution.<sup>29</sup> The evidence is clear enough to the watchful Adventist that the Christian Coalition is not an ally in our efforts to preserve religious liberty. "The New Christian Right is out to Christianize America," shares Gulley.<sup>30</sup>

Gulley is direct in addressing the political alliances that the Christian Coalition sought to create. He notes that the Christian Coalition had "considerable influence in the Republican party and hope(ed) to get the Republican President of their choice elected in the year 2000."<sup>31</sup> Gulley also sides with the liberal or progressive Supreme Court justices, against conservatives like the late William Rehnquist and still active Antonin Scalia.<sup>32</sup> Gulley continues by sharing that the Christian Coalition is misguided in its perception of persecution against Christians in America, leading them to greatly exaggerate the difficulties Christians face in America.<sup>33</sup> In other words, they are deceptively playing a "victim" card to attract attention and strengthen their base supporters, according to Gulley.

The goal of the Christian Coalition is clear to Gulley. They want to "legislate morality" which sounds "like Revelation 13," doesn't it, he asks rhetorically.<sup>34</sup> Gulley notes that Robertson helped organize a meeting

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refuses to engage in the mandated false worship will be threatened by boycott and death (vss. 15-17)."

<sup>28</sup> Andrew E. Moore, "Christian Coalition," in *Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics*, ed. Paul A. Djupe and Laura R. Olson (New York, NY: Facts On File, 2003), 90-91.

<sup>29</sup> Gulley, "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," 121-122.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 124. Gulley refers critically to Rehnquist's comment that the "wall of separation" between church and state was a "metaphor."

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

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where he tried to rally his coalition behind a single individual in the Republican party to run for president in 2000, all the while trying to keep his organization tax exempt, a violation of law.<sup>35</sup> Gulley notes with irony the enigma that the Christian Coalition's "take-over of the Republican party" defies the party's traditional stance "against big government" and its concern "with individual freedom."<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Gulley observes Robertson's call for "his Coalition to get behind one Republican candidate for president," revealing "the partisan nature of their scheme,"<sup>37</sup> which they no doubt recognized was necessary to obtain power; they knew they needed to control a prominent secular party first.

Gulley does note that there were Christian dissenters against Robertson's Christian Coalition, like the Presbyterian minister Robert H. Meneilly, who dubbed the New Right as "a present danger greater than 'the old threat of Communism'"<sup>38</sup> and Edward G. Dobson, who wrote an article in *Christianity Today* entitled "Taking Politics Out of the Sanctuary."<sup>39</sup> But overall, Gulley leaves his readers awestruck with his personal account of his time attending the 1995 "Road to Victory" Convention organized by the Christian Coalition. He observed that in 1990, the convention had 250 delegates, but in 1995 that number had swollen to 4,260, with 143 speakers, and 7 of 9 Republican Presidential candidates speaking.<sup>40</sup> At the conference, Gulley reports personally hearing cries of "Let's get rid of Kennedy of Massachusetts!"<sup>41</sup> Even more importantly, to "thunderous applause," there were shouts of "Take the nation back for God!" and "Out with the liberals" resounding throughout.<sup>42</sup> Gulley, pauses to recall earlier refrains from Christian history of "Crucify them!," and directly compares the two. It was clear to Gulley that the Christian Coalition wanted to join the state and religion. Gulley also notes that of the 1.7 million Coalition

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. "For the Coalition to seek religious tax exempt status when engaged in partisan politics shows how blind it is to the moral issue involved. No organization with any partisan agenda can legally claim religious tax exempt status. But it comes as no surprise to find the Coalition seeking this status when it rejects the separation of church and state," Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. The Kennedy's are well-known liberal Democratic politicians in America.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



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members in 1995, 250,000 of them were Catholics. Indeed, Catholics were now able to “sit cozily snug in a common cause [with Protestants]. They sense victory in the air, and it’s not Calvary’s but Caesar’s.”<sup>43</sup>

Gulley acknowledges the fact, and rightly so, as he concurs with them, that the moral condition of America is wanting. However, although “the Christian Coalition is appalled at the moral disarray in the country,” they wink at the “doctrinal disarray in the church.” Thus “they shout out against moral degradation, but don’t even whimper about doctrines on the trash heap. This uniting for a moral cause is a moral disaster,” Gulley asserts.<sup>44</sup> Gulley recognizes correctly that the real issue is “the danger of moralists attempting to legislate their moral values on minorities. This is the danger of the Christian Coalition agenda, and that of Dominion theology.”<sup>45</sup>

Gulley concludes his analysis of the Christian Coalition by citing how their efforts are compatible with Ellen White’s picture of the end times presented in *The Great Controversy* and elsewhere. “As we watch the Christian Coalition out to force through its social revolution, we remember that ‘Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas.’”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Gulley notes that “during the 1990s there have been unprecedented natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes.”<sup>47</sup> He continues, “the Christian Coalition and the New Right consider these natural disasters as judgment acts of God for moral degradation. And this fires them up in their push to place secular leaders in power to push their religious agenda.”<sup>48</sup> Gulley nicely frames several quotes from Ellen White that would seemingly fit the Christian Coalition perfectly. He cites her by sharing, “‘This very class put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called ‘Christian sabbath,’ and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the *morals*

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 134. Gulley cites Ellen White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 228.

<sup>47</sup> Gulley, “The Christian Coalition and the End Game,” 134.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

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of society.”<sup>49</sup> It is this breaking down of the separation of church and state that Gulley describes as the “end-game.”<sup>50</sup> To summarize his analysis of contemporary Sunday movements, it is clear that Gulley anticipated them as most likely to come from the people like those behind the Christian Coalition, which is similarly part of the New Christian Right, the Religious Right, and perhaps recognized more publically as the Republican worldview.

The central lynchpin of Gulley’s broader critique is not leveled against the Christian Coalition per se, however. His perspective centers on the idea that there is a definable wall of separation between church and state in the Constitution, which philosophically presumes such a separation is in fact possible. This is a decidedly complex subject, as many differing opinions abound on the nature and intent of the Founding Fathers in their creation of our Constitution and the philosophical possibility of truly separating religion from the state. I would suggest that solving this puzzle would be an equivalent to having a clean cut between subjectivity and objectivity in quantum physics and neuropsychology; it currently cannot be done.<sup>51</sup> Gulley, however, concludes that the Founders intended, through the first amendment, to preserve a wall of separation. This means “the government must stay out of the sphere of religion, which also means that religion should not force government to legislate in matters of faith and conscience.”<sup>52</sup> This decidedly enters Gulley into the debate over the intent of the Founders and the philosophical issues related to any true separation of church and state. Gulley sides with the liberals who view our nation as a secular nation. Gulley insists that the Founders never wanted an openly Christian nation. The Constitution is a “secular” document.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Gulley quotes Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 587. He also cites White, “Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the *moral* restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth.” Ibid., 592 (emphasis added).

<sup>50</sup> Gulley, “The Christian Coalition and the End Game,” 135.

<sup>51</sup> Louis S. Berger, *Psychotherapy as Praxis: Abandoning Misapplied Science* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2002), 19-20; and Louis S. Berger, *The Unboundaried Self: Putting the Person Back Into the View from Nowhere* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 250-257.

<sup>52</sup> Gulley, “The Christian Coalition and the End Game,” 121.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

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At this point, I will not critique Gulley's perspectives, save one general comment. Rather, I will share my comments at the end, and analyze all three Adventist perspectives together while interacting with non-Adventist views of the Roman Church-State's goals. My one comment is that, while I am in complete harmony with Gulley's theology and eschatology concerning the ultimate end game as described by Ellen White, I am obligated to point out that the Christian Coalition is, for all practical intents and purposes, utterly destroyed. Yes, just a decade and a half after Gulley penned his article and book in 1997-98, from the vantage point of 2013 (and, in truth, from around 2002,<sup>54</sup> making his article outdated within 4 years), the Christian Coalition has nose-dived severely. It jumped off a cliff. From a highpoint of \$26.5 million revenue in 1996, their financial wherewithal had dropped to a scant \$1.3 million by 2004, by which point they had also lost their battle with the IRS over their tax exempt status, setting a precedent for other similar religious organizations who thought to engage in politics.

Furthermore, the now elderly Pat Robertson, the man behind the Christian Coalition, is a name garnering nearly universal ridicule and disdain today, especially by the under-35 crowd, to which I belong, for his racist and judgmental attitudes. When after 9/11 he blamed the terrorist attacks on the immorality of America, his comments were not received well at all. He was the object of nearly universal disdain for his remarks. Indeed, since then, I only read about him in the news when he says something stupid enough that the media pokes a little more fun at that "aging Christian fool," who is also seen as a hypocrite. In August 2005 he called for the assassination of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, then denied it, though the evidence didn't support him, forcing him to finally apologize.<sup>55</sup> In September of 2011, he made a remark that divorce was

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<sup>54</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_Coalition\\_of\\_America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Coalition_of_America). It's worth noting that the Christian Coalition's presidential candidate did not "win." However controversial George W. Bush was as a President, and acknowledging his professed Christianity, and although the Iraq war is a highly controversial issue, the fact is little was done in the U.S. concerning the Religious Right's wishes during his 8 years in office. Furthermore, Bush's campaign manager, Karl Rove, is often said to have "exploited" the religious right during the 2000 and 2004 elections. Rather than religious conservatives taking control and exploiting politics, quite the reverse occurred, with clever secular politicians exploiting religious zealots to win an election, and then abandoning them.

<sup>55</sup> <http://uspolitics.about.com/b/2005/08/24/robertson-back-pedals.htm>.

justified if one's spouse had Alzheimer's disease.<sup>56</sup> Christians everywhere, his former supporters, were shocked and stunned; they were infuriated. Robertson's fall was complete. And his movement with him. The champion of the New Christian Right destroyed his own machine so rapidly that if you weren't following the news you'd have blinked and wondered where the Christian Coalition went. It seems most Republicans decided they were, as Gulley had pointed out from a *New York Times* editorial suggesting the same, terrified that such radical conservative Christians wished to take over the Republican party to enact their agenda at the sacrifice of individual liberty.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, to my knowledge, Gulley has not penned a followup article to evolve with the times.

### 2.3 Marvin Moore: Could It Really Happen?

Moore takes a similar approach to Gulley. Outlining our traditional perspectives on the historical significance of the Papacy and the United States in prophecy, particularly our understanding of Revelation 13, Moore admirably guides his readers through the historical context that sets up the contemporary picture.<sup>58</sup> Again, as with Gulley, I see nothing in particular worth detailing here. I agree with virtually everything he wrote on these topics. Moore sets up his book by asking the question, "Could it really happen?" in reference to a union of church and state in the United States, followed by a Sunday law, thus making an image to the beast of Papal Rome. My answer is, yes, it could happen. I agree with Moore. The question at present is, who does Moore identify as most likely to make such a union of church and state? And in what manner does he see it developing historically?

Moore notes that the land-beast of Revelation 13:11-18 is *lamb-like*. As the symbol of the lamb usually represents Christ, this means the United States will become a "professedly *Christian* nation."<sup>59</sup> This means for Moore that however strong secularism, atheism, or other religions may

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<sup>56</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/AlzheimersCommunity/pat-robertson-alzheimers-makes-divorce/story?id=14526660#.TzYnupWsPmg>.

<sup>57</sup> Gulley, "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," 129.

<sup>58</sup> Marvin Moore, *Could It Really Happen?: Revelation 13 in the Light of History and Current Events* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2007). Note especially chapters 1-9, which detail the history of the Catholic church in biblical prophecy.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

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become in America, they will never obtain a dominance. America, while founded on the separation of church and state, is nevertheless and will remain predominantly a protestant Christian nation.<sup>60</sup> This protestant nation will, however, eventually pay homage to the Papacy through the enactment of Sunday legislation.<sup>61</sup> So far, again, these interpretations and predictions in and of themselves are in harmony with longstanding Adventist interpretations, and I support them.

When Moore traces the rise of religious influences and powers in America, however, things get more interesting. Moore, like Gulley, rests his case largely on the assumed true separation of church and state established in the Constitution,<sup>62</sup> all the while acknowledging that the Founders of our nation recognized the importance of religion.<sup>63</sup> From this point onward, Moore clearly reveals only one path that he foresees as bringing a union of church and state, and it is the rise of the conservative movement in America and its associated religious arm, the Religious Right, which includes the Christian Coalition and the Moral Majority.<sup>64</sup> Liberal theology and “mainline” Protestantism are given little attention; indeed, they are relegated to merely a few pages with scant references.<sup>65</sup> Conversely, the “Religious Right” as a phrase occurs 58 times in Moore’s

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 99-101.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 202-203. Moore states, “As a Seventh-day Adventist, I don’t hesitate to say that a national Sunday law—which we have predicted for 150 years and which has seemed so foolish to so many people during most of that time—is now a distinct possibility. Adventists are confident that it *will* become a reality at some point in the future,” Ibid., 203.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 112-115.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 108. Moore explains his view, “This is not to say that the Framers were devout, Bible-thumping Christians who attended church every week. They were a unique brand of secularists who appreciated the positive contribution that religion could make to the life of the nation. . . . The Framers of the American Constitution recognized the *importance* of religion, but they also were convinced that their new government couldn’t *sponsor* religion,” Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 7. His table of contents reveals the course of his discussion, with titles like “The Rise of the Conservative Movement in America,” 117, “The Rise of the Religious Right in America,” 121, and “The Success of the Religious Right in America,” 131. Moore describes the Moral Majority as the creation of Jerry Falwell in 1979, a well known conservative Christian. See Ibid., 124.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 122-123. Moore describes “liberal theology” which he acknowledges made “deep inroads into mainstream American Protestantism during the second half of the nineteenth century and continuing on into the twentieth century,” but overall it failed the test of time. Ibid.

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book. The dichotomy of emphasis is noteworthy. Moore's work clearly reveals his thoughts here; in that, although the intellectual elites, including those more involved with politics, were more likely to be liberal theologically, their influence and numbers amongst the population declined during the mid and late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup>

Moore proceeds to detail the work of Jerry Falwell, Ronald Reagan, and Pat Robertson, as key players in the rise of conservatism.<sup>67</sup> Falwell and Robertson undeniably desired to create a Christian political powerhouse to run society. Moore also traces with special interest the rise of the Christian Coalition in the early 1990's following the relative demise of the Moral Majority.<sup>68</sup> And, although the conservative presidencies of Ronald Reagan and the first George Bush represented successes for the Religious Right, Moore acknowledges that they weren't as conservative as many Religious Right leaders hoped. Moore then makes a particularly revealing statement and analysis following the presidency of Bill Clinton, a noted Democrat liberal. Moore observes that religious conservatives were able to see a silver lining, in that now they had a "face" to war against in Bill Clinton.<sup>69</sup> This paid off to some degree in Moore's thinking as following Clinton, Republican President George W. Bush was elected, whom Moore considers a genuine religious conservative who catered to the Religious Right. This commitment to conservatism was seen through his "appointment of . . . two Catholics," John Roberts and Samuel Alito, to the Supreme Court, granting decided victories in Moore's mind for the Religious Right.<sup>70</sup>

At this point, a summary can be made. Moore essentially sees the avenue toward the Sunday law to be along the lines of the conservative, Republican, religious push of the 1980's and 1990's. Moore also cited R. J. Rushdoony, a very influential character in Christian Reconstructionism and Dominionism, which emphasize creating a kingdom of heaven here on

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 123. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "mainstream Protestantism shrank about as significantly as conservative Protestantism expanded. But here is an important point to note: In spite of their declining numbers, the pastors, priests and members of the mainline Protestant denominations were the educated elite in the nation, and they dominated its politics during the first three-fourths of the twentieth century," Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 126-130.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 132-134.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 134. Moore quotes a Religious Right operative, "'What better way to galvanize your troops than to have Bill Clinton to fight against?'" Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 136.

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earth.<sup>71</sup> Without question, Adventists are opposed to these views, which are antithetical to religious liberty. With that in mind, Moore sees these ideas as the influential drive for the Religious Right and the path that the Sunday Law will likely follow.<sup>72</sup> In other words, it is a conservative version of Christianity that has its roots in the Religious Right and its political connections that will create the Sunday Law.

Following my pattern with Gulley, I will not offer an extended critique of Moore here, save a brief comment. Although all the citations and sources Moore cites are technically accurate to my knowledge, and do reveal an attitude amongst some “ultra” conservatives that is indeed opposed to genuine religious liberty, there is a flaw in his analysis of the present situation. First of all, as I noted above, individuals like Pat Robertson and the now deceased Jerry Falwell are *not* popular figures in America. The younger culturally and ethnically diverse generation which is taking over America does not view these men favorably. Additionally, I note with irony that while it is true that President George W. Bush had two influential and historically significant terms of office, he also left the presidency with the highest *disapproval* rating in U.S. history, at 71%!<sup>73</sup> The chances of seeing another Bush-like figure win the presidency are low for the foreseeable future. In other words, America isn’t interested in following the ultra-conservative path as the 21<sup>st</sup> century gets well underway. This is seen clearly in the election of Barack Obama in 2008, and again in 2012, to the presidency, one of the most liberal politicians in history with a very progressive agenda. A ping-pong ball effect appears to be the reality America embraces more than anything else.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 213. “In Rushdoony’s optimistic view, as more and more people convert to Christ, the whole world will gradually become Christian, including its civil governments. These governments will be based upon all the biblical laws of the Old and New Testaments, and that will be the signal for Jesus to return.

“This notion of a perfect end time flies in the face of the biblical teaching.” Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 214. Moore acknowledges that most on the Religious Right do not accept Rushdoony’s more radical views, but he asserts that “while Religious Right Christians by and large reject Rushdoony’s most extreme views, *they are very attracted to his notion that governments should be Christian and that America’s laws should be based on the Bible, thus making America a ‘Christian nation,’*” Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> [http://articles.cnn.com/2008-05-01/politics/bush.poll\\_1\\_disapproval-rating-new-poll-polling-director?\\_s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2008-05-01/politics/bush.poll_1_disapproval-rating-new-poll-polling-director?_s=PM:POLITICS); see also [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/2008/05/how\\_unpopular\\_is\\_george\\_bush.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/2008/05/how_unpopular_is_george_bush.html).

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However, even more important than either of the above observations is the fact that Moore completely fails to mention one of the most amazing trends in American Christianity during the late 1990's and 2000's. That is the rise of the Religious Left, a term not even appearing in Moore's work, which mentions the Religious Right 58 times. This oversight is surprising. Moore seems to operate on the assumption that "most" (say around 80%) of Christians in America are Republicans and supporters of the Religious Right, in light of the mainstream liberal (left, though Moore doesn't use the term) denominations shrinking rapidly during the 1920's-1970's. While the small size of liberal Protestants was true during the late 1980's, times have changed yet again. According to a recent poll in 2009, American Christians are now split almost 54/46, Right versus Left, and the trend is moving toward a 50/50 split.<sup>74</sup> There is little difference between the Catholic and Protestant numbers; both are split in their overall socio-political identification.<sup>75</sup> Pollsters noted that their report "puts to rest the question of whether there is a 'God gap' between Republicans and Democrats: 'Clearly, from this data, it's not only closing. It's closed.'"<sup>76</sup> The importance of this "God gap" being closed will be examined later, as it directly impacts upon the relationship of Christianity to the government. Moore also fails to mention the significance of the culture/geographical gap, or the "Red/Blue" divide in America, separating the liberal coastal cities from the conservative heartland, and the impact this could have on the implementation of Sunday laws.<sup>77</sup> This cultural divide has only become prominent since after 1992.<sup>78</sup> The population centers in America, where much power exists, are overwhelmingly liberal, not conservative.

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2343313/posts>.

<sup>75</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Church\\_and\\_politics\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_and_politics_in_the_United_States).

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2343313/posts>.

<sup>77</sup> Ellen White notes that the persecution against Sabbath keepers will be greatest in the cities. But, currently, cities are decidedly *not* conservative or Christian. Therefore, it seems odd, at present, to imagine Moore's scenario. "As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government, and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains," Ellen White, *Last Day Events*, 259-260.

<sup>78</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_states\\_and\\_blue\\_states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_states_and_blue_states);  
[http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/2000\\_election\\_county\\_by\\_county/](http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/2000_election_county_by_county/).



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Interestingly, Ellen White seems to indicate that persecution of Sabbath-keepers will be most severe in cities. If this is so, it would be ironic, as cities are not conservative or Republican. Having conservative, country, farmer Christians invade the cities to enforce a Sunday law on secular people and liberal Christians seems odd. Unfortunately, Moore seems unaware of these current events and trends. This is not to say things couldn't happen Moore's way. But the trends are currently pointing toward a different direction as I will explain later, and certain elements of this new direction seem "here to stay."

#### **2.4 John V. Stevens: Abortion and the Sunday Law**

Stevens, a longtime specialist and activist on matters of religious liberty, follows a similar line of thinking alongside that of Gulley and Moore, and outlines clearly the Adventist position on Revelation 13, that places the United States squarely into the center of prophecy. Again, there is much here with which I can agree with Stevens, and will not comment upon on these items further at present. Just to be clear, I agree with his overall eschatology.

Stevens sees the United States as a nation founded upon secular principles respecting the freedom of religion.<sup>79</sup> In this he echoes the views of Gulley and Moore. It was the separation of church and state that granted the U.S. its lamb-like characteristics.<sup>80</sup> Stevens specifies how precisely the U.S. was able to achieve this, and how such a system must look. It requires a specific separation of the two tables of the Ten Commandments into vertical and horizontal planes, wherein a secular government can only legislate the horizontal plane.<sup>81</sup> This leads him, however, to articulate yet

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<sup>79</sup> John V. Stevens, *The Abortion Controversy: Will A Free America Survive? Will You?* (Sun City, AZ: Founders Freedom Press, 2008), 404-405.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, "The United States began as a secular nation with no form of established religion." "It was that very gift that qualified this new nation to be described as lamb-like—even Christ-like."

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 405-406. "The United States was established on the premise that all men were equal, and its principles and laws were based on the concept that each one was to love and respect everyone else as one's own self. That principle is taken from the second table of the Ten Commandment law, which deals with the horizontal social relations of man to man and does not breach the separation of church and state, which forbids laws enforcing a religious law. Such laws interfere with the citizen's vertical man-to-God relationship and responsibility, these being Sunday observance laws, or other laws stemming from religious

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another reason for criticizing the Religious Right, and that is the issue of abortion.<sup>82</sup> Stevens believes fervently that conservative religious powers are trying to restrict or oppose abortion in violation of the separation of church and state principle upon which our nation is founded. I will not here pursue Stevens' precise views on why he believes abortion is acceptable, other than to state that he believes human life begins only at birth, not conception.<sup>83</sup> This view is naturally contestable in its own right. But that debate must take place elsewhere. For the present purposes, however, how abortion relates to Sunday legislation is what matters. And for Stevens, interpreting the commandment on murder to include abortion is not biblical. Therefore, legislating the issue in favor of a pro-life commitment violates the separation of church and state.

For Stevens, "the most powerful religio-political coalition in the nation is seeking control of the presidency, the Congress, and the judiciary, and for all practical purposes has achieved it, and the same is true on the state level." He continues, "The Fundamentalist New Right, including Protestants, Roman Catholics, Mormons, and others, is effectively using the abortion issue in recent years in order to become our moral and legal guardians."<sup>84</sup> The powers he refers to reside, in his mind, in the conservative political party of the Republicans, the party well known for its support of anti-abortion, or pro-life, positions. Stevens is highly critical of both President George W. Bush and James Dobson, of *Focus on the Family*, a conservative organization dedicated, in part, to opposing abortion and gay marriage.<sup>85</sup> I must immediately note that Stevens' book, written in

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dogma. Another example is the current prevalent use of religious theology as a legal basis to determine the beginning of personhood and life at conception in the issue of abortion," *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 402. "The biggest religious issue we face in society today is that of abortion. This author predicts that it will be resolved favorably to those who oppose it," *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 197. Stevens claims that "God's Word defines the time of the beginning of life for a person as birth and the end of life as death."

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 455. Stevens claims that "Perhaps the most recognized Evangelical leader today is Focus on the Family's James Dobson. He seems to have more political clout than any other Evangelical. His complaint about Harriet Miers nixed her nomination to the United States Supreme Court and caused her to withdraw her name from consideration. She appeared to have a more moderate position on the Constitution than her successor nominee, Samuel Alito. . . . One might add that since Dobson is the head of Evangelical Christianity's

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2008, went to press prior to President Obama's election, which casts a very different light on current events. Nevertheless, Stevens believes that it is through the issue of abortion as the catalyst, that "the Catholic-Evangelical alliance wants to unite religion with government" and that "it is *this* change on the part of some American Protestants that is changing them into the likeness of the beast, like the papacy."<sup>86</sup> This will eventually lead to "Sunday observance" coming "again . . . to the forefront."<sup>87</sup> Abortion and Sunday legislation are thus joined at the hip for Stevens, with their common origin in the conservative Religious Right which dominates the Republican party in America. In some respects, again, his views are clearly supportable by all Adventists, such as when he criticizes Timothy La Haye, a noted evangelical author, for claiming that "the only way to have a genuine spiritual revival is to have legislative reform."<sup>88</sup> The key issue is the application of the issues he advocates and their relationship to the separation of church and state.

To critique Stevens briefly in line with what I've done above, there are two major issues that affect the accuracy of his assessment. First, abortion must be interpreted in harmony with his view that life begins only at birth, leaving the value of the fetus significantly lessened. Many Adventists are not comfortable with that interpretation. In fact, were one to take the opposite view from Stevens, that voluntary abortion *is* murder, one could argue that it is precisely society's willingness to violate one of the horizontal commandments that will prepare them to violate a vertical commandment. Secondly, in line with the above criticisms, some of Stevens facts just don't line up with the present reality. Influential figures he cites, such as Dobson, the "pope of evangelicals" are fading off the scene without obvious replacements. There has been a strong rise of liberal Christians in recent times. Even when Obama provoked American Catholic leaders over the issue of contraceptives in February 2012, drawing pointed criticism, the average Catholic seemed unconcerned, with Obama's approval ratings dropping only three percentage points from 49% to 46%

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Vatican, he is close to being to the Evangelicals what the pope is to the Roman Catholic Church—the Protestant pope," Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 456.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 455.

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among Catholics,<sup>89</sup> right in line with the rest of the country at the time, including many other Christians. Overall, Obama maintained a near 50% approval rating during the public dialogue on this issue, consistent with the very split nature of the country overall, a split that has deepened of late as part of a broad “culture war.”

### **2.5 Summary**

Upon the above survey of three prominent mainstream Adventists, a theologian, well-published pastor, and religious liberty expert, concerning the issue of potential Sunday legislation, a clear pattern has emerged.<sup>90</sup> Every branch of interested groups, namely theologians, informed pastors, and legal experts, have advanced the idea that Sunday legislation is most likely to come from *conservative* religious Protestant groups uniting with fellow conservative Catholic groups to “moralize” society. In the everyday world, this amounts to a criticism of the Republican party in American politics during the 1980’s-2000’s. This is not to say there aren’t differing perspectives. This study cannot explore that presently, partially in light of the fact that little literature exists with alternate viewpoints from Adventists. Nevertheless, amongst the general Adventist population, there is sympathy for the work of people like James Dobson, who has labored for family values. Of course, no Adventist denies the problematic nature of some of Pat Robertson’s and Jerry Falwell’s statements and beliefs. But, as noted, they are not necessarily as influential as the above authors believe. Indeed, the facts point otherwise. Moore’s mention of Rushdoony, for example, highlights the situation. Texas Governor Rick Perry, during his brief primary run in the Republican Party for President in 2012, was supported by the New Apostolic Reformation, an offshoot of Rushdoonian Reconstructionist ideas, and he was able to garner only 7% in some polls of the *Republican* vote before he bowed out of the 2012 presidential primaries.<sup>91</sup> It seems the American people don’t like ultra-

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<sup>89</sup> [http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2012/02/obamas-ratings-with-catholics-are-little-changed/1#.Tzv\\_3ZWsPmg](http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2012/02/obamas-ratings-with-catholics-are-little-changed/1#.Tzv_3ZWsPmg).

<sup>90</sup> I could add others who share essentially the same views, such as G. Edward Reid, *Sunday’s Coming!: Revelation 13 Is Coming Into Focus* (Omega Productions, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> This became clear especially after Rick Perry’s views were compared, under the national spotlight, with those of his liberal fellow Republican nominee challengers. Even in his home state of Texas, Perry lost support. <http://www.npr.org/2011/08/24/>

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conservatives, notwithstanding any other reasons Perry was rejected by his party.

Rather, our nation is very evenly divided when it comes to conservative and liberal Christians, and the fragmentation appears to be growing.<sup>92</sup> The future is uncertain concerning who will win—conservatives or liberals? And, as I hope to demonstrate below, Adventist prophecy is compatible with *either* side winning in a general sense, as they both have strong motives compatible with Catholic teachings that could combine the church and the state, and the various understandings of the Old and New Covenants advanced by Protestant believers.

Additionally, I hope to prepare a *reason* why we as Adventists should cease our overly partisan critiques of American Protestant Christianity as it is hindering our witness to many sympathetic Christians who may favor either the conservative *or* liberal versions of Christianity in a broad sense. The fundamental problem illustrated by the above situation is that it very often appears that Adventists are generally or wholesale in opposition to *any* conservative idea or movement through their critiques of the Religious Right, including those in the arenas of economics and foreign policy. This can hardly be avoided when one feels encouraged to always vote for one particular political party because of their purported religious supporters. Our corporate witness is in danger in such instances of being swallowed up in our Sunday-phobia. But should this necessarily be the case? Must not all issues be argued for individually, irrelevant of party platforms?

As noted in the introduction, Ellen White encouraged us to work to delay Sunday legislation. Given the above, and the party identification that the Religious Right has obtained, it would make it appear that every good Adventist should always vote for the Democrat or liberal politician. The unfortunate result is that Adventist young people are implicitly encouraged to believe or support *every* liberal cause, idea, or practice. This greatly

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139781021/the-evangelicals-engaged-in-spiritual-warfare. See also, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/17/rick-perry-texas-republicans\\_n\\_1211144.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/17/rick-perry-texas-republicans_n_1211144.html). Also, <http://www.pollwatchdaily.com/tag/rick-perry/>.

<sup>92</sup> The fact is, religion is more complicated in America these days. “Gone are the days when one could simply gauge the religious right’s position on a given issue by procuring a sound bite from a spokesman with an established organization like the American Family Association, the Christian Coalition, or Focus on the Family,” writes Becky Garrison, <http://www.thereligiousleft.org/>.

damages our reputation with many non-militant conservatives, both religious and secular, who are not seeking any particular union of church and state. I will examine a sample of such individuals below. Again, my purpose is not to embrace either side, but merely to demonstrate the unwise character of the monotoned critiques of the above individuals, whose work I generally support, with the exception of Stevens' views on abortion, which I do view differently.

### **3. The Existence of the Religious Left: Fact**

The section title above is very intentional. Based on the evidence provided above, prominent Adventists seem to doubt the existence of a politically active Religious Left, and especially doubt that the Left could be key players in any Adventist eschatological picture. Rather, it is clearly conservative religious powers allying with conservative political powers that will enact Sunday legislation. I believe this simplified prediction to be a grave error, if not in content, then in presentation. Below I will outline some of the reasons why we need a modified approach to our understanding of the nature of religious political identities, and especially how we relate to them.

#### **3.1 Are “Most” Christians “Conservative?”**

As the liberal Democrat leaning Catholic Steven H. Shiffrin observed in 2009, “although the mass media tend to ignore it, there is a strong religious Left in the United States.”<sup>93</sup> His observation is merely the echo of one made by Michael Cromartie in 2000, when he shared that a visiting liberal theologian, Harvey Cox, was surprised to find that the students at Pat Robertson's Regent University were “not monolithic in their political views.”<sup>94</sup> Indeed, Cromartie notes that evangelicalism “includes not only a diversity of denominations but also Christians from the political right,

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<sup>93</sup> Steven H. Shiffrin, *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1. See also, David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 216.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Cromartie, “The Evangelical Kaleidoscope: A Survey of Recent Evangelical Political Engagement,” in Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Steward, eds., *Politics and Public Policy: A Christian Response* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 123.

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left, and center.”<sup>95</sup> Even more importantly, from his vista in 2000, he already had noted that “although they have largely maintained an alliance with political conservatism, they do have a moderate, liberal, and left-wing contingent that has had an important influence.”<sup>96</sup> When this fact is combined with the knowledge that even decades ago “many evangelical college students were turned off by the confrontational tactics of Jerry Falwell’s followers”<sup>97</sup> and were not fans of Robertson either during the heyday of the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition, the evangelical world was and remains ripe for unpredictable changes.<sup>98</sup>

The question is, what kind of changes? And have they already begun to happen? The answer, as already implied above, is a resounding “yes.” “The Religious Right and the Religious Left are almost exactly the same size. The former has had a much greater impact for the past 25 years largely because of superior organization and drive.”<sup>99</sup> Yet that dominance might change, as the latest data from 2013 indicates.<sup>100</sup> It seems that “if current trends persist, religious progressives will soon outnumber religious conservatives, a group that is shrinking with each successive generation.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “Linking the Bible to Public Policy,” in Demy and Steward, eds., *Politics and Public Policy: A Christian Response*, 58. Henry pointedly observed that “the religious right did not, to be sure, speak for all evangelicals any more than Pat Robertson’s presidential candidacy was a ‘panevangelical’ effort,” Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> This consequence is in part due to the epic failure of Pat Robertson’s presidential campaign, which resulted in Robertson being one of the most negatively viewed politicians ever. As Doug Bandow shares, “popular acceptance of the role of religion, at least of [conservative] evangelical Christianity, in the political process may have peaked [in 1987]. . . . A year later Pat Robertson’s presidential candidacy crashed and burned. After his dramatic second-place showing in Iowa polls showed that half of all Republicans, let alone Democrats, would not vote for him under any circumstances, a negative rating virtually unprecedented for any politician [followed],” Doug Bandow, *Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 226-227.

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Politics/2004/10/The-Twelve-Tribes-Of-American-Politics.aspx>. See also, Shiffrin, *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations*, 1.

<sup>100</sup> <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2013/07/19/2324411/the-rise-of-the-religious-left-religious-progressives-will-soon-outnumber-conservatives/>; and [http://www.salon.com/2013/07/19/the\\_rise\\_of\\_the\\_religious\\_left/](http://www.salon.com/2013/07/19/the_rise_of_the_religious_left/).

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/07/the-rise-of-the-christian-left-in-america/278086/>.

As such, the “forgotten” Evangelical Left<sup>102</sup> may yet rise again, in unforeseeable forms. And the socio-political groundwork for such a major movement has already been laid for some years in what is called liberation theology, which depends on a union of church and state.

### 3.2 The Origin and Development of the Religious Left

A history of the origin of the contemporary Religious Left in America necessarily begins with a very brief primer on liberation theology, a movement popular in South American Catholicism in the 1960's and 70's, though its social and political visions come from even earlier times.<sup>103</sup> In its essence, “liberation theology grew out of the faith, struggles, sufferings and hopes of the poor.” As such, “it is . . . a theology that starts out in a particular political context and set of social conditions.”<sup>104</sup> This political dimension is crucial to recognize. Indeed, as Ian Linden comments, “because liberation theology originated—and remains—at the intersection of contested political and religious goals,” no matter how one wishes to define the “theological” dimension of it, at heart it remains interested in “socio-economic systems”<sup>105</sup> that have a decidedly Marxist, redistributive flavor, that takes, forcibly if necessary, from the rich and gives to the poor to advance equality.<sup>106</sup> “Liberation theology” has “its focus on the poor, the construction of God’s reign and liberation.”<sup>107</sup> It seeks the “radical political

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<sup>102</sup> David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). While appreciative of Swartz’s historical research, I believe the Evangelical Left is not something that has been abandoned to the dustbin of history, as the numerous books below demonstrate.

<sup>103</sup> For works describing this moment, both pro and con, see Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1987); Daniel Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (Routledge, 2013); Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

<sup>104</sup> Ian Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?* (London, UK: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1997), 5.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Liberation theology is when a “knowledge of God is sought through a critical reflection on praxis, the action and practice of the poor in seeking their liberation from every kind of oppression,” Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.gotquestions.org/liberation-theology.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology*, 4.



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transformation of the present order” as “a central component of the living out of Christian faith.”<sup>108</sup> It is noteworthy, for Adventist audiences, that Ellen White took a decidedly neutral position on socio-economic activism.<sup>109</sup>

There is a direct connection between the above and the popular concept of “cheap grace,” a problem infecting the Religious Right, whose vision became obsessed with political goals at the cost of personal piety, and which must be explained before proceeding further. To define it, as Eldin Villafañe puts it, “‘cheap grace’ is a phrase, and a concept, that has great theological meaning. In its practical sense, which I want to underline, it speaks to us of an ‘easy’ Christianity.” He continues, “An easy Christianity is a Christianity that doesn’t cost much, that pays no price. It thinks and says, in fact, ‘Please don’t ask too much of me’; ‘Don’t place any demands on me.’ ‘Cheap grace’ portrays those persons who want to live in a secured comfort zone, those who think and say, ‘Do not disturb!’ Ultimately, ‘cheap grace’ characterizes that mode of thinking or mind-set that rejects obedience, commitment, and discipleship, and the cross!”<sup>110</sup> Although the criticism of cheap grace can be fully given and accepted as a *personal* critique and call to discipleship, and thus an internal criticism of conservatives to themselves, it can also become a corporate and external one, as it is used by liberal theologians against conservatives. For example, the prominent liberal leaning Christian, Ronald Sider, connects the Religious Right’s apparent “cheap grace” message to a lack of emphasis by Christians on social justice.<sup>111</sup> He aims his critique of “cheap grace” at traditional evangelical conservatives, the Religious Right. He credits liberal “Mainline Protestants [and] Roman Catholics” for an understanding of “distributive justice,” which includes universal access to “health-care”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Humberto Belli, “Nicaragua: Field Test for Liberation Theology,” *Pastoral Renewal*, September (1984), 18.

<sup>109</sup> Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases Vol. 14* (1990), 160-161; and White, *Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2* (1977), 625-627.

<sup>110</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 2.

<sup>111</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why are Christians Living Just like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 77-78, 81.

<sup>112</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Why Are Christians Missing the Chance to Really Change the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 104-105, 136. An irony is that Sider is against abortion, while many secular advocates of universal

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and a rejection of cheap grace. For Sider, the “issues of poverty, inequality, and economic justice . . . [are] central to biblical morality.”<sup>113</sup>

The liberation movement, a call to abandon “cheap grace,” took on an American face in the 1970’s through the work of Jim Wallis (particularly when he re-branded an earlier magazine of his into *Sojourners* in 1976), the aforementioned Ron Sider, and Tony Campolo. Ronald Nash’s work may represent one of the first serious critiques describing the rise of these individuals and their thinking in his 1996 book, *Why the Left Is Not Right: The Religious Left: Who They Are and What They Believe*.<sup>114</sup> Importantly, the connection is explicit between the South American liberation thought and the American version of the evangelical Left, often softened to simply the Social Gospel. In the words of Wallis himself, who was not even here advocating Marxism, though his pragmatic ideas would lean more and more that way:

As more Christians become influenced by liberation theology, finding themselves increasingly rejecting the values and institutions of capitalism, they will also be drawn to the Marxist analysis and praxis that is so central to the movement. That more Christians will come to view the world through Marxist eyes is therefore predictable. It will even be predictable among the so-called ‘young evangelicals’ who, for the most part, have a zeal for social change that is not yet matched by a developed socio-economic analysis that will cause them to see the impossibility of making capitalism work for justice and peace.<sup>115</sup>

Wallis’ words were prophetic. Note his reference to the “young evangelicals,” also sometimes called the “new evangelicals.”<sup>116</sup> Such

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health care are not, and Sider connects the right to health care upon the right to life.

<sup>113</sup> Laurence R. Iannaccone, “*The Economics of American Fundamentalists*,” in *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economics, and Militance*, ed. Martin E. Marty, and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 350.

<sup>114</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Why the Left Is Not Right: The Religious Left: Who They Are and What They Believe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

<sup>115</sup> Jim Wallis, “Liberating and Conformity,” *Sojourners*, September 1976, 3-4.

<sup>116</sup> Marcia Pally, *The New Evangelicals: Expanding the Vision of the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). See also, David P. Gushee, *A New Evangelical Manifesto: A Kingdom Vision for the Common Good* (Chalice Press, 2012). C.F., Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

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individuals would later contribute to the rise of the hottest and hippest Christian movement, the Emergent and/or Emerging Church, which is essentially a postmodernized Christianity, an amorphous liberal Christianity that “speaks hip” fluently and constitutes a group of millions throughout the western and south American world.<sup>117</sup> Although their exact numbers are difficult to ascertain in part because they eschew the traditional churches and buildings most still identify with Christianity, what is clear is that they have split American evangelicalism in two.<sup>118</sup> They are an “ideology” that runs house-to-house, college campus-to-campus. While often relegated by some as merely a youth movement, many aspects of the Emerging ideology have made their way mainstream.<sup>119</sup> The Occupy Wall

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<sup>117</sup> <http://www.alanhartung.com/2007/02/the-size-and-scope-of-the-emerging-church/>.

<sup>118</sup> “The evangelical church is deeply divided. . . . Two groups, the traditional [Right] and emerging [Left] camps, are at the heart of the impending split,” Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 9.

<sup>119</sup> The “Emerging/Emergent Church” is a difficult label to define precisely. For brevity’s sake, I’ll borrow a less than brief sentence from Kevin Deyoung: “After reading nearly five thousand pages of emerging-church literature, I have no doubt that the emerging church, while loosely defined and far from uniform, can be described and critiqued as a diverse, but recognizable, movement. You might be an emergent Christian: if you listen to U2, Moby, and Johnny Cash’s *Hurt* (sometimes in church), use sermon illustrations from *The Sopranos*, drink lattes in the afternoon and Guinness in the evenings, and always use a Mac; if your reading list consists primarily of Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen, N. T. Wright, Stan Grenz, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Jim Wallis, Frederick Beuchner,; David Bosch, John Howard Yoder, Wendell Berry, Nancy Murphy, John Franke, Walter Winks and Lesslie Newbigin (not to mention [Brian] McLaren, [Doug] Pagitt, [Rob] Bell, etc.) and your sparring partners include D. A. Carson, John Calvin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Wayne Grudem; if your idea of quintessential Christian discipleship is Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, or Desmond Tutu; if you don’t like George W. Bush or institutions or big business or capitalism or *Left Behind* Christianity; if your political concerns are poverty, AIDS, imperialism, war-mongering, CEO salaries, consumerism, global warming, racism, and oppression and not so much abortion and gay marriage; if you are into bohemian, goth, rave, or indie; if you talk about the myth of redemptive violence and the myth of certainty; if you lie awake at night having nightmares about all the ways modernism has ruined your life; if you love the Bible as a beautiful, inspiring collection of works that lead us into the mystery of God but is not inerrant; if you search for truth but aren’t sure it can be found; if you’ve ever been to a church with prayer labyrinths, candles, Play-Doh, chalk-drawings, couches, or beanbags (your youth group doesn’t count); if you loathe words like *linear*, *propositional*, *rational*, *machine*, and *hierarchy* and use words like *ancient-future*, *jazz*, *mosaic*, *matrix*, *missional*, *vintage*, and *dance*; if you grew up in a

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Street movement in America represents this “liberation” of the poor from the rich in a secular context, and has been specifically embraced by the Religious Left’s Wallis.<sup>120</sup> It’s no accident that Wallis is a special advisor on religious matters to President Obama. It is similarly no surprise that Obama’s longtime pastor, Jeremiah Wright, has connections with liberation theology.<sup>121</sup>

My point in the above is very simple: all of these movements and individuals are religious, political, and lean to the far left politically. Furthermore, Wallis is also a close ally with Brian McLaren, a prominent leader of the Emerging church movement. And those with sympathies to these movements represent a significant number of the American populace. And they don’t like the Religious Right or Republicans. Emergent or Emerging Christians are overwhelmingly Democrats.<sup>122</sup> And Emerging Christians often espouse a “kingdom on earth” mentality, oft considered a tell-tale sign of the Religious Right. For example, Scot McKnight, an Emerging Church leader, once said “I tell my friends that I have voted Democrat for years for all the wrong reasons. I don’t think the Democratic Party is worth a hoot, but its historic commitment to the poor and to centralizing government for social justice is what I think government

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conservative Christian home that in retrospect seems legalistic, naive, and rigid; if you support women in all levels of ministry, prioritize urban over suburban, and like your theology narrative instead of systematic; if you disbelieve in any sacred-secular divide; if you want to be the church and not just go to church; if you long for a community that is relational, tribal, and primal like a river or a garden; if you believe doctrine gets in the way of an interactive relationship with Jesus; if you believe who goes to hell is no one’s business and no one may be there anyway; if you believe salvation has a little to do with atoning for guilt and a lot to do with bringing the whole creation back into shalom with its Maker; if you believe following Jesus is not believing the right things but living the right way; if it really bugs you when people talk about going to heaven instead of heaven coming to us; if you disdain monological, didactic preaching; if you use the word ‘story’ in all your propositions about postmodernism—if all or most of this tortuously long sentence describes you, then you might be an emergent Christian,” Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We’re Not Emergent: (By Two Guys Who Should Be)* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 21-22.

<sup>120</sup> <http://vitalwholeness.wordpress.com/2011/11/13/occupy-wall-street-according-to-jim-wallis/>.

<sup>121</sup> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88512189>.

<sup>122</sup> [http://articles.cnn.com/2008-07-01/politics/obama.evangelicals\\_1\\_evangelical-voters-young-evangelicals-evangelical-community?\\_s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2008-07-01/politics/obama.evangelicals_1_evangelical-voters-young-evangelicals-evangelical-community?_s=PM:POLITICS). See also, <http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/why-im-voting-for-barack-obama-a.html>.

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should do.”<sup>123</sup> When combined with what Brian McLaren believes, namely that “Jesus came ‘to proclaim the Kingdom of God, which is God’s will being done on Earth,’”<sup>124</sup> whether one likes this or not, this kind of thinking leads to the explicit ideological union of Church and State that McKnight alluded to, and which the liberal Social Gospel seeks to temporally fulfill here on earth. The saying of Jesus, “‘Seek first the kingdom of God’” includes “social salvation and the salvation of the earth.”<sup>125</sup> It is not an accident that President Obama, a Democrat, echoed their sentiments that he wanted to create “a kingdom right here on earth”<sup>126</sup> in his desire to reach out to what he perceived to be his liberal Christian base.

Presently, very little has been said about the Emerging church by Seventh-day Adventists in print.<sup>127</sup> There is virtually no sounding board with which one may interact. Some Adventist scholars are even ignorant of the existence of the swelling number of people in the Religious Left; not one mention of them appears by any of the Adventists explored above—Gulley, Moore, and Stevens—as they look at possible eschatological scenarios. This is a remarkable fact, given how large the movement is!<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> <http://www.estnews.com/bm/issues-facing-christians-today-common-sense-for-today/falling-standards-and-seeker-sensitive-churches/top-agenda-of-the-emergent-church-social-gospel.shtml>.

<sup>124</sup> <http://christianresearchnetwork.com/?p=2106>.

<sup>125</sup> This is a popular line of thought for liberal-leaning theologians, notes Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, ARISE!: God’s Future for Humanity and the Earth* (Minneapolis, MN: First Fortress Press, 2010), 80.

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.libertymagazine.org/index.php?id=1810>; [http://articles.cnn.com/2007-10-08/politics/obama.faith\\_1\\_obama-s-south-carolina-rick-warren-faith?\\_s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2007-10-08/politics/obama.faith_1_obama-s-south-carolina-rick-warren-faith?_s=PM:POLITICS); <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,300257,00.html>.

<sup>127</sup> This is slowly changing. The work of Fernando Canale, here in *JATS*, is addressing the Emergent Church in an ongoing article series looking at its philosophical and theological roots. See also, John Markovic, “The Emerging Church: A Call to Action and Authenticity,” *Ministry*, (March, 2010).

<sup>128</sup> It is very difficult to measure the exact size of the “Emerging Church” movement, as it is not a denomination. It represents the widespread “liberal/progressive” impulse amongst Christians from *every* denomination, that has now split evangelicalism amongst the two major secular political parties. Estimates run in the millions. A “Google books” search nets 27,000+ books with the phrase “Emerging Church” appearing. However, there is another dimension to explore here as well. Societal socio-demographic changes are in store for the United States that will completely shake up the traditional powers and groups, and favor the Religious Left, which is open to more diversity and is very ecumenical. Furthermore, it is none other than Pat Buchanan who discusses this in a recent book. Patrick

This exhibits a strange and unexpected unawareness of what is happening religiously in America. And, although it may seem inconceivable that such liberal Christians would want to create a Sunday law, I will provide below a sample of reasons why this is not so far-fetched as one might think, because of the close relationship that liberal Catholics have with the Religious Left, and the relationship that the Religious Left's interests have in the government to advance their causes. Although Catholicism's "best kept secret"<sup>129</sup> may have been its Leftist progressive social agenda, this day may be coming to an end as it emerges into the American public consciousness.

### **3.3 The Ground Motive of the Secular and Religious Left**

Although the arguments rage on over the Republican and Democratic visions of society and the amount of power or control the federal government should have over its citizens, it does appear to be a basic reality that, at least in theory, the Republicans favor big business "trickle down" economics and the Democrats more of helping the poor directly as the best way to improve society and the economy. Although it is a highly divisive topic, the basic fact is that the liberal/socialist/progressivist/Marxist philosophies admittedly require larger, more comprehensive governmental oversight, whereas a conservative capitalism emphasizes less government and more localized control.

With the above in mind, it is important to emphasize that societal change oriented toward emphasizing equality and fairness is the ground motive of the Religious Left, and is something it shares with the secular Left. They want things to be fair, even if it means "forcefully" (in South America, sometimes violence was used, in the U.S., usually just higher taxation of the rich). Both are willing to use the government to achieve

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J. Buchanan, *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2011). See especially his chapter, "The End of White America," 123-161, for an extended discussion of the changes in store for American culture. However the cards may fall, indeed one needn't agree with Buchanan's assessment of the good or bad sides of the changes, there are certain inevitabilities that will come, and they will bring changes with them that will break up the current political groups.

<sup>129</sup> In reference to the work by Edward P. DeBerri, James E. Hug, Peter J. Henriot, and Michael J. Schultheis, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992). All of the documents referenced in this work would support "Leftist" policies related to world poverty, etc.

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their socio-economic-religious aims. What truly separates the Left from the Religious Right, which seeks to reform society *morally* (e.g., taking a stance against abortion and same-sex marriage), is simply a shift in focus. The Left is willing to work through the government just as much as the extreme Right leaders were. In the Left, however, the idea that everyone should have an equal or “fair” amount of wealth and prosperity is the primary concern, and even becomes the moral justification for their actions. The issue is, does reforming society through the government, even without purportedly traditional moral concerns, truly leave the state out of the church or individual’s life in an excessive way? The answer appears to be no.

Any law, such as the universal health-care plan that the Obama administration passed, that requires an “individual mandate,” represents this reality, and is almost unanimously supported by Leftist religious leaders, though not by most on the Right.<sup>130</sup> Even more *apropos* would be the debate concerning the Obama administration on the issue of government mandated contraception availability in church controlled hospitals. Although most Catholic *leaders* denounced Obama’s plan to provide contraception through religious organizations, including Catholic hospitals which oppose the practice, the fact is 95% of Catholics do in fact practice contraception in spite of their Catholic faith.<sup>131</sup> The point is, were Adventists to focus solely on the vigorous voice of the conservative Catholic leadership’s opposition, they would be preaching from a denial of reality of what most religious people actually believe. Religious people are as likely to be “progressive” as “conservative” on different issues. In this instance, the progressive liberals are rather stoking the fire by provoking conservatives over an irrelevant issue through a desire for greater “forced” secularism, as free or very low cost contraceptives were already available

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<sup>130</sup> <http://brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/jim-wallis-gets-it-right-on-theo.html>. Also noteworthy is that the critical votes to pass the Health-care plan were a supposed “conservative” Catholic, Chief Justice John Roberts, and Obama’s appointee, the liberal progressive Catholic Justice, Sonia Sotomayer.

<sup>131</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-overreach--obamacare-vs-the-constitution/2012/02/16/gIQAmupcIR\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-overreach--obamacare-vs-the-constitution/2012/02/16/gIQAmupcIR_story.html). See also, <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pelosi-i-am-going-to-stick-with-fellow-catholics-in-supporting-obama-birth>.

at many health clinics for people from lower economic brackets.<sup>132</sup> Liberals were here inserting themselves into socio-religious issues unnecessarily, even when it interfered with the operation of churches.<sup>133</sup> Interestingly, the disagreement between conservative Catholics and the secular Left over contraception ignores the fact that the Catholics strongly favored the universal health-care plan in the first place, setting up the future disagreement. These issues are complicated, and I cannot give them a full treatment here. Instead, I will turn toward some non-Adventist reactions to the Religious Left and the Left's relationship with Catholicism's historic desire for complete socio-political-economic control, which Adventists believe will be renewed during the end times. In any case, one can't deny the Religious Left's desire to gain a public and political influence that rivals that of the Religious Right,<sup>134</sup> and it's hard to argue they aren't beginning to achieve some success.

### **3.4 The Religious Left's Catholic Roots and Desire for Political Control**

It is no accident that a number of individuals in the Emerging church and Religious Left see the tight relationship between the Religious Left and

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<sup>132</sup> <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/2762671/posts>.

<sup>133</sup> [http://www.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/op\\_ed/view/20220217health\\_mandate\\_vs\\_religion/](http://www.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/op_ed/view/20220217health_mandate_vs_religion/). See also, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-overreach--obamacare-vs-the-constitution/2012/02/16/gIQAmupcIR\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-overreach--obamacare-vs-the-constitution/2012/02/16/gIQAmupcIR_story.html). George Weigel explains it well as he shares, "But what about the intellectuals? What about the insistence of self-identified "liberal Catholic" commentators, op-ed columnists, and journals that the HHS mandate had nothing to do with religious freedom, or, later, that the "accommodation" met any legitimate religious-freedom concerns? What is going on when these Catholics provide intellectual and political cover for the Sebeliuses, DeLauros, Murrays, and Pelosis in their insistence that this is all about "preventive services" necessary for "women's health"? Many of these liberal Catholics had, of course, provided similar cover for Obama during the 2008 campaign, so in that sense it was less than startling that their partisanship trumped their religious loyalty once again. Still, there was something different, something tragic, about this particular *trahison des clercs*. In throwing a robust concept of religious freedom over the side, liberal Catholics were betraying their own noblest heritage," <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/291455/catholic-betrayal-religious-freedom-george-weigel>.

<sup>134</sup> For example, see Frederick Clarkson, ed., *Dispatches from the Religious Left: The Future of Faith and Politics in America* (Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 2009).



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liberal Catholicism.<sup>135</sup> Noteworthy is that those in the new Evangelical “Center” (which is really more Left than Right, given which issues they emphasize, like Global Warming) are far more open to Catholic teachings.<sup>136</sup> Roger Oakland, in *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . A New Reformation or an End-Time Deception*,<sup>137</sup> treats in book-length detail the friendliness and ecumenical attitude that Religious Left leaders have toward their “mother church,” the Catholic Church, especially concerning mystical spirituality. As the evangelical Left’s ethicist David Gushee remarks, “We believe that while the Catholic tradition’s emphasis on learning from tradition and other sources of insight can be embraced, the equating of the authority of Scripture and of tradition must be rejected on the basis of Jesus’ example.”<sup>138</sup> Gushee favors more nuanced positions, like the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, where Scripture is combined with tradition,

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<sup>135</sup> E.g., see Paul E. Begala, “The Religious Left, Too Often Left Out,” 57-62, in E.J. Dione Jr., Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Kayla M. Drogosz, eds., *One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion & American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 58. Growing up in the “Bible Belt,” Begala shares that while “Christian views led many of the people I grew up with to express their politics through conservatism, Christianity—especially Catholicism—drew me to liberalism,” 58. He also shared, for example that, “I am disappointed when prominent Catholic politicians and bishops try to reduce the call to faithful citizenship to the issue of abortion alone,” *Ibid.*, 61. Recalling that 54% of Catholic voters supported Obama in 2008, a very strong pro-choice President, one can see this reality is undoubtedly repeated in the minds of many Catholics. See also, Shiffrin, *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations*, ix, 1.

<sup>136</sup> For example, note David P. Gushee and Glen Harold Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 423-424, “Catholic social teachings have been willing to name these problems [in capitalism] quite forthrightly and have consistently called for appropriate government regulation of free-market economies so as to reduce distributive injustice. The encyclicals also have pleaded with individuals and institutions to remember the universal destination of goods, the biblical mandate for economic generosity and the simple humanity of those who suffer economic deprivation. . . . [we need] more aggressive government involvement in constructive economic empowerment efforts.” See also, David P. Gushee, *Christians and Politics Beyond the Culture Wars: An Agenda for Engagement* (Baker Books, 2000). Gushee also observes that many more liberal evangelicals “often draw on the profound resources of the magisterial Roman Catholic social-teaching tradition,” David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 219.

<sup>137</sup> Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . A New Reformation or an End-time Deception* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2007).

<sup>138</sup> Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 88.

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reason, and experience. “All have a role to play in the formation of Christian faith and ethics, though Scripture occupies the central place,”<sup>139</sup> so he claims. His discussion needs to be taken seriously by Adventist thought leaders to detect the slide into Catholicism that Religious Left leaders are encouraging. Either Oakland and Gushee are completely misinformed, or there is a reason that Emergent, liberal, Leftist ideas are so friendly to Catholic understandings of spirituality and social concern, even when the political scene is brought into the picture.<sup>140</sup>

In the secular arena, journalist and historian Jonah Goldberg has written a provocative book entitled *Liberal Fascism*,<sup>141</sup> detailing the intellectual history of many of the ideas that today’s liberals, Democrats, or progressives, advocate. In brief, many of today’s liberal or progressive ideas, Religious or otherwise, have intellectual roots or parallels in

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 87. Gushee is quite honest about his thinking. He states that “the Catholic moral tradition . . . has always been quite interested in gaining insight from other sources, such as the moral philosophy of ancient Greece or, in modern times, the best and most relevant scientific research available on any given question. This interest is rooted in a deeply held theological belief that God speaks to humanity not solely through the Bible (or church tradition) but also through the witness of the created order as discovered by the human mind,” Ibid. Gushee goes on to acknowledge that “the Protestant Reformers broke with Roman Catholicism precisely on the issue of sources of authority. The rallying cry of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) meant the rejection of the authority of the Catholic tradition in favor of a return to the Scriptures, and only the Scriptures, for theological and moral direction,” Ibid. Gushee rejects this radical Protestant ideal as unrealistic and untenable, preferring the Catholic moral tradition that seeks the best and most relevant scientific research available.

<sup>140</sup> Interestingly, during the 2012 Presidential campaign, the Republican conservative Catholic presidential candidate Rick Santorum lost to his fellow moderate Mormon Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, in Republican primary voting amongst Catholic voters, again demonstrating that Catholic voters favor more liberal policies. <http://www.religionnews.com/politics/election/mitt-romney-trouncing-rick-santorum-among-catholics>. See also, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/07/loudly-catholic-santorum-loses-ohio-catholics/>. It is very telling that *Republican Catholic* (let alone the Democratic Catholics, which are a sizeable number) voters were not offering strong support to a genuine conservative Catholic, which runs directly against the ideas that Gullely, Moore, and Stevens have suggested.

<sup>141</sup> Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2008).

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totalitarian fascism. The evidence is overwhelming.<sup>142</sup> Those on the Left are often as totalitarian in their thinking as those on the right.<sup>143</sup> It seems, then, that many prominent Adventist thinkers have clearly neglected studies of recent history as they paint possible eschatological pictures, which are always filtered through classical or contemporary conservatism and the Religious Right of the 1980's-90's. However, such critiques are not absent from the rest of the Christian world.

In his *tour de force* book, *Freedom and Capitalism: Essays on Christian Politics and Economics*,<sup>144</sup> alongside his earlier work, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church*,<sup>145</sup> the libertarian conservative John W. Robbins sharply rebukes the liberal-progressive tendencies of Catholic social

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. From the front inside cover, “the original fascists were really on the left, and . . . liberals from Woodrow Wilson to FDR to Hillary Clinton have advocated policies and principles remarkably similar to those of Hitler’s National Socialism and Mussolini’s Fascism.”

“Contrary to what most people think, the Nazis were ardent socialists (hence the term ‘National Socialism’). They believed in free health care and guaranteed jobs. They confiscated inherited wealth and spent vast sums on public education. They purged the church from public policy, promoted a new form of pagan spirituality, and inserted the authority of the state into every nook and cranny of daily life. The Nazis declared war on smoking, supported abortion, euthanasia, and gun control. They loathed the free market, provided generous pensions for the elderly, and maintained a strict racial quota system in their universities—where campus speech codes were all the rage. The Nazis led the world in organic farming and alternative medicine. Hitler was a strict vegetarian, and Himmler was an animals rights activist,” Ibid. This doesn’t mean today’s liberals or progressives are identical by any means. But the similarities and the intellectual roots of many of the ideas are undeniable. Even more importantly, Goldberg is not only very critical of Barack Obama, but also highly critical of “compassionate conservatives,” including George W. Bush. See also, [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_PAUL?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2012-02-18-22-33-48](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_PAUL?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2012-02-18-22-33-48), where U.S. Congressman Ron Paul, a Libertarian with Republican ties, attacks both the political Right and Left with equal vigor.

<sup>143</sup> “Absolutism and fanaticism . . . apply not only to the Religious Right but to the Religious Left as well,” James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America: Making Sense of the Battles over the Family, Art, Education, Law, and Politics* (BasicBooks, 1991), 155.

<sup>144</sup> John W. Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism: Essays on Christian Politics and Economics* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2006).

<sup>145</sup> John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1999; 2006).

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teachings as an integral part of the Catholic church's plan to regain complete authority over society. Robbins states plainly that "the Roman Church-State devised much of the theory on which secular twentieth-century totalitarian regimes have been based, as well as acting as a model for them."<sup>146</sup> Robbins argues that "for centuries the Roman Church-State had resisted the advance of the Reformation and its economic system, capitalism." As capitalism began to win the day, "a new ally had to be found" to combat capitalism.<sup>147</sup> That new ally was socialism and all its variants.

Robbins demonstrates what to him seems clear. "In the United States, the influence of Roman Catholic economic thought has resulted in the creation of a redistributive state, in which the government intervenes in the economy and society in order to protect the 'common good' and establish 'social justice.'"<sup>148</sup> Robbins believes that "Mainline Protestant churches, which like the Roman Catholic Church . . . were promoting what came to be called the Social Gospel, whose political expressions were the Progressive movement and later the New Deal," represent the heart of the Catholic Church-State's vision.<sup>149</sup> Presently, in 2013, this can be seen in the progressive vision of a variety of programs and ideas, including universal health-care, where "every person has a right to adequate health care."<sup>150</sup> As Robbins explains, "what the papacy has realized is that by constantly enlarging the Rights of Man, to use the Vatican's own phrase, it can offer ever new moral arguments for enlarging the size, scope, and power of government."<sup>151</sup> With health care, the principle at stake is the universal destination of goods. "The rights advocated by the Roman Church-State require the enslavement of some people for the benefit of

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<sup>146</sup> Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism*, 217-218.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 459. See also, <http://www.ourdailythread.org/content/vatican-issue-radical-document-economy-thomas-j-reese-sj>, where Tom Reese shares that the Vatican's, and Pope Benedict XVI's, position on economics is "to the left of every politician in the United States. It will be closer to views of the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement than anyone in the U.S. Congress. It will call for the redistribution of wealth and the regulation of the world economy by international agencies. Not only will it be to the left of Barack Obama, it will be to the left of Nancy Pelosi."

<sup>148</sup> Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism*, 480.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 486.

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others.” It appears “the Church-State seems to realize that this is the case, and advocates these rights for that reason.”<sup>152</sup> Just imagine the day a “day of rest” might become a “right” before a “requirement” like our forced participation in universal health-care. A time when I am no longer *requested* to aid my brother willingly, but my well-being is bound up with his, in every way, *forcibly*. The parallels are closer than one might wish; the precedent has been set, and supported by Catholic Supreme Court Justices from both ideological perspectives.

The most important point to draw from Robbins is the fact that the re-empowerment of the Roman Church-State is most likely to come from their socio-economic teachings, which authorize greater governmental oversight over all of society for the “greater good.” Robbins notes that “the Vatican itself traces the origin of liberation theology to the Roman Church-State, specifically to Vatican II (1962-1965) and the 1968 conference of Roman Bishops in Medellín, Colombia.”<sup>153</sup> Indeed, “the only disagreements the Vatican has had with some aspects of liberation theology are its secular elements, the insufficient obsequiousness of some liberation theologians to the pope, and their sometime advocacy of a systematic use of violence to achieve goals that the Roman Church-State has always approved: social justice, the common good, and the universal destination of goods.”<sup>154</sup> Robbins again plainly states that the Roman “Church-State has never criticized the economic views of the liberation theologians.”<sup>155</sup>

At this point, I must ask: If it were true that the Roman Church-State were using Leftist liberal social concerns to prepare the groundwork for a total takeover of American society, then where are the critiques of the relationship of Leftist economic thought and church-state relations by Adventists focusing on eschatology? Just like health care, could a day of rest on Sunday also become, first a right, before a requirement?<sup>156</sup> Why

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 497-498.

<sup>153</sup> John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania*, 78.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> This is not nearly so radical an idea as traditional Adventists who incessantly attach such ideas to the Religious Right might think. See [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/jurisprudence/2008/04/the\\_new\\_blue\\_laws.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2008/04/the_new_blue_laws.html), where both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, and their supporters, have referenced the need for a day of “rest.” <https://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/Tritium/gG5ngR> (unfortunately no longer available).

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aren't we engaging conservative but moderate theologians like Ronald Nash, who has written extensive criticisms of liberation theology and its attendant economic theory in relation to church-state issues?<sup>157</sup> Why aren't we paying closer attention to Max Weber's thesis in 1905 that capitalism, however imperfect in a sinful world, leads to greater freedom and better economic outcomes than alternative systems?<sup>158</sup> Considering that Robbins agrees wholeheartedly with our Adventist representatives Moore, Stevens, and Gulley, that Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell are false Christians, and shares with Adventists an opposition to Christian Reconstructionism,<sup>159</sup> I find it unfortunate that we aren't entering genuine dialogue with his and similar thinkers works, which are very concerned about the growing power of both the secular and Religious Left alongside their strong disagreements with aspects of the Religious Right. Robbins expresses a healthy independence from any history of eschatological predictions and guesswork, letting his epistemology speak for itself as it analyzes the present, and he sees the church and state uniting on both the Left and the Right with equal force.

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<sup>157</sup> For example, see Ronald H. Nash, *Freedom, Justice and the State* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980); *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1983); *Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986); Ronald Nash and Humberto Belli, *Beyond Liberation Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).

<sup>158</sup> For an analysis of Weber's thesis, see Stanislaw Andreski, "Method and Substantive Theory in Max Weber," in Eisenstadt, *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

<sup>159</sup> Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism*, 164, n 1. "For 50 years Christians in America have been bamboozled by Romanists like Patrick Buchanan, William Bennett, and William F. Buckley, Jr., into supporting their Antichristian programs, candidates, and theologies. The rise of the Religious Right—Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, D. James Kennedy's Center for Reclaiming America, and Rousas Rushdoony's-Gary North's-Greg Bahnsen's Reconstructionist movement—has exacerbated, not corrected, the situation. Now Romanists are invited to address D. James Kennedy's political conferences, and putative Protestants endorse books by devout Romanists, and become Romanists and Orthodoxists themselves. The Reconstructionist movement and its allies and offshoots, by substituting political and cultural action for the proclamation of the Gospel, by substituting eschatology and ecclesiology for soteriology, and by mangling the Gospel itself, have become tools of Romanist political action," *Ibid*.

### 3.5 Summary

In this study, I have not argued, as Gulley, Moore, and Stevens did, for a bold new and precise prediction for how the “end game” will play out to fulfill traditional Seventh-day Adventist predictions for Sunday legislation. I have simply wished to highlight the work of non-Adventist Christians who also have a passionate concern for religious liberty, and share our concern over the historical Roman Church-State’s desire for totalitarian authority. When a non-Adventist like Robbins can state the following, we should at least listen and dialogue:

The Roman Church-State is a hybrid – a monster of ecclesiastical and political power. Its political thought is totalitarian, and whenever it has had the opportunity to apply its principles, the result has been bloody repression . . . . The Roman Church-State in the twentieth century, however, is an institution recovering from a mortal wound. If and when it regains its full power and authority, it will impose a regime more sinister than any the planet has yet seen.<sup>160</sup>

The point is that Robbins sees Catholicism’s end-time power coming as much from the liberal, progressive, Religious Left, as from the Right, in contrast to the one-sided views some Adventists have predicted. Indeed, it’s important to again note that Robbins is interestingly no fan of Pat Robertson or George W. Bush; Robbins is *not* part of the Religious Right! Are his arguments and evidence then not even worthy of dialogue? Is it possible Adventists have had narrow myopic vision in our eagerness to foresee the rise of Sunday legislation? My purpose is not to engage Robbin’s arguments in any detail, but he claims a lot of evidence to support his position, and his scenario isn’t incompatible with our traditional Adventist teachings. It merely includes a component that Robbins didn’t see, the role of Sunday. But my question remains an open, hypothetical one: Could it be that the Roman Church-State has been using the Religious Right as a dialogue partner, all the while seizing greater influence and power in both the secular and Religious Left, as well as the Right, to gain complete control? Something like a boxer watching out for the “right cross” and then having a “left hook” strike you? Given the Roman Church-

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<sup>160</sup> Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania*, 195.

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State's long and well-established history of social teachings which require governmental control, many of which are operative today in the thinking of Leftist progressives, I feel the need to voice the myriad possibilities that may fulfill the traditional Adventist teachings on the end-times, possibilities that are completely absent from many of today's Adventist intellectuals. Adventism is in desperate need of a more complete and independent worldview, one that can see more clearly the wholistic nature of the final conflict, and one that will have greater evangelistic and apologetic power than the one-sided presentations that some of our best thinkers have offered thus far in the representative works I have presented.

### **4. Conclusion**

I begin this conclusion with a brief exposition of Ellen White's views on the Sabbath/Sunday crisis, with the popular Old/New Covenant Law/Grace distinction in mind. In the *Desire of Ages*, White further reiterates the importance of understanding the historical origin of the Sabbath and how this establishes its true meaning. "Because He had rested upon the Sabbath, 'God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,'—set it apart to a holy use. He gave it to Adam as a day of rest. It was a memorial of the work of creation, and thus a sign of God's power and His love."<sup>161</sup> Again, White describes in detail the true purpose of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into communion with the Creator. In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day."<sup>162</sup> The Sabbath, as a time set apart, is a sign of the nature of the God who created us, one who is personal and relational. It was made *for us*, but can, as originating with Him, only be chosen *by Him*. Some other day won't do. Although it was made for us, it is not of our choosing, but God's; in this respect, it is no different than any relationship, it has two parties. And in this instance, one is the creator, the other the created. We can't choose a Sabbath for God, but rest in our acknowledgment of God's choice of a Sabbath with and for us. God wants to rest with us. God wants to spend his quality time, so to speak, with us.

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<sup>161</sup> Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 281.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-282.



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An important point to note is also that Sabbath observance is not merely an external form that we can meet through some series of actions, as a mere ritual. “In order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.”<sup>163</sup> Our hearts must be in conformity to God’s work and designs for us for us to actually rest in Him, fulfilling a true rest. Furthermore, and highlighting the universal scope of the Sabbath, White states that “The Sabbath was embodied in the law given from Sinai; but it was not then first made known as a day of rest. The people of Israel had a knowledge of it before they came to Sinai. On the way thither the Sabbath was kept.”<sup>164</sup> And, “The Sabbath was not for Israel merely, but for the world. It had been made known to man in Eden, and, like the other precepts of the Decalogue, it is of imperishable obligation.”<sup>165</sup>

In many ways, and in complete contrast to many other religions, God’s “idol” is His time, the Sabbath. Other religions worship shapes and forms, but the biblical God commanded us to do no such thing. Rather, instead of a wooden or metal idol, He hallowed the Sabbath time. We are not merely commanded, but invited, to join Him during this time.<sup>166</sup>

White also beautifully describes that the Sabbath is not intended to be a yoke upon us, but that it is designed to be a joy.<sup>167</sup> The Jews had turned the Sabbath into a rule book, rather than allowing it to be a positive focus of our week. It is perfectly within the purpose and intent of the Sabbath to bring joy and help to our friends and neighbors.<sup>168</sup> The Sabbath itself serves as a sign of God’s redemptive power for us. We are invited to rest in His work for us, both in creation and in salvation.<sup>169</sup> As White explains, “The Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.”<sup>170</sup> As such, we are to ““Serve the Lord with gladness: come before

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 288.

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His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise,' Psalm 100:2-4."<sup>171</sup> It is not a burden imposed for the sake of forcing our salvation.

Two of the most important chapters of White's writings are surely found in "God's Law Immutable" and "A Work of Reform" in *The Great Controversy*. These chapters present the difficulties that Sabbath keepers have had and will have in explaining the Sabbath and its original purpose. Not because of any intrinsic fault with the Sabbath, but because of the insidious nature of the arch-deceiver's work. As White shared, "In the absence of Bible testimony in their favor, many with unwearied persistence urged—forgetting how the same reasoning had been employed against Christ and His apostles: 'Why do not our great men understand this Sabbath question? But few believe as you do. It cannot be that you are right and that all the men of learning in the world are wrong.'"<sup>172</sup>

Although there is much that could be said on these issues, I think it worthwhile try to boil it down to a much more simple question. It is not so much that it will come down, in the final period of earth's history, to two groups of people "properly" living the Christian life, with one group worshipping on Sunday, while the other worships on Sabbath. No, the final crisis will come when one group attempts to *force* and *coerce* the other group to do as they want. In this critical sense, the Sunday keepers will be rejecting the entire plan of salvation Christ has offered, attempting to save themselves, and others, by their own works. An Old Covenant experience of Law, not grace! This is why grasping this truth, in its wholistic socio-political context, is important, as events unfold. One cannot properly keep the Sunday as the Sabbath at the appointed time. This is the "sign" that true Sabbath keepers may rest in as we attempt to share the ultimate price and cost of our choice to rest in God's salvation, rather than presenting to God our own means of salvation.

As such, despite the fact that "The great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth is the fact that it involves inconvenience

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 455.

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and reproach,”<sup>173</sup> we may share that it is not merely an inconvenience, but a choice, to truly accept salvation by *faith* that empowers rather than empty works! No true Sabbath keeper would wish to go out and persecute his Sunday worshiping friend. But that our message is sometimes (and by and large will be) rejected is a sign of its truth. God’s Law cannot be changed to save man, and this is a *good thing!* That the Sabbath also functions as the ultimate sign at the end separating those who *choose* God rather than man’s authority makes it ironic that we are accused of salvation by works, when the very opposite is true. All of the “requirements” that Adventists submit themselves to, the health message, the Sabbath, etc., are really preparatory, like with Daniel in Babylon, to prepare us (and our *minds*) to make a *choice* to accept God’s salvation for us and to rest our repentant hearts in Him, as the completion of our character development here on earth (White elsewhere compares the final Sabbath test to Eden’s Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; a simple test).<sup>174</sup> This is a beautiful reality, not a legalistic one. In our obedience to God we acknowledge we are not saved by works, but accept His work on our behalf. And the hatred of Satan will cement that this seeming paradox (obedience to accept grace and redemptive growth in God) is the true reality, as Sunday keepers will ultimately persecute us for our *rest* in God’s work. We, the ones accused of legalism over the Sabbath, will finally be the only ones who are proven *not* to be legalists, the only ones living a New Covenant experience of grace and faith that works.

#### **4.1 Review and Implications for Further Study**

This study has surveyed Seventh-day Adventist perspectives on the possibilities in foreseeing a union of church and state such that a Sunday Law might be enacted. To undertake this task, I examined the perspectives of selected prominent conservative or mainstream Adventists, Norman Gulley, Marvin Moore, and John Stevens, to identify how they see the “end game” that leads to Sunday legislation. What emerged was that they unanimously pictured the conservative Christians in America as being the

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>174</sup> See Ellen White, “The Test of Loyalty,” in *The Signs of the Times*, Feb. 13 (1896); and Ellen White, “The Sabbath Test,” in *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 30 (1898).

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primary instigators of the destruction of religious liberty and the creation of Sunday legislation in harmony with Papal wishes.

For the purposes of fostering greater dialogue and a more complete and thorough examination of this ever important topic, I also examined the works of select non-Adventist scholars, to see if their understandings of church-state relations and religious freedom match those of our own thinkers. I found that there were almost diametrically opposed viewpoints, relative to understandings of how the Roman Church-State would attain its power. In their views the Roman Church-State union would come more from the political and Religious Left. This is a fascinating situation.

What the above demonstrates is that several mainstream Adventist authors have neglected important contemporary trends, and have failed to engage in dialoguing with other prominent contemporary thought leaders who are also seeking to preserve religious liberty.<sup>175</sup>

The results of this study are important for several reasons. First, this study demonstrates an evangelistic barrier exists at present. Many sincere Christians in the “conservative heartland” of America are, for a variety of reasons, more sympathetic to the Religious Right. Not necessarily because they wish to see Christians take over and enact religious laws, but rather precisely because they see a biblical view of economics and individual liberty aligning with more conservative or libertarian positions. Evangelizing to these people by sharing the ideas found in Gulley, Moore, and Stevens’ works can be counterproductive, because they simply don’t see reality that way. And these evangelicals have sufficient facts and evidence to sustain their differing worldview, whether it is ultimately closer to the truth or not.<sup>176</sup> Many of these Christians have no desire to create

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<sup>175</sup> Interestingly, studies emphasizing only one side of these contemporary movements continue to be written by Adventist scholars, even in this current *JATS* issue. Note the articles by the Adventist scholars Trevor O’reggio and Fernando Canale. I wish to make clear that I agree with basically everything each of them wrote. I merely point out that the New Apostolic Reformation and the Emergent Church are, for all general purposes, ideologically opposite Christian movements. They favor opposite secular political parties to advance their agendas. What does *this* mean for Adventist eschatology, and where is the conversation about this paradox?

<sup>176</sup> In support of Robbin’s position, I note that studies have shown that “after 1991, increasing numbers of Americans of all ages expressed deep concern that religious leaders should not try to influence either people’s votes or government decisions,” which shifted the emphasis on issues into more *humanistic* moral concerns, like social justice, rather than

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Sunday legislation that would harm dissenters. They are baffled by our insistence that they will. Conversely, however, when reaching out to people who share Ronald Nash's and John Robbin's views, it makes perfect sense to them that Catholics are trying to assert political power through *leftist* liberal social ideas which will ultimately impinge upon their understanding of the separation of church and state. Allowing the possibility of this perspective in Adventist circles might open more doors to such people concerning the nature of the final eschatological conflict, including the role of the Sabbath as a social, as well as a moral, commandment. To be clear, in my opinion both views, Robbin's and the Adventist authors I surveyed, remain possible. Thus, what should remain speculative is what views we Adventists should advocate and share publically with any air of certitude.

Secondly, this study demonstrates an *internal* ideological barrier for Adventists, especially our young people. It is confusing to them to wonder why it is that we spend most of our efforts engaging, in a positive way, liberal, mainline churches and secular intellectuals who are often theistic evolutionists or atheists, simply because they purportedly "agree" with us on religious liberty issues. How privileged is one set of issues over another? As various socio-political issues percolate through the media, whose voices should we be listening to as we try to understand what is happening in the world? Should we believe secular Leftists who constantly ridicule every idea from Religious Right? Or should we be more wary of the humanistic morality that the secular *and* Religious Left are now pushing, and their potential consequences? My personal experience tells me Adventist young people are baffled by the mixed messages their leaders are sharing with them, and this is a key contributor to the fragmentation Adventism is now experiencing. Why do Adventists not also engage more positively with the "Religious Right," on issues we have in common, like recent Creationism? Do doctrines not matter? Should we be so selective in who we engage with in scholarly dialogue in more positive ways? Spending some time positively dialoging with people like Robbins and

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traditional moral issues, like marriage and abortion. Thus, the creation of a "secular" morality has become the issue of our times. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 121.

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Nash, and in a friendly way critiquing any weaknesses we perceive they may have, while also enlisting their sympathies in areas which we may share, seems the more productive route. Simply dismissing their eschatological views on the particulars of the Roman Church-State because they differ from our traditional emphasis on the Religious Right, while they are more wary of the Religious Left, appears inadequate, if an accurate understanding of the world around us is desired.

Third, in their efforts to fully secularize the country with a supposed complete separation of church and state, it must be recognized that some believe the secular and religious Left *literally create* (the contemporary Religious Right's political influence did not exist until the religious and secular Left agitated them) the Religious Right.<sup>177</sup> Although delving into this topic would require another study, more often than not, it is the interference of secular liberals, whom Adventists like those noted above are implicitly supporting in church-state issues, that creates the uproar from people like Pat Robertson. Do we even know, as Adventists, what a *truly secularized* nation (where church and state were totally separated) and its laws would look like? Could it not be a totalitarian state just as easily? The point for now seems to be that if secular liberals wouldn't interfere in conservative Christianity, then things would remain more *status-quo*; there would be no flag around which to rally the Religious Right. Thus, it would be wiser to support moderate political positions to delay any awakening of the "beast" of Revelation. "Let sleeping dogs lie," goes the old saying. So if Adventists wish to delay a Sunday Law, they should not appear to so

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<sup>177</sup> The history is complex. What is interesting is that although some issues like the ethnic segregation of some conservative private religious colleges was lamentable and caused the political Left to respond to the religious Right in the 1970's, the direct seeds of the Religious Right initially sprouted in reaction to the advance of secular leftist science and its promotion in public schools which encouraged evolution in the 1950's. There is an irony here in that the secular evolution promoted by liberal progressives encourages "racism," yet the religious Right rejected evolution, creating an unfortunate contradiction in the thinking of some conservatives that has now been mostly corrected. George Rising, "Religious Right," in *Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices*, ed. Roger Chapman (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010), 466. See also, Cleran Hollacid, *Evolution Declassified: Just When You Thought it was All Settled* (Detroit, MI: Gold Leaf Press, 2012), 21-44; and Jonah Goldberg, *The Tyranny of Clichés: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2012), 100-114, 204-219.

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openly support the political philosophy of progressivist secular liberals<sup>178</sup> in their opposition to the Religious Right, as this only irritates and awakens the true conservatives. There is more than one philosophical way to support libertarian principles.<sup>179</sup> Perhaps in this light we also need to reevaluate the precise nature or possibility of any truly “secular” Constitution, which secular Leftists promote.

Supporting humanistic morality is a growing trend among the general populace, and surprisingly compatible with the Left and Catholic social teachings. It is no accident that Pope Francis recently shared that atheists and agnostics can be saved, when he wrote that “the issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience.”<sup>180</sup> The point is not whether or not Scripture supports the salvation of the unevangelized or those who have received an incorrect view of God and thus doubted His existence, but that the *Pope*, of all people, would contextualize this so openly and point toward the *conscience* as our guide. God does not offer a “pass” for those who merely follow their own conscience.<sup>181</sup> When applied

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<sup>178</sup> Ellen White expressed an astonishingly balanced and uncommonly insightful perception of how complicated church and state issues can be when she rebuked A. T. Jones for objecting to a law that would make Bible reading in public schools required, on the purported principle of an absolute separation of church and state. White did not support required Bible reading, but could not object to it either, and warned that if we were thought to be objecting to required Bible reading as Adventists, it would hurt us later. Ellen White, *Spalding and Magan Collection* (1985), 8-9.

<sup>179</sup> A fascinating comparison on political philosophy would be between a postmodern philosopher like Gary Brent Madison with the works of John Robbins and Ronald Nash cited above. They appear to arrive at similar conclusions on many issues, showing “conservatism” and “libertarianism” to not be mutually exclusive. See G. B. Madison, *The Logic of Liberty* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1986); G. B. Madison, *The Political Economy of Civil Society and Human Rights* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998); and G. B. Madison, *The Politics of Postmodernity: Essays in Applied Hermeneutics* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-francis-assures-sceptics-you-don-t-have-to-believe-in-god-to-go-to-heaven-8810062.html>; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/the-pope/10302850/Pope-Francis-reaches-out-to-atheists-and-agnostics.html>.

<sup>181</sup> It is a conscience that *listens* to the Spirit of God which will guide those ignorant of Scriptural truth into salvation. Ellen White notes that “we shall meet those who have so perverted the conscience that they are unable to discern the precious truth of God’s word,” White, “The Pearl of Great Price,” in *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 1 (1899); Furthermore, “there are professed Christians who will warp the conscience and becloud the mind, under

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to the socio-political sphere, our consciences will often conflict on matters of life and death; when we should go to war, who should receive health-care, and at the cost of whom. The atheist who follows his conscience when voting on these issues and many other issues does not receive a “go to heaven card” automatically. Yet, this example by Pope Francis shows, among other issues, like the Catholic church’s possible reconsideration of Priests and marriage<sup>182</sup> and de-emphasis on abortion and homosexuality,<sup>183</sup> that the Catholic church is now perfectly willing to connect with liberal progressive humanists and their views of morality, including a heavy emphasis on economic systems, wealth distribution, and poverty.<sup>184</sup> If the Left continues to redefine morality’s relationship to socio-political realities alongside an Emergent vision,<sup>185</sup> it is impossible to predict how things may play out. What is clear is that a government that is proactive in social agendas is needed in such a worldview, which plays as much into Robbin’s predictions for the Roman Church-State as a creation of Leftist ideas, as one that is created by the Religious Right. Thus, a more neutral approach on our part would culturally ally ourselves more closely with those who truly do share our general Christian beliefs, allowing us to better reach out to them with more authentic and genuine sympathies, to share with them

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the pretense of godliness; and those who do not see nor sense the danger are already the dupes or victims of Satan,” White, *Counsels to Physicians and Medical Students* (1885); and “The conscience is the regulative faculty, and if a man allows his conscience to become perverted, he cannot serve God aright,” White, *Manuscript Releases Vol. 13* (1990), 155.

<sup>182</sup> <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3866516.ece>.

<sup>183</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/20/world/europe/pope-bluntly-faults-churchs-focus-on-gays-and-abortion.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/20/world/europe/pope-bluntly-faults-churchs-focus-on-gays-and-abortion.html?_r=0); <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-19/pope-says-church-should-stop-obsessing-over-gays-abortion.html>; and [http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2013/09/19/20580271-pope-francis-says-church-cannot-focus-only-on-abortion-and-gay-marriage?lite](http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/09/19/20580271-pope-francis-says-church-cannot-focus-only-on-abortion-and-gay-marriage?lite).

<sup>184</sup> <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-francis-speaks-again-world-poverty>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/22/us-pope-economy-idUSBRE98L04H20130922>; <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/1866398/report-pope-francis-tells-clergy-to-go-out-on-the-streets-and-help-the-poorest>.

<sup>185</sup> Steven H. Shiffrin, “The Religious Left and Church-State Relations: A Response to Kent Greenawalt and Bernie Meyler,” *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*, Vol. 19 (2010), 761. Shiffrin suggests that “the religious Left or religious liberals are better equipped to combat or engage religious conservatives or the religious Right than are secular liberals. . . in the context of church-state relations,” Ibid. Yet, if the religious Left continues to rely on the secular academic Leftists for its intellectual foundation, one can foresee a variety of problems in many areas.



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the message of “justification by faith,” a message that Martin Luther accepted and for which Ellen White specifically endorsed Luther.<sup>186</sup> We would then be better positioned to be received as true heirs of the Reformation. Then we will be in more influential positions to introduce the Sabbath and the Sanctuary doctrine as the true “New” Covenant experience, outside the restrictive stereotypes of any political-ideological identification.

Lastly, in conclusion, it would serve Adventism well, I believe, if we articulated a less partisan and narrow vision of how end-time events will play out, and focus more on the philosophical aspects of the debate as they interrelate with theological issues. It serves our evangelistic purposes more effectively to explore different possibilities with a more open mind, keeping our distinctive issues at the forefront, but not letting our eschatology replace a solid epistemology that analyzes the present honestly and without bias. This will allow us to form our worldview off what is really happening in an ever evolving world, not what “could” or “will” happen, outside of what prophecy specifically makes clear. In this way, Adventists will not be caught off guard when things don’t turn out “precisely” the way we predict as time passes, and our message will be more open to acceptance by individuals of varying religious and political backgrounds and perspectives, which may open scholarly and evangelistic doors of opportunity we had never anticipated.

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<sup>186</sup> “Luther searched the Scriptures with untiring interest and zeal, and at last found therein the way of life clearly revealed. He learned that it is not to the pope, but to Christ, that men are to look for pardon and justification. ‘There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Christ is the only propitiation for sin; he is the complete and all-sufficient sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world, securing the pardon of all who will believe on him as God hath appointed. Jesus himself declares, ‘I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.’ Luther sees that Christ Jesus came into the world, not to save people in their sins, but to save them from their sins; that the one only way whereby the sinner can be saved is by repentance toward God, because of the transgression of his law, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, both for the pardon of sin and for grace to lead a life of obedience,” Ellen White, “Martin Luther—His Character and Early Life,” in *The Signs of the Times*, May 31 (1883); c.f., White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 140, 253.

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