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Editorial

A new issue of *Spes Christiana* is ready. We proudly offer our readers a collection of seven interesting articles and a number of relevant book reviews.

Our authors come from different backgrounds: Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States; and they represent various theological disciplines. A look at the Table of Contents reveals that the topics vary from studies of a church-historical and missiological nature to biblical and theological studies. In the latter category are the article about “The Prophet as a Model of a Spiritual Leader” and the piece about the “Laws of Nature: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives of Evil in Nature.” The other five articles relate more directly to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its history. Very little has been written about the early Adventist leader Robert Sloan Donnell. The article about him in this issue of *Spes Christiana* definitely adds to our knowledge of the fascinating episode of Adventist history around 1900 in which Donnell played a key role. The piece about Ellen G. White’s use of material from the Apocrypha, similarly, breaks new ground and invites further exploration in this area.

The teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are now codified in the *Statement of 28 Fundamental Beliefs*, but this document, in its present form, was not adopted until a few decades ago. Prof. Stefan Höschele, who has long been connected with our journal and the general editor and still acts as an advisor, explores the role and content of the earliest formal summary of Adventist beliefs, which dates from 1872. I have contributed an article in which I try to answer a question many are asking, namely whether the Adventist hermeneutics regarding the Bible books of Daniel and Revelation are gradually changing. Finally, an intriguing issue – how Adventist missionaries interacted with local traditions and indigenous beliefs in Nigeria in the era in which the Adventist Church was founded in this African nation – is dealt with by a young scholar who hails from Nigeria, but is now a Ph.D. candidate at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Hopefully these articles will be appreciated and enjoyed by our readers, who are as geographically spread out as are the authors of this issue. I hope that many of our readers will feel inspired to also contribute to the upcoming issues of *Spes Christiana*. The Spring 2021 issue will have a special focus on the

theme of Spirituality. We welcome articles on one of the many aspects of this topic, which may be approached from different angles: biblically, theologically, phenomenologically, historically, (auto-)biographically, etc.

We expect that we will be able to publish in the 2021 Autumn issue several papers that will be presented at the European Theology Teachers Convention that will be held (online) from March 24 to March 28.

Yours in the service of Christian scholarship to which our journal is dedicated,

Reinder Bruinsma, General Editor

Is the Adventist Hermeneutical Approach to Daniel and Revelation Changing?¹

Reinder Bruinsma

Abstract

This article investigates whether, within Seventh-day Adventism, the hermeneutical approach is changing, in particular with regard to the prophetic portions of Daniel and Revelation: Is the traditional historicist position still dominant or are other approaches also making inroads? A number of official and semi-official sources are surveyed, as well as publications from scholars and popular authors. The article zooms in on the treatment of four issues in the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy: (1) the year-day principle, (2) the identity of the little horn (Dan. 7) and the sea-beast (Rev. 13), (3) the seal of God and the mark of the beast, and (4) the number 666. It appears that the historicist approach continues to receive support, most strongly in official and semi-official publications, but less so in books by scholars and popular authors. Authors in the two latter categories are also inclined to attribute value to other approaches besides historicism. Quite generally, there is a tendency to be less specific, when compared to the past, in making specific historical applications to particular symbols.

It could be the dream of any Adventist author or Adventist publisher to hear the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during a world congress give an unequivocal endorsement of a book that has just been written or published. That was what Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson did when, after having emphasized the importance of approaching the Bible in as literal a way as possible,

¹ This article is an updated version of my presentation at the conference of theology teachers in the Adventist universities and colleges in Europe, held at Cernica in Romania, in April 2011.

he encouraged the church members to use a recent book, prepared by the Biblical Research Institute, as their hermeneutical guide. He said: “Utilize wonderful resources such as the Biblical Research Institute’s new book on hermeneutics that helps us know the correct way to interpret the Scriptures.”² In giving this ringing endorsement he spoke in clear support of the traditional Adventist approach to the study of the Bible, including the use of the historicist option in dealing with the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

In this article I want to address this element of traditional Adventist hermeneutics by surveying the way in which recent publications have approached this matter, and to investigate whether any clear hermeneutical shift is discernible. If so, this may inspire further studies with regard to implications for Adventist theology and evangelistic practice.

I will single out a few particular issues in Daniel and Revelation, to illustrate how a particular approach works out in the exegesis of the actual Bible text. I have selected about twenty books which have been published since 2000. A few of these have an official or semi-official status. These include the *Seventh-day Adventist Handbook of Theology* (Dederen 2000), two publications of the BRI (Reid 2006; Pfandl 2010), and the *Andrews Study Bible* (Dybdahl 2010). In addition, I have chosen a few publications that have been written by prominent Adventist theology professors: Jacques Doukhan (2000a; 2000b); Ekkehardt Mueller (2015), Jon Paulien (2004; 2007; 2008; 2009), Ranko Stefanović (2002), Zdravko Stefanović (2007) and Sigve K. Tonstad (2019).³ And, finally, I have taken a good look at a few books that are of a more popular nature,⁴ such as *The Remnant Study Bible* (2009)⁵ and books by Marvin Moore (2001; 2007; 2008), Mike Tucker (2007), Francis Njau (2010), Reimar Vetne (2016), and the book that was co-authored by Steve Case and Daniel Wysong

² For the text of Wilson’s sermon in Atlanta, GR (USA), on July 3, 2010, see <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=3614>. Wilson referred to the book edited by Gerhard Pfandl, *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers* (Pfandl 2010).

³ Tonstad’s book is published by a non-Adventist publisher and is intended for a wider public, which is clearly reflected in its approach and avoidance of Adventist jargon.

⁴ This categorization does not imply any judgment on the scholarly capacities of any of these authors, but only underlines that they intentionally write in a more popular way for a broader (mostly Adventist) public.

⁵ For an extensive review and a comparison of the *Andrews Study Bible* and the *Remnant Study Bible*, see Bruinsma 2011, 52–58.

(2014).⁶ I have not included in this study any of the publications and other media products about apocalyptic themes that constantly flow from a wide range of independent ministries, which operate mostly on the conservative fringe of the Adventist Church.⁷

1. Our Historicist Heritage

Historicism has ancient credentials. Most Adventist authors on Daniel and Revelation do not fail to mention this fact and regard it as a key argument for choosing the historicist option. Historicism may indeed have a long track record,⁸ but we must recognize that over time the general picture within the Christian world has changed, and the preterist, futurist and idealist approaches have won many adherents, while dispensationalists have applied the historicist approach in ways that Adventists strongly reject. Norman Gulley, an Adventist systematic theologian, possibly overstates his case when he claims that Adventists stand virtually alone, when defending historicism, but his point is well taken (Gulley 1998, 66).⁹

In a book in which the various hermeneutical approaches to biblical apocalyptic prophecy are compared, some rather striking statements by proponents of the various options may be found. The person writing in defense of *preterism* concluded:

Preterism seems to me to provide the most coherent, relevant, and exegetically sound approach to the most difficult book of the Bible. The preterist principle can be abused, of course – some liberals adopt it, devoid of its supernaturalism, of course). But so can the futurist principle.... The same can be said about the idealist and the progressivist principles. The task of the serious Christian is to carefully weigh the issues in the balance of the whole of Scripture. (Gentry 1998, 92)

⁶ Most Adventist publications on eschatology are of American vintage and are written by professors in the American SDA colleges and universities. Many Adventist publications on eschatology in other languages are, in fact, translations from American originals.

⁷ Some of the best known are the *3ABN ministries*, Doug Batchelor's *Amazing Facts*, Walter Veith's *Amazing Discoveries*, David Gates' *International Gospel Ministries*, and Stephen Bohr's *Secrets Unsealed*.

⁸ LeRoy Edwin Froom continuously emphasizes this in his momentous 4-volume work *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Froom 1950–1954).

⁹ There are a few organizations that stridently promote historicism, such as the Historicism Research Foundation, with the Australian professor Francis Nigel Lee (a Presbyterian) as the key person (see www.historicism.net).

The representative of the *idealist* approach does not agree, but claims that his approach is superior: “I am convinced for several reasons, that the idealist approach stands on a stronger hermeneutical foundation than the other approaches ...” (Hamstra 1998, 128). Dispensationalist Robert L. Thomas is, however, convinced that his approach is best: “A *dispensational* view of Revelation strives for objectivity by putting aside all preunderstanding and bias, so that the text of the book may speak for itself” (Thomas 1998, 227).

Adventist theologian Jon K. Paulien, who defends historicism, is just as adamant as the three authors just mentioned: “The *historicist* view remains the best approach to apocalyptic prophecy” (Paulien 2006, 268). Elsewhere he states: “It [historicism] takes all the evidence of the Bible seriously” (Paulien 2009, 17).

Paulien echoes a long-established Adventist position: The historicist approach unlocks the meaning of Daniel and Revelation. Adventists inherited the historicist approach from their Millerite forebears (Davidson 2000, 96). However, Kai Arasola, the Finnish scholar who investigated the methodology of William Miller, concluded that many of Miller’s conclusions did not pass into Adventist thinking, and that the 1844 debacle which confronted the Millerites contributed to “the end of historicism.” Yet, Arasola admitted that

historicism did not die with Miller. It still lives in a modified and partly renewed¹⁰ form within the groups that have some roots in Millerism.... On the one hand, he [Miller] contributed to the end of a dominant system of exegesis, on the other hand, he is regarded as a spiritual father by millions of Christians who have taken some parts of the Millerite exegesis as their *raison d’être*. (Arasola 1990, 171–172)

2. Qualified Support for Historicism

Today, the historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy represents a minority position. Academic interpretations tend to favor preterism, “while the popular market has embraced futurism” (Tonstad 2019, 27). The official teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, remains firmly rooted in historicism. This was recently underlined in the *Consensus Statement* voted by the approximately four hundred participants in a conference on eschatology, held

¹⁰ See Hans K. LaRondelle 2005 for some remarks as to how Adventists renewed the Millerite historicist approach.

in Rome (Italy) from June 11 to June 21, 2018. It was one of the regularly scheduled Bible conferences that are organized by the BRI, intended for Adventist theology teachers, pastors and church leaders. The statement that was voted included this paragraph: "We affirm that the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation are foundational for the understanding of biblical eschatology and that the historicist method is the proper approach to interpreting them."¹¹

Yet, when looking at Adventist authors who have written about apocalyptic prophecy in the last two decades, we find that in many cases their support for historicism is qualified in different ways. In the chapter "Biblical Apocalyptic" in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, William H. Johnsson argues for a historicist emphasis but does not push it too strongly. Daniel and Revelation manifest "a cosmic range of apocalyptic prophecy," that covers history from the days of the prophets to the end of time (Johnsson 2000, 795). He adds that preterist and futurist interpretations, or such interpretations that make the prophetic message "no more than the eternal confrontation between the forces of good and evil," are inadequate (Johnsson 2000, 796–797). In contrast, he concludes, "historicism, though sometimes marred by diverse, sensational, speculative and contradictory approaches, appears as the most valid hermeneutical approach in the biblical apocalypses" (Johnsson 2000, 797).

The *Andrews Study Bible*, though avoiding Adventist jargon in its notes and comments on the apocalyptic sections of the Bible, makes it clear that it operates on the basis of the historicist principle: "The historicist position takes the full evidence of these portion of Scripture most seriously" (Dybdahl 2010, 1659). But, while the over-all method is considered as sound, exact applications, the *Andrews Study Bible* suggests, are often uncertain. Moreover, each of the other approaches (preterism, futurism and idealism), "have a point, as long as that point is not taken to an extreme." The idealist perspective is "certainly helpful, provided it does not lead us to ignore the global, historical, and political implications of the book [of Revelation]" (Dybdahl 2010, 1659).

In one of his books Professor Jon Paulien, a specialist in the Book of Revelation, makes the same point. He suggests that historicism has its problems. If we limit ourselves to a historicist reading of apocalyptic prophecy, "then much of it doesn't apply directly to the point of time in which we now live....

¹¹ See <https://adventist.news/en/news/adventist-theologians-approve-statement-on-biblical-eschatology>.

[It] is often very dry and leaves people wonder about the spiritual meaning." All approaches (historicist, but also preterist, futurist and idealist) "have a certain degree of validity" (Paulien 2004, 29–30).

In the commentaries of Doukhan on Daniel and on Revelation, historicism is assumed rather than explicitly defended. Although one might argue that Doukhan's books also betray traces of idealism, the author maintains that a historicist approach is dictated by the context and stresses that there is much more beyond the spiritual dimension of these books:

In Hebrew thinking, though, truth is not a spiritual or philosophical message designed only to nurture our soul and our minds. Instead, biblical truth is essentially historical. God speaks in history. And whatever explanation or whatever emphasis we want to give to the date fulfilling the prophecy, we should not be surprised that biblical prophecy takes the risk of entering the flesh of history, even our modern history. (Doukhan 2000, 152)

In his recent commentary Zdravko Stefanović, a theology professor at AdventHealth University (Orlando, Florida, USA), does not deny the important historical applications of Daniel. But he is also keen to pay attention to the meaning for the original readers and to contemporary applications (Stefanović 2007, 9). Daniel's purpose is not to provide objective history, but to point at the truths that lay behind the historical facts. His brother Ranko Stefanović, who teaches theology at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA), expresses himself in rather similar ways with regard to the book of Revelation. He finds the historicist approach "sometimes problematic," because of the difficulty of fitting every detail of the text into a historical fulfilment. On the other hand, he says, the alternative approaches can only have some validity, "if the prophetic elements are taken into consideration and applied to the time that extends beyond John's days" (Stefanović 2002, 11). This position appears to have some resemblance to that of Desmond Ford (Ford 1978, 65–72), whose "apotelesmatic" principle – which stressed the positive elements in preterism, futurism, and idealism – caused major theological uproar in the Adventist Church in 1980s and beyond (Ouro 1888, 326–342). Ranko Stefanović calls for making case-by-case judgments:

The exposition of the text must be controlled by the intent of its author, who should tell us what we are supposed to find in it. If the message of the studied text was primarily for John's days, then it calls for the

preterist or idealist approach. On the other hand, if it discusses the very end of times, then its interpretation calls for a futurist approach. If the studied text presents the events occurring throughout the course of history, however, a sound interpretation calls for a historicist interpretation of the text. Strong evidence must demonstrate that the scenes and symbols in the text point to events throughout all of history, rather than those primarily in John's times or the time of the end. (Stefanović 2002, 12)

In the second edition of his commentary, Ranko Stefanović somewhat modifies his views regarding this matter without, however, retracting them (Reynolds 2010, 27–28).

Sigve Tonstad emphasizes that any interpretation of the Revelation must be *adequate* and *relevant* (Tonstad 2019, 28). He opines that the major “schools” of interpretation are all found wanting in these respects. Repeatedly he points to the inadequacies of the preterist view. “Revelation trains its sight on *values* more than *events*, and is *God-centered* more than *time-centered*” (Tonstad 2019, 29). The central theme is the cosmic conflict between good and evil (Tonstad 2019, 20).

The more popular authors whom I have included in this review do not spend much energy on defending the historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy. Marvin Moore, a prolific author and editor at the Pacific Press Publishing Association, and the African author Francis Njau simply assume the validity of the historicist option. The same applies to the *Remnant Study Bible*. No attempt is made to explain why the historicist approach is the best option, but the principle is simply applied (1575–1582). Mike Tucker's book is primarily pastoral in intent, and looks particularly for contemporary spiritual lessons. But underneath one can detect the tacit assumption that historicism is a valid principle. Yet, it could be argued that Tucker's book in some places clearly shows idealist tendencies.

In their book about the Revelation, which places Jesus at the center of everything that is said in this Bible book, the authors – Steve Case and Daniel Wysong – briefly discuss the various approaches to apocalyptic prophecy. They conclude that “each of the four schools [of interpretation] has merit, and yet each gets stuck by insisting that it is the only possible interpretation.” (Case and Wysong 2014, 4) Readers of the Revelation, they say, must let the text speak for itself and then determine which sections focus mainly on the

first century, which have particular meaning for the end-time, and which relate to events in past history. And “we certainly can find passages with powerful spiritual application for any believer who listens” (Case and Wysong 2014, 4).

Gerhard Pfandl and Ekkehardt Mueller, both prominent staff members of the Biblical Research Institute during the period under review, do not agree. They see a major difficulty in this eclectic approach, since it leaves the exegete with the problem of how to determine what method is appropriate (Pfandl and Mueller 2010, 81).

The somewhat different levels of qualified support of historicism may be partly due to different definitions. Reimar Vetne has pointed out that many Bible exegetes operate with a particular understanding of preterism and of the other non-historicist approaches, which may not always be totally accurate, and therefore tend to define historicism in an all-or-nothing way.¹² Vetne suggests that a definition of historicism must allow for enough room for applying certain passages specifically to the authors’ days, and some specifically to the final days which are yet future (Vetne 2003, 7).

3. Historicism at Work

It seems fair to conclude that in recent Adventist publications historicism is still used as the main hermeneutical principle in interpreting apocalyptic prophecy, even though there is often not the across-the-board unqualified stamp of approval historicism once received. We will find confirmation of this when we look at a few topics that have consistently played an important role in the Adventist understanding of Daniel and Revelation. We will look briefly at the way our various recent authors have dealt with these particular facets. I have chosen (1) the year-day principle, (2) the identity of the little horn of Daniel 7, the sea beast of Revelation 12 and the land beast in Revelation 13, (3) the meaning of the seal of God and the mark of the beast, and (4) the meaning of the number 666.

¹² As we find, for instance, in: Shea 2003, 22.

3.1 *Year-Day-Principle*

It is rather surprising to discover that, generally speaking, very little effort is made to provide a solid basis for the validity of the so-called year-day principle, which stipulates that in apocalyptic time prophecies one day symbolizes one literal year, one month stands for 30 years, and one year for 360 years. Several authors refer to the extensive study by William H. Shea (Shea 1982, 67–110), which is probably the most thorough treatment given to the topic by any Seventh-day Adventist scholar. Marvin Moore also provides detailed information about the historical antecedents of the year-day principle (Moore 2008, 116–124). Usually, if any justification for the application of this principle is given at all, reference is simply made to Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4–8 as proof texts.¹³ In these two passages, days are used as a symbol to represent years. Although these passages are situated in a prophetic context, they are not, however, connected to any long-term prophetic time periods.

The year-day principle, which is closely linked to the historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy, has a venerable tradition, and was an important aspect of the Millerite heritage. The application of the principle to the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:25 was “the ultimate proof of its suitability.... Like earlier historicists, he [Miller] believed that a 490-year period leading up to the time of Christ was an unarguable conclusion for any discussion on the year for a day theory” (Arasola 1990, 87). Gerhard Pfandl and Ekkehardt Mueller call the year-day principle the “backbone of historicism” (2010, 81–83).

Johnsson argues that the statements of time periods in Daniel and Revelation are found in a symbolic context. Hermeneutical consistency, therefore, would require that these time periods, which are described as days, months, or times, are treated as symbolic (Johnsson 2000, 797). Paulien also stresses that there is a strong exegetical basis for interpreting the time prophecies as symbolic (Paulien 2010, 210.257.268). For Doukhan it is clear that the year-day principle is dictated by the context in which the time prophecies occur (Doukhan 2000, 108), but he hardly discusses the matter any further. In his commentary on Revelation, one short footnote refers the reader to a few remarks in his previous book on Daniel (Doukhan 2002, 97). Zdravko Stefanović accepts the year-day principle, but limits his justification to a reference to Shea and Doukhan (Stefanović 2007, 282). Ranko Stefanović, when discussing the

¹³ See for instance *Remnant Study Bible*, 158; *Andrews Study Bible*, 1673.

1260 day period, is a little less explicit and suggests that “these time designations have more qualitative than quantitative significance” (Stefanović 2002, 379). But it is clear that he applies the year-day principle (albeit perhaps more loosely) when he refers to this 1260 day time period as a period “of approximately 1200 years,” during which God’s people were under attack (Stefanović 2002, 384). Tonstad concludes that the prophetic time periods, such as the 1260 days, cannot refer to literal days, but seem to denote “a considerable time period” (Tonstad 2019, 163.185).

Mike Tucker assumes the validity of the year-day principle, when he mentions a twelve-hundred year period of persecution during the Dark Ages (Tucker 2007, 97). Reimar Vetne, likewise, emphasizes that “days” in apocalyptic portions of the Bible must be symbolic, and refer to years, if they are to make sense (Vetne 2016, 62–64). Case and Wysong mention the year-day-principle only in passing. Those who take “days” as symbolic, “follow a concept of each day of prophetic time meaning a year of literal time” (Case and Wysong 2014, 88). Francis Njau thinks that it is not a question *whether* the year-day principle is legitimate, but *when* it should be used (Njau 2010, 252). Some passages, such as Daniel 8:14, make sense only when interpreted symbolically (Njau 2010, 238).

3.2 *The Identity of Daniel’s Little Horn and of the Sea-Beast and the Land-Beast in Revelation 13*

The identity of the little horn in Daniel 7 was from the very start of the Adventist movement seen as one of the capstones for the apocalyptic framework. There was no doubt in the mind of the Adventist pioneers, and of most Adventist thought leaders since then, that this symbol represents the institutional Roman Catholic Church, since they believed the description of this horn clearly matches the characteristics of this religious and political power. Although the books under review in this article by-and-large support this thesis, there are considerable differences in the way in which this conviction is expressed, as a few examples will demonstrate.

Frank B. Holbrook in his chapter on the “Great Controversy” theme in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Holbrook 2000, 969–1009), remains quite vague regarding the identity of the persecuting power that wages an unrelenting war against the saints, and the “beasts of Revelation” are not specifically identified (Holbrook 2000, 990–991). Only in the final section of his

chapter the Roman Catholic Church is briefly referred to by name: “As Protestants, employing historicist principles of prophetic interpretation, the pioneers of the [Adventist] movement were familiar with the identification of the little horn (Dan. 7:8,21,25), and the seven-headed leopardlike beast (Rev. 13:1–10) with the Roman Papacy” (Holbrook 2000, 1002).

For Marvin Moore, the evil role of the Catholic Church in the course of history and in the end-time scenario is crystal clear. From their study of Daniel and Revelation, Adventists know, he argues, that the apostate forces of the future will be under the leadership of Rome (Moore 2001, 17). He states: “I agree with the traditional Adventist view that the first beast of Revelation 13 is the papacy. I agree that at the very least the papacy was *the* antichrist during the Middle Ages and will be an important antichrist during the final conflict” (Moore 2010, 99). In his book *Challenges to the Remnant*, in particular, Moore minces no words in his discussion of the historic, present and future role of Catholicism. His use of language is a reminder of what used to be the common Adventist manner of speaking about Roman Catholicism (Moore 2010, *passim*). This is also true of the treatment given to the Daniel 7 prophecy by Francis Njau (Njau 2010, 186–193).

The users of the *Remnant Study Bible* will note that the Ellen G. White quotations clearly identify the little horn and the sea-beast as Roman Catholicism, and the land-beast as the United States of America (2009, 1528–1534; Bruinsma 2011, 35–42). In the notes of the *Andrews Study Bible*, the little horn and the sea-beast of Rev. 13 are said to be powers with a religious agenda, but no specific mention is made of the papacy. Somewhat surprisingly therefore, in the note for Rev. 13:11 the land-beast of Rev. 13 is more clearly named: “According to many interpreters, it is a symbol for the United States of America” (Dybdahl 2010, 1676).

In his 2007 book with daily devotional readings, Jon Paulien does not intend to engage in “dissecting beasts in detail as representatives of sweeping events in history” (Paulien 2007, 8). He contents himself with referring to the “beast” of Revelation 13 as a counterfeit for the Son of God, the second entity of the pseudo-trinity of dragon, sea-beast and land-beast (Paulien 2007, 232). He reiterates this concept of a pseudo-trinity repeatedly in several other of his writings (Paulien 2008, 64ff.).

Ekkehardt Mueller, an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, clearly identifies the little horn as the

Roman Catholic Church (Mueller 2015, 166). He argues that the little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast from the sea in Revelation 13 are symbols for the same power, namely ecclesiastical Rome. But this, he hastens to add, does not mean a depreciation of Catholic Christians. “The redemption of people is God’s concern. We, therefore, do not equate membership in a church with salvation or condemn people based on their religious affiliation” (Mueller 2015, 169).

Doukhan follows the Adventist tradition: The little horn and the sea-beast are symbols for the institutional Roman Catholic Church, but his language is rather mild. “We should not rush into the extreme of seeing features of the little horn in every aspect of Catholic Christianity.” And the symbol of the little horn extends beyond Catholicism: “The evil represented by the little horn appears in any religious community that allows intolerance, anti-Semitism, and human tradition to prevail over love, respect, and faithfulness to divine revelation” (Doukhan 2000, 110). Moreover, recognition of the faults in Catholicism should not lead us to an attitude of anti-Catholicism (Doukhan 2000, 111). The prophecy [of the sea-beast] “does not necessarily accuse the Catholic Church as such. The prophetic intention seeks less to condemn than to elucidate the meanders of history” (Doukhan 2002, 116). Doukhan identifies the land-beast, in line with Adventist tradition, as the United States of America (Doukhan 2002, 119–120).

Zdravko Stefanović lists eight characteristics of Daniel 7’s little horn and concludes that “only one entity really fits all these eight identifying marks,” namely “the religio-political power that gained prominence after the decline of the Roman empire,” i.e. the Roman papacy. But he does not dwell at any length on this and hastens to add that the world was also greatly blessed in many ways by the church of Western Europe (Stefanović 2007, 281). Ranko Stefanović is even more circumspect than his brother in linking prophecy with Roman Catholicism. “The sea beast represents all oppressive world powers, civil and religious, that oppressed God’s people from the establishment of the church at the Exodus down to the Second Coming” (Stefanović 2002, 411). Certainly, there is a match between aspects of the sea-beast and “medieval and post-medieval ecclesiastical rule,” but

we must acknowledge, that applying the seventh head of the sea-beast to the medieval ecclesiastical power alone is inadequate. History equally depicts the same behavior of religious-political oppression and intolerance in the newly established Protestant orthodoxy in the

Western world during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
(Stefanović 2002, 412)

The land-beast is more directly identified, namely as a symbol for the United States of America.

Mike Tucker follows much the same line as the Stefanović brethren. The sea-beast equals the little horn, and the symbolic language of the prophetic passages to describe these entities points to “a religio-political power that played a role in persecuting God’s people” for about twelve hundred years. Luther, he says, identified this power as the papacy. However, Tucker then refers to William G. Johnsson (without providing a reference), who “like others” see the “beast-power” as pointing to “any power that coerces matters of faith” (Tucker 2007, 97).

Tonstad does not identify the two beasts of Revelation 13 with any specific political or religious entities. He sees them as the “two witnesses” who represent Satan’s mission, in contrast to the “two witnesses” of Revelation 11 who are on God’s side (Tonstad 2019, 187–194).

3.3 *The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast*

A somewhat similar picture emerges when we look at the “seal” given to the end time people of God and the “mark of the beast” that will be stamped on God’s end time enemies: In general, the Adventist tradition is adhered to, but the degree in which a clear identification is made (with Sabbath and Sunday respectively) varies significantly.

Hans K. LaRondelle, in his contribution to the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, states that “the end time seal of God represents the divine recognition of the obedience of faith to God’s commandments,” while “the mark of the beast represents a cultic sign of disobedience to one or more of God’s commandments” (LaRondelle 2000, 879). To the Adventist reader it is clear what is meant, but for the general reader this remains rather vague.

The *Andrews Study Bible* comments in a short note that “the seal of the living God” in Rev. 7:2 is “possibly a reference to the Sabbath” (Dybdahl 2010, 1669. 1677). The notes in this Study Bible connect the “mark of the beast” with a “counterfeit Sabbath” (Dybdahl 2000, 1676). Again, as may be expected, the *Remnant Study Bible* is far more explicit and extensive in its comments, which are accompanied by a selection of E.G. White quotations. It directly links

God's seal with the Sabbath and the "mark of the beast" with Sunday-keeping.

Paulien maintains that the "mark of the beast" is not just about the end of time, but is a more general symbol for "divided loyalties" (Paulien 2007, 245; Paulien 2008, 172 ff.). Tonstad agrees and indicates that God's seal cannot just refer to a particular point in time. Believers must be "sealed" by God, i.e. they need divine protection, at all times (Tonstad 2019, 132).

Reimar Vetne connects God's seal with his gift of the Holy Spirit (Vetne 2016, 50). Jacques Doukhan expresses himself in similar ways: The seal and the mark are "outward signs of inner allegiance" (Doukhan 2002, 128). For Tucker these symbols stand for a "sign of ownership" (Tucker 2007, 108). Likewise, for Ranko Stefanović both the seal and the mark are a "sign of loyalty." He does not highlight the role of the observance of Sabbath or Sunday to any extent and believes that the seal/mark application should not be limited to the day of worship, even though the observance of either day may at some point in time become a litmus test (Stefanović 2002, 371, 415, 416). Marvin Moore knows no such reticence. The mark of the beast is "observance of the Sunday when enforced by law" (Moore 2001, 203).

3.4 *The Number 666*

Finally, a few words about the "number of the beast," the mysterious number six hundred and sixty-six. The "discovery" that the papal title *Vicarius Filii Dei* was the key to the solution of this mystery used to be a favorite argument for Adventist evangelists. The claim continues to be used in popular evangelism and in some publications, mainly at the fringe of the church, but by-and-large it is recognized that this interpretation is methodologically faulty and historically questionable, at the very least.¹⁴

The fact that Ellen G. White never connected 666 with the papacy explains the total silence on this point in the *Remnant Study Bible*. The *Andrews Study Bible* notices that 666 is a multiple of the number six and "may represent and emphasize counterfeit and falling short" (Dybdahl 2010, 1676). Tonstad points to the symbolic meaning of the number 7, which stands for completion

¹⁴ For an extensive discussion about this, see Valentine 1992, 273–275; and Bruinsma 1994, 143–147. Samuel Bacchiocchi, in his later years, turned against the traditional Adventist interpretation of 666; see: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/endtimeissues/et_145.htm.

and perfection. The triple-6 “signifies an imitation that is a stunning imperfection” (Tonstad 2019, 198). Paulien remarks that lots of suggestions have been made to find the name that was somehow hidden in the alleged numerical value of 666. He mentions several examples, without making reference to any pope (Paulien 2007, 247). For Jacques Doukhan, 666 is “a symbol of God’s absence” (2002, 121). Case and Wysong warn against any attempt to identify 666 with any person or institution. It is “a symbol for humans disregarding God” (Case and Wyson, 2014, 102). Ranko Stefanović also warns against any play with numbers, as John has nowhere used gematria as a means of identification. It is significant that ancient Babylon employed the sexagesimal system (Stefanović 2002, 417). Mike Tucker also believes that the number is spiritual rather than literal (Stefanović 2007, 99).

4. Some Tentative Conclusions

Our investigation has shown that there is a definite tendency on the part of Adventist interpreters to remain loyal to basic framework Adventist interpretations, but many are increasingly reticent in making specific applications, and the language used is generally much less aggressive than was often the case in the past.

The number of Adventist publications, both scholarly and popular, on apocalyptic topics is extensive, and this brief study does not do justice to the entire range of opinion that these publications (also in non-print media) present. Yet our present study, though limited in scope (both with regard to the number of authors surveyed and the range of publications that were investigated), may lead to two significant, albeit tentative, conclusions.

(1) The historicist principle continues to be dominant among the hermeneutical approaches to apocalyptic prophecy by recent Adventist authors. The adherence to this principle tends to be most strongly expressed in those sources that may be considered as more or less authoritative in the Adventist denomination. The choice of the historicist option is more qualified among recognized scholars who are active in the field of apocalypticism, while there is a divergence of opinion among the more popular authors. The idealist approach may well be gaining some ground in Adventist apocalyptic thinking. Further research would be needed to substantiate this and it would, in particular, be interesting to know whether this idealist approach also gains in importance among the rank-and-file of church membership.

(2) When looking at a few selected topics, which are important in the Adventist eschatological tradition, to see how the historicist principle is applied, we find that there definitely is a significant tendency with several of the authors to be less explicit about the specific historicist application of certain symbols. In some cases an idealist interpretation is offered in addition to, or in the place of, a purely historicist application.

Further research could provide more evidence to either confirm or disconfirm these tentative conclusions. Opinions may differ as to whether these trends (if they can be further substantiated) are desirable or deplorable, but regardless of one's convictions on that issue, I believe clarifying possible trends will be useful in any further discussion.

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Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel untersucht, ob sich der adventistische hermeneutische Zugang v. a. in Bezug auf die prophetischen Teile von Daniel und Offenbarung verändert: Ist die traditionelle historicistische Position weiter vorherrschend oder werden andere Zugänge zunehmend wichtiger? Es werden offizielle und semi-offizielle Quellen begutachtet sowie wissenschaftliche und populäre Veröffentlichungen. Der Artikel beleuchtet schwerpunktmäßig vier Themenfelder der Interpretation von apokalyptische Prophezeiungen: 1. das Jahr-Tag-Prinzip, 2. die Identität des kleinen Horns (Dan. 7) und des Tieres aus dem Meer (Offb. 13), 3. das Siegel Gottes und das Malzeichen des Tieres und 4. die Zahl 666. Es scheint, dass der historicistische Zugang weiterhin Unterstützung erhält, v. a. in offiziellen und semi-offiziellen Veröffentlichungen, jedoch weniger in wissenschaftlichen und populären Büchern. Autoren der letzten beiden Kategorien sind eher geneigt, anderen Zugängen neben dem Historismus einen Wert beizumessen. Generell ist eine Tendenz erkennbar, dass bestimmte apokalyptische Symbole im Gegensatz zur Vergangenheit weniger spezifisch konkret historisch angewendet werden.

Résumé

Cet article examine si, au sein de l'adventisme du septième jour, l'approche herméneutique est en train de changer, en particulier en ce qui concerne les parties prophétiques de Daniel et de l'Apocalypse: la position historiciste traditionnelle est-elle toujours dominante ou est-ce que d'autres approches émergent-elles également ? Un certain nombre de sources officielles et semi-officielles sont examinées, ainsi que des publications de spécialistes et d'auteurs. L'article se concentre sur le traitement de quatre questions dans l'interprétation de la prophétie apocalyptique: (1) le principe de l'année-jour, (2) l'identité de la petite corne (Dan. 7) et de la bête de mer (Ap. 13), (3) le sceau de Dieu et la marque de la bête, et (4) le nombre 666. Il en ressort que l'approche historiciste continue d'être avancée, surtout dans les publications officielles et semi-officielles, mais moins dans les livres d'érudits et d'autres auteurs. Les auteurs des deux dernières catégories sont également enclins à valoriser d'autres approches en plus de l'historicisme. En général, il y a une tendance à être moins spécifique, comparé au passé, en faisant des applications historiques spécifiques à certains symboles apocalyptiques.

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The 1872 Declaration of Fundamental Principles On the Contextual-Theological Significance of Adventism's First Statement of Beliefs

Stefan Höschele

Abstract

The 1872 *Declaration of Fundamental Principles* is a milestone in the development of Adventist theology in several regards. It still enshrined the denomination's thinking of the period in a Millerite framework yet also indicated its move away from their Adventist competitors. It presented the movement's beliefs in a unique structure and thus became an important tool for Adventist dogmatic self-reflection; at the same time, it canonized the anti-creedal paradox of rejecting norms secondary to Scripture while producing precisely such a normative statement. Overall, the *Fundamental Principles* are a crucial witness to the contextuality of 19th century Adventist theologizing.

From its very beginning, Christianity was a confessional religion.¹ Followers of Jesus the Messiah declared their adherence to their Master with formulae which were, in effect, mini-creeds: e.g., "Jesus is Lord" or, even shorter, "Jesus Christ" (i.e. Jesus [is] the Messiah). It was logical, therefore, that the earliest Christians soon developed a set of items to be professed by neophytes as well as by those belonging to the believers' community already – the *regula fidei*. This "rule of faith" formed the basis of Christian theology, expressed it *in nuce*, and later developed into the well-known creeds – the Nicene, the Athanasian, and the Apostolic creed.

¹ For a thorough interpretation of the meaning and variety of credal texts, see Pelikan 2003; this book accompanied his (and Valerie Hotchkiss's) massive collection *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (2003, 3 vols.).

Seventh-day Adventists arose in one of the most intensely anti-credal eras of Christian history, the 19th century in America, and adopted the critical stance towards creeds, confessions, and dogmas of their Baptist, Connectionist, and Millerite forebears. It may seem somewhat ironical that Seventh-day Adventists never shed this anti-creed rhetoric of the past but developed a well-defined and clearly demarcated set of “Fundamental Beliefs” themselves. Of course this did not happen overnight: the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs had their precursors in a less elaborate statement with the same name of 1931; and the 1931 text had replaced a Declaration of Fundamental Principles originally published in 1872, which was written by an individual and was later used in denominational self-portrayals.

This paper² analyzes and interprets the Fundamental Principles of 1872.³ So far no separate publication exists on this text, only a few papers that deal with its content in connection with other Adventist statements of belief.⁴ The most comprehensive discussion is found in a comparative article by Denis Fortin (1998) that includes reflections on the 1845 and 1869 statements of faith of the non-sabbatarian Advent Christians and Evangelical Adventists. Fortin’s evaluation focuses on the doctrinal similarities and differences as well as the general evangelical tenets of faith (and in particular the 1846 basis of the Evangelical Alliance) and the texts that those two alternative Adventisms had produced (56–60; 63–66).⁵

The focus of this paper, besides a close look at the historical context, is (1) the theological emphasis of the 1872 Declaration, which is also visible (2) in

² I would like to express my gratitude to two anonymous reviewers, whose expertise in Adventist history, theology, and statements of beliefs helped sharpen some formulations and add a few important references; see footnotes 10 and 16.

³ The publication details are: [Uriah Smith,] *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-Day Adventists* (Battle Creek: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872), 14 pp. The full text is included in section 4 below.

⁴ S. Joseph Kidder’s (2009) attempt to situate the text in the enfolding Adventist discourse on creeds and statements of belief devotes only one page to the Fundamental Principles (112–113). Michael Campbell (2016) interprets the statement as a response to friction with other Adventists (100–103) and compares the 1872 Fundamental Principles with the “Fundamental Beliefs” of 1931 (105–108).

⁵ The impetus for the present article mainly arose from discussions and reflections on the development of Adventist doctrine in general, as found in Rolf Pöhler’s 1995 dissertation at Andrews University, “Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology,” now republished (Pöhler 2020).

its (hitherto neglected) structure, (3) the importance of the text in the development of Adventist theology, and (4) its significance as a witness of Adventism's contextual nature. Needless to say, this is not a full interpretive treatment of each section found in the *Fundamental Principles*; however, since little is available so far in terms of in-depth discussions on these Adventist statements of faith, the article may serve as a basis for further debate.

1. Historical Context

The Seventh-day Adventist Church came into being in the early 1860s. After the ups and downs that its forebears experienced in the apocalyptic-inspired and revivalist Millerite Advent Movement from the late 1830s onward, delegates of the then 3500-member group of sabbatarian Adventists chose the denominational name in 1860. During the following years, they formed regional organizations called "conferences" and, in 1863, a General Conference, i.e. a leadership structure with a committee that was to direct the new church and organize its ministry and expansion. These earliest Seventh-day Adventists were united by their experience in the Advent Movement, distinctive practices and beliefs (notably the Saturday Sabbath) and trust in God's special guidance through the prophetic gift of Ellen White. What they did not have was an official confession of faith.

This was a rather typical situation among several of the most vigorous religious movements in 19th century America.⁶ The anti-credal stance of the various Restorationist groups and (to a large degree) the Baptists had left strong marks upon the Millerites, and Seventh-day Adventists proved to be true to their Millerite heritage. The slogan "no creed but the Bible," which was popular in most of the American-born denominations of the period, essentially mirrored a disdain for tradition accompanied by individualism, mistrust of established authorities, and a mixture of biblicism and common sense reasoning.⁷

It is in such a context that the early Seventh-day Adventists found themselves developing an organization, an expanding network of congregations, institutions of various kinds, and an increasingly fixed body of doctrine. Their founders' earliest moves away from the Millerite Adventist mainstream in the latter half of the 1840s had proven to be both innovative (in terms of teaching)

⁶ For a comprehensive study on this period, see Hatch 1989.

⁷ See *ibid.*, *passim*, especially 40–46 and 162–183.

and painful (with regard to brotherly relations). By the mid-1850s, a stable body of believers had developed around shared convictions, the periodical *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* and a few leaders, notably James and Ellen White. Yet even in the 1860s, the self-image as God's end-time "remnant," a transitory organizational entity before the approaching *parousia*, implied that a well-formulated dogmatic statement was not deemed necessary.

These sentiments changed when the movement entered its second generation. The rather disorganized but close-knit spiritual community of a few dozen in the late 1840s had developed into a recognizable denomination two decades later. Their leaders were no longer in their twenties but had raised children up to adulthood. The non-credal stance coupled with a constant *sola scriptura* emphasis continued to determine the Adventist rhetoric, but the church had clearly developed traditions of its own, which its members sought to propagate, defend, and pass on to the next generation.

It is in this context that the first comprehensive statement of Adventist doctrine was drafted by a person whose authority was undisputed. Uriah Smith, 40 years old at the time, was among the leading personalities in the movement and is remembered mostly for his more than three decades of service as the editor of the leading denominational paper, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Yet Smith, who also served as secretary of the General Conference in 1863 and for four further one-year terms, actually preferred scholarly work and writing to top leadership. Together with his brother-in-law John N. Andrews, he was one of the two most important theologians of the early denomination.

If there was a specific occasion that prompted or facilitated this 1872 publication, it is not known. The first references to the existence of the pamphlet appear as mere mention of the title in March in the "Books, Pamphlets, Tracts, &c" and "Important Works" sections of the denominational paper.⁸ Unlike for other publications, no more extended discussion of the brochure seemed necessary, presumably because it was deemed merely a summary of what all Seventh-day Adventists agreed upon anyway.

The text clearly refers to other Advent believers as the primary frame of reference; the introduction asserts that "there are many who call themselves

⁸ See, e.g., "Important Works," *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath* [sic; the name went through several changes over the decades], March 19, 1872, 112, and March 26, 1872, 120.

Adventists who hold views with which we can have no sympathy.” It is possible that less-than-friendly exchanges with Miles Grant, a leader of the Advent Christian Church, contributed to the formulation of the 1872 “Fundamental Principles,” as Michael Campbell suggests (2016, 102–103). However, Adventists also had other enemies among the “First-day Adventists” (as they called them), and the statement itself does not provide any evidence relating to particular persons. What is significant, however, is that the very period of issuing the Fundamental Principles brought forth both rapprochement with other Christians and squabbles with competing Adventist groups: a lengthy period of attempts in establishing a kind of sabbatarian ecumenism with the Seventh Day Baptists (Campbell 2017), some effort in reaching out to non-sabbatarian Adventists,⁹ but also considerable friction with those Advent believers who rejected the sabbatarian stance.¹⁰

⁹ Just two years earlier, the denomination’s General Conference had passed the first resolution regarding interchurch relations. It said, “*Resolved*, That for the sake of our blessed Redeemer we desire to cultivate fraternal feelings, and maintain friendly relations, with all who name the name of Christ; and in particular with those who in common with us hold to the unpopular doctrine of the second advent of our Saviour near.” See “Business Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, March 15, 1870,” *RH*, March 22, 1870, 109.

¹⁰ One major memorial of this era is the publication of Isaac C. Wellcome’s *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People*, Yarmouth: privately printed, 1874. He commented on James White and Ellen Harmon (later White) in ways that were certainly not calculated as creating conciliation; see *ibid.*, 401–408. Many thanks to one of the anonymous article reviewers, who pointed out that the 1872 Declaration might actually have been motivated by changes in the larger post-Millerite realm: “Proto-Jehovah’s Witnesses under Charles Taze Russell were ... beginning to emerge” and “Christadelphian ideas began to crystalize around this period under their leader Thomas” as well. Moreover, he refers to former sabbatarian Adventists Snook and Brinkerhoff, who “abandoned their Sabbatarian Church of God in Iowa in 1871 and joined the Universalists” and adds, “*The Hope of Israel* was taken over by Jacob Brinkerhoff (William Brinkerhoff’s younger brother) and the name of the paper was changed in March 1872 to *Advent and Sabbath Advocate and Hope of Israel* because the new name better expressed ‘the two fundamental doctrines of the church’ [!];” he concludes, “clearly there was a concern about identifying markers in other Adventist bodies at the time,” and refers to the history of the Church of God (Seventh-day) written by Robert Coulter (2014), 147–149.

2. Theological Significance

The theological background and significance of the 1872 Fundamental Principles must be seen in the maturation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in terms of identity during the early 1870s. In the late 1840s and during the 1850s, sabbatarian Adventists still identified fully with the Advent revival of which most of them had been part. The 1860s consolidated their peculiarity in a permanent organizational manner; theologically, however, they were still entangled in the larger Millerite Adventist discourse. It is only in the 1870s that Seventh-day Adventists began to shed their Millerite connection in a unique manner: on the one hand, they claimed to represent the true Advent belief and underlined this claim by incorporating Millerite history and concepts into their theology – the very theology presented in the 1872 statement. On the other hand, they permanently broke with alternative Advent groups; one decade after organizing as a denomination, they did not need them anymore. Relationships with other Sabbath keepers and Christians who had not engaged in intra-Adventist quarrelling became more attractive.

This enlargement of Adventist relational options and theological perspectives did not occur in a painless manner. The Fundamental Principles witness to the uneasiness that Seventh-day Adventists had in bidding farewell to their closest fellow pilgrims to eternity; for not only does the text emphasize where they differ from the various types of Advent believers, but it also suggests that some of their views were to be considered “subversive of the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of God.” Yet apart from this short side blow in the introduction, the polemical tone of the era is almost absent. Thus one can classify this text as a relatively moderate expression of Seventh-day Adventist sentiments vis-à-vis other Adventist variants.¹¹

¹¹ Just one example for the sake of comparison: In 1875, James White offered the first article-length treatment of the question of how Adventists ought to relate to other Christians. He argued, “we should be on peaceable terms with the religious bodies, so far as possible with the free and uncompromising proclamation of the word of life.” However, he also lamented, “Notwithstanding their loud protestations against sectarian creeds, and their boasted free discussion of Scripture questions, we know of no people this side the church of Rome who are more shut up to dogmas, or more under the control of narrow, bigoted leaders, than these Adventists.” [James] White, “Our Relation to Other Religious Bodies,” *RH*, February 18, 1875, 60.

The 1872 Declaration of Fundamental Principles

Structurally, the piece seems confusing at first glance, in part because it has no section headings.¹² It largely presents Millerite chains of logic rather than the common systematic theological *topoi* found in earlier Protestant (e.g. Reformed, Baptist or Lutheran) confessions. Nevertheless, it is much more than a hodgepodge of general Christian, specific Millerite and peculiar Seventh-day Adventist convictions (as one could surmise after reading the introductory part). Almost each section – with the exception of those on God (I), the Scriptures (III) and baptism (IV) – presents typically Adventist views; the stress is, therefore, almost uniformly laid on the denomination’s *distinctive* teachings (called “the more prominent features of our faith” in the introduction).

A Christian Faith

- I: God
- II: Christ
- III: Scriptures
- IV: Baptism
- V: New Birth

C Christian Life

- XI: Decalogue
- XII: Sabbath
- XIII: Reform
- XIV: Conversion
- XV: Obedience

B Eschatology – Past

- VI: Prophecy
- VII: History
- VIII: Premillennialism
- IX: 1844
- X: Sanctuary

D Eschatology – Present

- XVI: Spiritual Gifts
- XVII: Three Angels
- XVIII: Invest. Judgment
- XIX: Grave
- XX: Death

E Eschatology – Future

- XXI: Resurrection
- XXII: Translation
- XXIII: Millennium
- XXIV: Earth’s Cleansing
- XXV: New Heaven & New Earth

The summary table demonstrates that Smith’s somewhat idiosyncratic presentation of the subjects, far from being merely a home-grown scheme, entails a well-crafted system that has five distinctive parts. Evidently Smith wanted to construct the entire text in modules which address certain pieces of

¹² The table below summarizes the main content of each section, but the absence of such headings in the original text may imply that in the mind of the author, each section was closely related to the others. This is also one reason why the beginning of new parts are not visible at once. The transitions between the five parts are largely buffered with connecting themes, and there are hardly any sudden turns between the parts.

Christian existence. Part A on the (general) Christian faith is close to the outline of many other evangelical statements of faith. Part B neatly refers to the core concepts among Millerites (which may be summarized as “past aspects of eschatology”) – with the addition of the peculiar Seventh-day Adventist explanation of 1844 (IX) and the associated sanctuary teaching (X). Part C parallels part A structurally in some ways;¹³ it thus elaborates what had become crucial to SDA identity after these sabbatarians had parted ways with the other Advent believers.

The text as a whole follows a “salvation historical” outline from the viewpoint and experience of contemporary Seventh-day Adventists, who could conveniently situate themselves in part D, which summarized their present experience of God’s working through prophecy (XVI), through their own movement (XVII), and in the form of a judgment that was held at present rather than in some unknown future (XVIII). Death (XX) and its corollary, hell (XIX on *sheol*/the grave), were not to be feared because God’s last acts in history were impending and certain (part E). Even though it is unknown whether Uriah Smith devised the five units of five themes each in a completely conscious manner,¹⁴ the back-and-forth movement and overall logic makes it an impressive construction once one looks below the surface.

This structure heavily leans towards eschatology, which is hardly surprising. What is more remarkable is that this eschatological bent led to some reinterpretations of traditional Christian views – such as the new birth taking place in two phases, “first, a moral change, wrought by conversion and a Christian life; second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ” (V). An even more thoroughly redefined concept occurs in the christological-soteriological treatment of the atonement, which is disconnected from the cross and associated with “the very last portion” of Christ’s work – i.e. his ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (II). It is such unorthodox interpretations of general Christian teachings that indicate the nature of 1872 Fundamental Principles:

¹³ I and XI: the basis of the respective section; II and XII: central Christian viz. Adventist foci; III and XIII: making the respective preceding article tangible; IV/XIV and V/XV: cause and effect connection.

¹⁴ Smith did not add headings to the parts A to E as identified above, nor did he actually divide the overall text into major parts. Moreover, he added three items in section C in the revised 1888 version, which distorted the overall balance in one way but strengthened the central part of the text in another.

the statement was not only an attempt at adding a few items to other Christian confessions, it was an endeavour to create an entirely new type of text.

The terminology chosen, “Fundamental Principles,” does not fully reveal this intention, but it fits in with the wholistic and salvation historical perspective that drives the entire declaration: it is not only about doctrines but a freshly designed and total conception of faith, life, and human history. No wonder it appears “very confusing” and “untraditional” in comparison to traditional confessional statements (Fortin 1998, 64). Whether or not the sanctuary doctrine viz. the peculiar Seventh-day Adventist understanding of atonement is the “theological center” of this early type of Adventism and of the 1872 statement, as has been suggested (ibid.), might be debated; however, at the very least, one can observe that these concepts were sufficiently weighty in the overall SDA understanding that they surfaced in several sections (II, IX, X, XI, XVIII). All in all, it is certainly safe to say that the superstructure of the Fundamental Principles is the history of salvation in its peculiar Adventist understanding. This understanding included a strong emphasis on a unique understanding of the atonement-sanctuary-judgment nexus and thus extended salvation history right into the present.

This is visible even in part C, which constitutes the actual centre of the 25 units – i.e. sections XI to XV, which essentially deals with the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath. Each of the first three of these is embedded in a panorama that includes the history of God’s people. This section on the Christian life represented the ideological core of Sabbath keepers at the time, and they were able to enhance this core by reinforcing it with the eschatological-salvation historical reasoning that runs through the entire text.

3. Enduring Relevance

Uriah Smith’s text is important in several regards: as (1) a witness to the theology of the period, (2) a statement of increasing importance as time went by, as (3) the beginning of a canonization of the anti-credal paradox, connected with (4) the initiation of discussions on the role of such secondary authorities, (5) as a milestone in the Adventist dogmatic self-reflection and doctrinal development, and (6) a prime example of contextuality in Adventist theology.

(1) As the first comprehensive Seventh-day Adventist statement of faith, it codified what may be called the Adventist *sensus fidelium* of the period. Theology always implies the art of summarizing and carving out formulations;

thus the 1872 statement is a prime example of early Adventist theology. The fact that it was republished for many years¹⁵ indicates that the text was as representative of denominational reasoning as its author claimed in the introduction. Various modifications that occurred in later editions suggest a lively discourse that centred on peculiar interpretations and details while leaving the major substance unchanged.

(2) Later publication in many of the annual *Yearbook* issues also hints at a significant increase of importance attributed to the Fundamental Principles, which was evidently not anticipated at the outset. This is not entirely atypical of theological statements: once written, they can develop a life of their own, at times in ways that may seem at odds with what the original authors intended.

(3) Paradoxically, the Fundamental Principles canonized the principle of non-canonization of confessional texts among Adventists: any future attempt at creating statements looking like creeds had to downplay their ontological status, even if their function might be very similar to that of historic creeds.¹⁶ Thus, the statement remains a testimony to the inherent tension in many credal or quasi-credal statements: the question of their authority remains a theological conundrum as long as they exist even though the complete rejection of such statements does not solve questions of validity and secondary authority as well.

(4) A related issue – and a specifically Adventist one – is the question of status that such texts *ought* to have in an (originally anti-credal, and, later) officially non-credal community. Confessional statements generally claim only secondary or derived authority; in this case, reference to a *lack of* authority actually makes the situation more complicated. Nevertheless, the 1872 Declaration assumed a partial credal role for the two ensuing generations in that it presented to the public what Adventists largely thought of as being their consensus.

(5) Uriah Smith certainly did not draft the statement with the aim of referring to doctrinal development among Seventh-day Adventists; nonetheless, the 1872 text became a milestone of Adventist doctrinal development and,

¹⁵ See section 5 below.

¹⁶ Pelikan (2003, 245, footnote 3) actually refers to the very assertion in the 1872 Declaration that “we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible.” Thanks, once more, to the anonymous reviewer who pointed me to this detail.

thus, a notable example of SDA dogmatic self-reflection. The continuity with crucial Millerite convictions and early sabbatarian Adventist thinking is overwhelming; at the same time some earlier elements such as the “shut door” teaching, which had been such a defining element for the denomination’s pioneers and had been abandoned in the early 1850s, were absent. Moreover, later versions of the 1872 Declaration slightly modified its atonement theology and added further items (see section 5 below), thus indicating that Adventism upheld some degree of dynamism with regard to both core convictions and the overall perspective on their faith.

(6) Among the most remarkable features of the 1872 Fundamental Principles is its contextuality. In fact, it may well be regarded as a prime example of Adventist contextual theology: the apologetic style, the Connectionist heritage permeating the text,¹⁷ the emphasis on distinctiveness, which was so common in the popular strands of 19th-century American Christianity,¹⁸ and the general theological orientation, which breathed the Millerite spirit even 28 years after the Great Disappointment of 1844: all of this indicated how substantially interwoven early Adventist convictions were with the environment from which the denomination had emerged.

The same is true to some extent for those elements which implied Adventist uniqueness: the many convictions derived from biblical apocalyptic and spelled out in detail in the Fundamental Principles were noted in contradistinction to competing Adventisms, thus relating to them primarily in a negative manner but demonstrating once more how much the discourse among the larger crowd of Advent believers had shaped their reasoning.

Even the fact that the 1872 Declaration was drafted by a single person entailed an important paradox of the period: in spite of the claim that such texts were non-normative (no creed!), Uriah Smith did in fact exert considerable

¹⁷ On the Connectionist-Adventist link in general, see Höschele 2009. Connectionist elements found in the 1872 Declaration are the non-credal stance, the reference to “the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of God,” the general biblicist approach to scripture, the emphasis on practical Christianity already in sections I to V, the legalist bent in sections X to XV, and the idea that justification is “for past offences” while grace is what God gives to enable believers “to render acceptable obedience” (XV).

¹⁸ See Hatch 1989, 162–189 (chapter 6, “The Right to Think for Oneself”).

influence as editor of the church paper. In spite of intermittent periods of conflict in the growing SDA community and among its leaders,¹⁹ in terms of theology an individual leader and his church were largely one. Thus the Fundamental Principles were right in claiming that they expressed “what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held” by the Seventh-day Adventists of the period.

4. Text²⁰

The title page quotes a biblical text: “*Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*” *Ephesians 2:20*

Fundamental Principles.

In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them. We often find it necessary to meet inquiries on this subject, and sometimes to correct false statements circulated against us, and to remove erroneous impressions which have obtained with those who have not had an opportunity to become acquainted with our faith and practice. Our only object is to meet this necessity.

As Seventh-day Adventists we desire simply that our position shall be understood; and we are the more solicitous for this because there are many who call themselves Adventists who hold views with which we can have no sympathy, some of which, we think, are subversive of the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of God.

As compared with other Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists differ from one class in believing [4] in the unconscious state of the dead, and the final destruction of the unrepentant wicked; from another, in believing in the perpetuity of the law of God as summarily contained in the ten commandments, in the operation of the Holy Spirit in the church, and in setting no times for the advent to occur; from all, in the observance

¹⁹ Valentine 2019 reports several episodes in which such conflicts erupt (1857: 193–194; 1860: 232–261 [ch. 9]; 1869–1870: 375–399; and 1872–1873 [!]: 473–503 [ch. 16]), even to the extent of dropping Uriah Smith from membership in the Battle Creed church while he continued serving as editor of the leading denominational paper and president of the Michigan Conference just two years before the 1872 Declaration was written. He was readmitted in 1871 (398).

²⁰ Page numbers are added in brackets; the topics in brackets are my formulations. For reprints and later versions, see section 5.

The 1872 Declaration of Fundamental Principles

of the Seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord, and in many applications of the prophetic scriptures.

With these remarks, we ask the attention of the reader to the following propositions, which aim to be a concise statement of the more prominent features of our faith.

- I - *[God]*

That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139 : 7.

- II - *[Christ]*

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist; that he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that he dwelt among men full of grace and truth, [5] lived our example, died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in Heaven, where, with his own blood, he makes atonement for our sins; which atonement, so far from being made on the cross, which was but the offering of the sacrifice, is the very last portion of his work as priest, according to the example of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in Heaven. See Lev. 16, Heb. 8 : 4, 5; 9 : 6, 7; &c.

- III - *[Scriptures]*

That the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

- IV - *[Baptism]*

That Baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, to follow faith and repentance, an ordinance by which we commemorate the resurrection of Christ, as by this act we show our faith in his burial and resurrection, and through that, of the resurrection of all the saints at the last day; and that no other mode fitly represents these facts than that which the Scriptures prescribe, namely, immersion. Rom. 6 : 3-5; Col. 2 : 12.

- V - *[New Birth]*

That the new birth comprises the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and consists of two parts: first, a moral change, wrought by conversion and a Christian life; second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ, whereby, if dead, we are raised incorruptible, and if living, are changed to immortality in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. John 3 : 3, 5; Luke 20 : 36.

- VI -

[*Prophecy*]

We believe that prophecy is a part of God's revelation to man; that it is included in that scripture which is profitable for instruction, 2 Tim. 3 : 16; that it is designed for us and our children, Deut. 29 : 29; that so far from being enshrouded in impenetrable mystery, it is that which especially constitutes the word of God a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, Ps. 119 : 105; 2 Pet. 2 : 19; that a blessing is pronounced upon those who study it, Rev. 1 : 1-3; and that, consequently, it is to be understood by the people of God sufficiently to show them their position in the world's history, and the special duties required at their hands.

[7]

- VII -

[*History*]

That the world's history from specified dates in the past, the rise and fall of empires, and chronological succession of events down to the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom, are outlined in numerous great chains of prophecy; and that these prophecies are now all fulfilled except the closing scenes.

- VIII -

[*Premillennialism*]

That the doctrine of the world's conversion and temporal millennium is a fable of these last days, calculated to lull men into a state of carnal security, and cause them to be overtaken by the great day of the Lord as by a thief in the night; that the second coming of Christ is to precede, not follow, the millennium; for until the Lord appears the papal power, with all its abominations, is to continue, the wheat and tares grow together, and evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, as the word of God declares.

- IX -

[1844]

That the mistake of Adventists in 1844 pertained to the nature of the event then to transpire, not to the time; that no prophetic period is given to reach to the second advent, but that the longest one, the two thousand and three hundred days of Dan. 8 : 14, terminated in that year, and [8] brought us to an event called the cleansing of the sanctuary.

- X -

[*Sanctuary*]

That the sanctuary of the new covenant is the tabernacle of God in Heaven, of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 8, and onward, of which our Lord, as great High Priest, is minister; that this sanctuary is the antitype of the Mosaic tabernacle, and that the priestly work of our Lord, connected therewith, is the antitype of the work of the Jewish priests of the former dispensation, Heb. 8 : 1-5, &c.; that this is the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days, what is termed its cleansing being in this case, as in the type, simply the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, to finish the round of service connected therewith, by blotting out and removing from the sanctuary the sins which had been transferred to it by means of the ministration in the first apartment, Heb. 9 : 22, 23; and that this work, in the antitype, commencing in 1844, occupies a brief but indefinite space, at the conclusion of which the work of mercy for the world is finished.

The 1872 Declaration of Fundamental Principles

- XI -

[Decalogue]

That God's moral requirements are the same upon all men in all dispensations; that these are summarily contained in the commandments spoken by Jehovah from Sinai, engraven on the tables of [9] stone, and deposited in the ark, which was in consequence called the "ark of the covenant," or testament. Num. 10 : 33; Heb. 9 : 4, &c.; that this law is immutable and perpetual, being a transcript of the tables deposited in the ark in the true sanctuary on high, which is also, for the same reason, called the ark of God's testament; for under the sounding of the seventh trumpet we are told that "the temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." Rev. 11 : 19.

- XII -

[Sabbath]

That the fourth commandment of this law requires that we devote the seventh day of each week, commonly called Saturday, to abstinence from our own labor, and to the performance of sacred religious duties; that this is the only weekly Sabbath known to the Bible, being the day that was set apart before paradise was lost, Gen. 2 : 2, 3, and which will be observed in paradise restored, Isa. 66 : 22, 23; that the facts upon which the Sabbath institution is based confine it to the seventh day, as they are not true of any other day; and that the terms, Jewish Sabbath and Christian Sabbath, as applied to the weekly rest-day, are names of human invention, unscriptural in fact, and false in meaning.

[10]

- XIII -

[Reform]

That as the man of sin, the papacy, has thought to change times and laws (the laws of God), Dan. 7 : 25, and has misled almost all Christendom in regard to the fourth commandment, we find a prophecy of a reform in this respect to be wrought among believers just before the coming of Christ. Isa. 56 : 1, 2; 1 Pet. 1 : 5; Rev. 14 : 12, &c.

- XIV -

[Conversion]

That as the natural or carnal heart is at enmity with God and his law, this enmity can be subdued only by a radical transformation of its affections, the exchange of unholy for holy principles; that this transformation follows repentance and faith, is the special work of the Holy Spirit, and constitutes regeneration or conversion.

- XV -

[Obedience]

That as all have violated the law of God, and cannot of themselves render obedience to his just requirements, we are dependent on Christ, first, for justification from our past offences, and, secondly, for grace whereby to render acceptable obedience to his holy law in time to come.

[11]

- XVI -

[*Spiritual Gifts*]

That the Spirit of God was promised to manifest itself in the church through certain gifts, enumerated especially in 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4; that these gifts are not designed to supersede, or take the place of, the Bible, which is sufficient to make us wise unto salvation, and more than the Bible can take the place of the Holy Spirit; that in specifying the various channels of its operation, that the Spirit has simply made provision for its own existence, and presence with the people of God to the end of time, to lead to an understanding of that word which it had inspired, to convince of sin, and work a transformation in the heart and life; and that those who deny to the Spirit its place and operation, do plainly deny that part of the Bible which assigns to it this work and position.

- XVII -

[*Three Angels*]

That God, in accordance with his uniform dealings with the race, sends forth a proclamation of the approach of the second advent of Christ; that this work is symbolized by the three angels of Rev. 14, the last one bringing to view the work of reform on the law of God, that his people may acquire a complete readiness for that event.

[12]

- XVIII -

[*Investigative Judgment*]

That the time for the cleansing of the sanctuary (see proposition X), synchronizing with the time of the proclamation of the third message, is a time of investigative judgment, first with reference to the dead, and at the close of probation with reference to the living, to determine who of the myriads now sleeping in the dust of the earth are worthy of a part in the first resurrection, and who of its living multitudes are worthy of translation—points which must be determined before the Lord appears.

- XIX -

[*Grave*]

That the grave, whither we all tend, expressed by the Hebrew *Sheol*, and the Greek *hades*, is a place of darkness in which there is no work, device, wisdom, or knowledge. Eccl. 9 : 10.

- XX -

[*Death*]

That the state to which we are reduced by death is one of silence, inactivity, and entire unconsciousness. Ps. 146 : 4; Eccl. 9 : 5, 6; Dan. 12 : 2, &c.

- XXI -

[*Resurrection*]

That out of this prison house of the grave mankind are to be brought by a bodily resurrect-[13]tion; the righteous having part in the first resurrection, which takes place at the second advent of Christ, the wicked in the second resurrection, which takes place a thousand years thereafter. Rev. 20 : 4–6.

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- XXII -

[Translation]

That at the last trump, the living righteous are to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and with the resurrected righteous are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, so forever to be with the Lord.

- XXIII -

[Millennium]

That these immortalized ones are then taken to Heaven, to the New Jerusalem, the Father's house in which there are many mansions, John 14 : 1–3, where they reign with Christ a thousand years, judging the world and fallen angels, that is, apportioning the punishment to be executed upon them at the close of the one thousand years; Rev. 20 : 4; 1 Cor. 6 : 2, 3; that during this time the earth lies in a desolate and chaotic condition, Jer. 4 : 20–27, described, as in the beginning, by the Greek term *abussos* (ἄβυσσος), bottomless pit (Septuagint of Gen. 1 : 2); and that here Satan is confined during the thousand years, Rev. 20 : 1, 2, and here finally destroyed, Rev. 20 : 10; Mal. 4 : 1; the theater of the ruin he has wrought in the universe, being appropriately made [14] for a time his gloomy prison house, and then the place of his final execution.

- XXIV -

[Earth's Cleansing]

That in the end of the thousand years, the Lord descends with his people and the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21 : 2, the wicked dead are raised and come up upon the surface of the yet unrenewed earth, and gather about the city, the camp of the saints, Rev. 20 : 9, and fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them. They are then consumed root and branch, Mal. 4 : 1, becoming as though they had not been. Obad. 15, 16. In this everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thess. 1 : 9, the wicked meet the everlasting punishment threatened against them, Matt. 25 : 46. This is the perdition of ungodly men, the fire which consumes them being the fire for which "the heavens and the earth which are now" are kept in store, which shall melt even the elements with its intensity, and purge the earth from the deepest stains of the curse of sin. 2 Pet. 3 : 7–12.

- XXV -

[New Heaven & New Earth]

That a new heaven and a new earth shall spring by the power of God from the ashes of the old, to be, with the New Jerusalem for its metropolis and capital, the eternal inheritance of the saints, the place where the righteous shall evermore dwell. 2 Pet. 3 : 13; Ps. 37 : 11, 29; Matt. 5 : 5.

5. Later Versions and Revisions²¹

After 1872, the Fundamental Principles were reprinted in various formats. Soon small changes and, eventually, significant additions were made.

²¹ Many thanks to Rolf Pöhler, who was so kind as to let me use his collection (from which much of the material in this section has been obtained).

(1) *Signs of the Times* (1:1, June 4, 1874) and (1:108, Jan. 28, 1875).

(2) *Review and Herald* (44:171, Nov. 24, 1874) – in the last of four installments of Uriah Smith’s “The Seventh-day Adventists . . .”

(3) Part of a booklet: [Uriah Smith,] *The Seventh-day Adventists: A Brief Sketch of Their Origin, Progress, and Principles* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1874), 24–32.

Here a different introduction is used:

As already stated, S. D. Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to certain well defined points of faith, for which they feel prepared to give a reason to every man that asketh them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as we know, entire unanimity throughout the body. They believe, [*here follows the Declaration*]

Except one mere change of a word in no. XXI, the only other modification occurs in no. X, where a few words are added:

... this work, in the antitype, commencing in 1844, occupies a brief but indefinite space, at the conclusion of which the work of mercy for the world *will be finished, and the second advent of Christ will take place.*

There were reprints of this booklet in 1876, 1878, and later years.

(4) Part of a revised version of this booklet: [Uriah Smith,] *A Brief Sketch of the Origin, Progress, and Principles of the Seventh-day Adventists*, Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1888.

In this version, a few significant changes in the explanations given to the atonement in sections II and X occur; these implied a move away from “atonement” being understood as only taking place in the heavenly sanctuary. Moreover, three entirely new items were added after no. XIII, thus strengthening the emphasis on Christian living in the central part of the Fundamental Principles:

XIV. That the followers of Christ should be a peculiar people, not following the maxims, nor conforming to the ways, of the world; not loving its pleasures nor countenancing its follies; inasmuch as the apostle says that “whosoever therefore will be” in this sense “a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4 : 4); and Christ says that we cannot have two masters, or, at the same time, serve God and mammon. Matt. 6 : 24.

XV. That the Scriptures insist upon plainness and modesty of attire as a prominent mark of discipleship in those who profess to be the followers of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart,” that the wearing of gold, pearls, and costly array, or anything designed merely to adorn the person and foster the pride of the natural heart, is to be discarded, according to such Scriptures as 1 Tim. 2 : 9, 10; 1 Peter 3 : 3, 4.

XVI. That means for the support of evangelical work among men should be contributed from love to God and love of souls, not raised by church lotteries, or occasions designed to contribute to the fun-loving, appetite-indulging propensities of the sinner, such as fairs, festivals, crazy socials, etc., which are a disgrace to the professed church of Christ: that the proportion of one's income required in former dispensations can be no less under the gospel; that it is the same as Abraham (whose children we are, if we are Christ's, Gal. 3 : 29) paid to Melchisedec (type of Christ) when he gave him a tenth of all (Heb. 7 : 1–4); the tithe is the Lord's (Lev. 27 : 30); and this tenth of one's income is also to be supplemented by offerings from those who are able, for the support of the gospel. 2 Cor. 9 : 6; Mal. 3 : 8, 10.

(5) In the 1889 *Yearbook*. This was a larger volume than usual, containing general information on the denomination and its activities. The Fundamental Principles were included in a slightly revised and expanded form (pp. 147–151). This was not continued in subsequent issues of the *Yearbook*; it was inserted again in 1905 (with a few very small changes) and continued to appear until 1914. The most important new elements in the 1889 text are two long footnotes commenting on sections II (on the atonement) and IX (on 1844).²²

(6) The Battle Creek Church Statements of 1891 and 1894.²³ The largest Seventh-day Adventist congregation by far, the Battle Creek Church, which counted 847 members in 1891 and 1521 in 1894,²⁴ issued pamphlets which contained names of officers, committees, etc., in addition to updated versions of the Fundamental Principles.

²² The discussions in the footnotes open up a chapter of its own in Adventist doctrinal history and cannot be appropriately dealt with here; they may be addressed in a future article on the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs. Suffice it to say that they illustrate the early Adventists' struggle of relating their literal understanding of biblical terminology such as "atonement" with varied occurrences of the imagery in the Bible and previous denominational pronouncements. The second footnote (on 1844) was evidently inserted to explain details that could no longer be known by the majority of readers 45 years after the event. The full text can be viewed online at <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1889.pdf>.

²³ See *Membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Battle Creek [...] 1891 and 1894*. Similar pamphlets were published in 1890 and 1893 (possibly also in 1892); these could not be accessed for this article, but they probably contain similar material.

²⁴ See the cover pages of the respective pamphlets. The total SDA membership in 1891 was 29,711 and in 1894, 37,404.

The changes are significant and merit a discussion of its own. Titled “Some Things Which Seventh-day Adventist Believe,” the 1891 text combines a number of shorter articles in the Fundamental Principles, shortens others, removes the numbering and Bible texts, and adds five new articles (on (a) backsliding vs. an active Christian life, (b) temperance and nutrition, (c) Satan, (d) government, and (e) the end of probation).²⁵ The 1894 text changes the wording in several minor cases and adds a short section on spiritualism; another significant change is that instead of referring to “tea, coffee, and the free use of flesh as food” as in 1891 (13) now the text formulates, “that ... tea, coffee, and the use of flesh as food, do not constitute a healthful diet” (14), presumably the most forceful reference to vegetarianism ever to appear in a representative Adventist statement of faith.

(7) The Fundamental Principles appeared in pamphlet form as no. 5 of the “Words of Truth” Series, with 29 sections, the one added to the 1889 *Yearbook* version being no. 14, on religious liberty. A few other, mostly very minor changes occurred in more than half of the other articles.

(8) *Review and Herald* (89:4, Aug. 22, 1912): Twenty-eight “Fundamental Principles,” “by the late Uriah Smith.”

N.B. It is likely that the statement was translated into various languages at different times; cf. the German version “Grundzüge der Glaubenslehren der Adventisten vom siebenten Tage.” *Herold der Wahrheit* 3.9 and 11, September and November 1886, 134/168–169.

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Zusammenfassung

Die Erklärung von 1872 mit dem Titel *Fundamental Principles* stellt in mehrererlei Hinsicht einen Meilenstein in der Entwicklung adventistischer Theologie dar. Sie verankerte das Denken der Denomination in dieser Phase noch in einem milleritischen Bezugssystem, zeigte jedoch gleichzeitig ihre Bewegung weg von ihren adventistischen Rivalen. Sie präsentierte die Überzeugungen der Bewegung in einer ganz eigenen Struktur und wurde dadurch ein wichtiges Instrument für die dogmatische Selbstreflexion von Adventisten. Gleichzeitig kanonisierte sie das anti-Credo-Paradox, Sekundärnormen im Hinblick auf die Bibel zu verwerfen und gleichzeitig genau solch einen normativen Text zu produzieren. Insgesamt sind die *Fundamental Principles* ein wichtiges Zeugnis der Kontextualität in Bezug auf theologisches Arbeiten im Adventismus des 19. Jahrhunderts.

Résumé

La Déclaration des principes fondamentaux de 1872 est à plusieurs égards une étape importante dans le développement de la théologie adventiste. Elle a enracinée la pensée de la dénomination de cette période dans un cadre millérite, tout en exprimant son éloignement de leurs concurrents adventistes contemporains. Elle a présenté les croyances du mouvement dans une structure unique et est ainsi devenue un outil important pour l'autoréflexion dogmatique adventiste; en même temps, elle a canonisé le paradoxe anti-crédal du rejet des normes secondaires à l'Écriture tout en produisant précisément une telle déclaration normative. Dans l'ensemble, les principes fondamentaux sont un témoin crucial de la contextualité de la théologisation adventiste du 19ème siècle.

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Robert Sloan Donnell

From Righteousness by Faith to Sinless Perfection

André Reis

Abstract

Robert Sloan Donnell (1846–1937) was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, evangelist and administrator. Donnell was president of the Indiana Conference at the time of the perfectionistic revival (also known as the “holy flesh” movement) which blossomed in that state in 1900. Donnell’s career in the denomination highlights a transformational period in Adventism marked by shifting views on the human nature of Christ, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the end of the world, as witnessed in the works of A. T. Jones, A. F. Ballenger, E. J. Waggoner, W. W. Prescott and Ellen G. White. Donnell’s struggle with perfectionism – especially in matters of health – is emblematic not only of the theological currents at work in the denomination at the time, but also of the way many today continue to conflate a particular view of consummated soteriology (sinless perfection) with Adventism’s accelerated eschatology (the imminence of the end) in the form of Last Generation Theology.

1. Introduction¹

Robert Sloan Donnell (1846–1937) was an early Seventh-day Adventist pastor, evangelist and church administrator, active between 1881–1907. A frequent

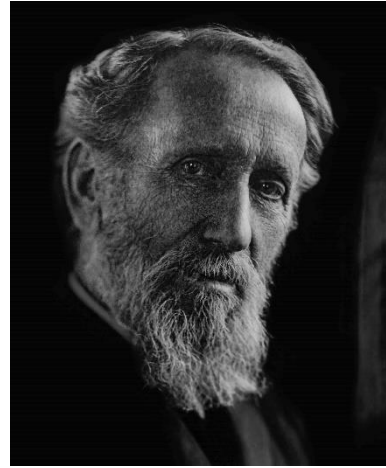
¹ Many thanks are due Terrie Aamodt, Gilbert Valentine, Michael Campbell and Jonathan Buttler for reading a draft of this paper and offering helpful suggestions.

Abbreviations: CAR: Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; EGWE: Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD; GCB: *General Conference Bulletin*; LB: Willie C. White Letter Book; RH: *Review and Herald*; SDA

presence in church publications and General Conference (GC) meetings of the period, Donnell served as president of the Missouri, Upper Columbia and Indiana Conferences from 1889 through 1901. A neglected and often misunderstood character in denominational history, Donnell became *persona non grata* in 1901 due to his involvement with what would later be pejoratively termed “the holy flesh movement” in Indiana (1898–1901).

Details of his otherwise obscure life have been illuminated by documents and personal correspondence unveiled in the William H. Grotheer Collection housed at the Center for Adventist Research (Andrews University) and deserve proper treatment. When used in conjunction with the digitized Adventist archives at the SDA headquarters and Ellen G. White Estate, as well as other primary sources, the collection sheds a nuanced, corrective light on his career as well as on the Adventism of his time.

As the first piece dedicated exclusively to Robert S. Donnell, a broad view of his life is offered in which important biographical data is interspersed with discussions of his theological positions and the wider denominational context in order to shed a light on the epochal events of which he was part, especially the “holy flesh movement” and how different iterations of “holy flesh” continue to subsist in the denomination.



Robert Sloan Donnell (1846–1937)
Courtesy of the Archives at Walla Walla University

2. Early Life

Robert Sloan was born in Belfast, Ireland, on February 7, 1846.² His family immigrated to the United States during Ireland’s Great Famine (1845–1855) and settled in the St. Louis, Missouri area. The young couple survived the harrowing voyage in a famine “coffin ship” only to die in a cholera pandemic

Archives: Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD.

² R. S. Donnell employment files, SDA Archives.

soon thereafter. Baby Robert was placed in an orphanage and adopted by Capt. John Denny Donnell, a veteran of the Civil War, and his wife Anne. The family traded cattle in Bond County, Illinois.³ The Donnells were part of a long line of Presbyterians hailing from North Carolina, and at the time of Robert's adoption, John Denny was an elder of the Greenville, Illinois, Presbyterian church (Norton 1879, 104).

Robert married Nannie F. Woods (1852–1919) on December 27, 1868, and the couple adopted a girl, Nellie (1880–1924).⁴

3. Joining Adventism and the Ministry

Donnell, his wife and mother-in-law became Adventists in 1875 during an evangelistic campaign led by George I. Butler in Missouri.⁵ Donnell became elder of the newly-formed Rolla, Missouri, SDA church in June 1876.⁶ Recognizing his potential, the Missouri Conference granted Donnell a ministerial license in 1881.

In November 1884, Donnell debated the Sabbath and soul sleep with renowned Baptist B. T. Taylor, and as a result, a company of ten members was organized in Aullville, Missouri.⁷ In that campaign he reported a six-month absence from home, his wife accompanying him as a singer.⁸ A successful

³ Cf. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Montgomery and Bond Counties, Illinois* 1892, 202–205, 222; US Census, 1860.

⁴ *RH*, July 8, 1902, 27; Letter, Viola Hopper to William H. Grotheer, 1965, box 5, folder 23, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

⁵ "Obituaries." *RH*, Jan. 21, 1909, 23. The obituary says 1874, but Butler only started evangelizing eastern and central Missouri in 1875. Cf. Butler, George I. "Allenton, MO." *RH*, May 27, 1875, 174; *ibid.* "Rolla, MO." *RH*, July 29, 1875, 38.

⁶ "M.O. T. & M. Society." *RH*, March 9, 1876, 79; *RH*, June 8, 1876, 182.

⁷ Allen, Nelson V. "Missouri." *RH*, Nov. 6, 1883, 11; Donnell, Robert S. "Missouri." *RH*, Nov. 27, 1883, 13.

⁸ Eight-year-old Nellie would write to the *Youth's Instructor*: "My papa is away from home all the time, preaching the truth, and my mamma goes with him to help in the singing. Grandma and I get very lonesome." See Letter Budget, *Youth's Instructor*, April 25, 1888, 80. Nellie would later support her dad in evangelistic campaigns as colporteur; cf. *RH*, Mar. 18, 1920, 31; "Arkansas Conference Organization." *RH*, June 5, 1888, 12; "News and Notes." *Indiana Reporter*, Dec. 9, 1903; "Life Boat Work in the South." *Life Boat*, February 1904, 41, SDA Archives; Donnell, R. S. "Rocklane." *Indiana Reporter*, Jan. 7, 1903.

evangelist, Donnell would bring between 75 and 125 new converts a year during this time, and as a charismatic leader, he once reported from Missouri: “I left all in harmony, and earnestly desiring to walk in all the light of the message.”⁹

4. Administrative and Theological Development

The year 1888 would be momentous for Donnell. He accepted the “righteousness by faith” message delivered by Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner in the General Conference session in Minneapolis in October and would later consider Jones a mentor.¹⁰ At that meeting, Donnell was elected to oversee the work in Tennessee and Kentucky, but he declined due to health issues.¹¹

In August, 1889, Donnell was elected president of the Missouri Conference and vice-president of the Missouri Tract Society.¹² Shortly thereafter, he was sent by the GC to Tennessee in order to secure legal counsel for several members who had been incarcerated in the wake of Sunday laws.¹³ Reporting on the events for the *Review*, Donnell wrote: “the storm cloud is rising.”¹⁴ At the GC session in the spring of 1891, Donnell became part of the GC Executive Board and other committees.¹⁵

In early 1892, problems with the construction of Walla Walla College led to the removal of the president of the Upper Columbia Conference (which then covered Washington, Oregon, Montana and Idaho) and Donnell was appointed to the post.¹⁶ He took an active part in the dedication Walla Walla College in December, offering the dedicatory prayer and writing a report for

⁹ Donnell, R.S. “Missouri.” *RH*, Feb. 8, 1887, 11.

¹⁰ Cf. his sermon in Spokane, Washington, titled “Not Saved by the Law” (*Spokane Chronicle*, Sep. 4, 1894, 3).

¹¹ *RH*, Nov. 6, 1888, 10; *RH*, Nov. 13, 1888, 9.

¹² Jones, Dan T. “Missouri Conference Proceedings.” *RH*, Sep. 10, 1889, 12.

¹³ Smith, L.A. “Persecutions for Sunday Labor in Tennessee.” *RH*, Nov. 19, 1889, 736. *RH*, June 17, 1890, 16. Donnell and L.A. Smith secured the counsel of Col. T.E. Richardson, but the case was lost and remanded on appeal by the Supreme Court.

¹⁴ Donnell, R.S. “Missouri.” *RH*, June 11, 1889, 379.

¹⁵ *GCB*, March 19, 1891, 163.

¹⁶ *Spokane Review*, Sep. 10, 1897, 3; “Report of the General Conference Committee Meetings from March 11–21, 1892.” *RH*, April 26, 1892, 266; “General Conference Proceedings.” *RH*, Dec. 14, 1886, 11. The circumstances of this appointment are discussed in Aamodt 1992.

the *Review*.¹⁷ Donnell would develop a close relationship with the school and built his house next to the college. He often held meetings at the school; at one campaign, twenty-four students were baptized.¹⁸ Concomitant with his duties as Conference president, Donnell was also elected president of the Walla Walla College Board, tasked with overseeing the college's construction.

The time in the northwest was also formative for Donnell's theology as he sought to strengthen the connection between righteousness by faith and Adventist eschatology being disseminated by Jones, Albion F. Ballenger and Ellen White. "The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer," Ellen White wrote in 1892.¹⁹ Donnell felt that the church was now ready for the "latter rain," the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit to prepare the church to meet her Lord.²⁰

Jones' presence as main speaker at the Upper Columbia camp meetings of 1894 and 1896 must have provided an opportunity for him and Donnell to confabulate on all matters theological, bringing him in closer alignment with Jones' views on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, "translation faith" and "physical righteousness," although he disagreed with Jones' views on the sinfulness of Jesus' human nature. (Donnell had never been convinced to abandon his pre-lapsarian views on the human nature of Christ, which "began when I was a boy," in Presbyterian church.²¹) Donnell embraced Jones' "Laodicean" emphasis and delivered it at the Anaconda, Montana, camp meeting, with an exhortation "to greater faithfulness by a full consecration to God."²² Jones' charismatic propensities must also have rubbed off on Donnell.²³

¹⁷ *RH*, Jan. 10, 1893, 29.

¹⁸ *The Bible Echo*, May 7, 1894, 142.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G. "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days." *RH*, Nov. 22, 1892, 2.

²⁰ Letter, R. S. Donnell to Ole A. Olsen, June 1896, SDA Archives.

²¹ Donnell, R. S. "The Nature of Christ and Man." Unpublished paper, 5 (Box 5, folder 27, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR); cf. Smith and Sherwood 1865, 544.

²² *The Anaconda Standard*, Sep. 5, 1897, 7.

²³ Breed, A. J. "The Upper Columbia Camp-Meeting." *RH*, July 3, 1894, 9; *ibid.* *RH*, July 28, 1896, 13; General Conference Committee Minutes, 1896, 167; 1894, 192, SDA Archives; *GCB*, Feb. 27, 1895, 368.

In early April, 1898, Donnell was informed by L. A. Hoopes, GC Secretary, that his services would be needed as president of the Indiana Conference. Initially apprehensive about the move due to his wife's health, after a few days later, he wired Hoopes: "You may count me for Indiana."²⁴

Donnell's years in the Northwest had been pleasant and fruitful. As the family returned to "the more densely populated districts, and murky atmosphere, of the East," they would "long for the pure air, mountain scenery, and freedom of the West," Donnell wrote in his farewell.²⁵ During his tenure at the Upper Columbia Conference (March 1892–June 1898), church membership more than doubled (600 to 1,500), no financial obligations were left outstanding, and the treasury had a surplus of fifteen hundred dollars.²⁶ Donnell also made sure that Walla Walla College received \$5,000 in pledges from the Conference before departing.

The move to Indiana brought Donnell back to his old mid-western stomping grounds, but would prove to be the unravelling of his career in the SDA church.

5. A. T. Jones and A. F. Ballenger: Developing Adventist Perfectionism

It will be helpful at this point to explore the wider religious and societal context of this period which made significant inroads in Adventism.

Millerism came onto the American religious landscape late into the Second Great Awakening (1795–1835), riding the last wave of its millennialist revivalism and its heightened interest in sanctification (see McLoughlin 1974). In the wider American Protestant context, famous preacher Charles Finney disseminated the perfectionism of John Wesley. "The perfect control of this preference over all the moral movements of the mind," Finney admonished his congregation in the 1830s, "brings a man back to where Adam was previous to the fall and constitutes perfect holiness" (Finney 1834, 12). Thus, the Adventism of the 1890s still reflected the way in which "Miller, scaled the heights of 'holiness' in pietistic preparation for the second advent," resulting in an

²⁴ Letter, L. A. Hoopes to R. S. Donnell, April 5, 1898; Telegram, R. S. Donnell to L. A. Hoopes, April 19, 1898, SDA Archives. Cf. Hoopes, L. A. "Summary Report of Spring Council." *RH*, April 19, 1898, 11; "Indiana, Notice." *RH*, April 26, 1898, 274; "Summary Report of the Spring Council." *RH*, April 19, 1898, 11; cf. Breed, A. J. "The Upper Columbia Camp-Meeting." *RH*, Jun 21, 1898, 12.

²⁵ "The Upper Columbia Camp-Meeting." *RH*, Jun 21, 1898, 12–13.

²⁶ *RH*, Jun 21, 1898, 12.

“individualistic perfectionism,” centered on “the millennial desire to eradicate all evil in the preparation of the world’s end,” observes Jonathan Butler (Butler 1986, 53.54).

The American Holiness Movement, founded in a camp meeting in Vine-land, New Jersey in 1867, gave rise to the Third Great Awakening (1875–1915), spurred on by the Social Gospel and Progressive movements.²⁷ In its soteriology, the American Holiness Movement was an outgrowth of Wesleyan perfectionism which advocated the complete eradication of the sinful nature at conversion.

Building on European pietism, in the 1880s eradicationists had taken an interest in healing, as seen in A.J. Gordon’s *Ministry of Healing* (1882) and R. Kelso Carter’s *The Atonement for Sin and Sickness, or, A Full Salvation for Soul and Body* (1884), who argued that “ample provision was made upon Calvary for the actual and practical destruction of the works of the devil — sin and sickness” (Carter 1884, 2).²⁸ This interest in health coalesced around the Divine Healing Movement, championed by Ethan O. Allen and Charles Cullis (1833–1892; see Chappell 1983, 5–26), which, in turn, built on German and Swiss pietism, as seen in the works of Albrecht Bengel (1682–1752), Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880), and Dorothea Trudel (1813–1862). Bengel in particular had a significant influence on John Wesley, who used to describe justification and sanctification as “the ‘double cure’” (Dayton 1987, 119).

During the 1890s Jones and Waggoner – who had introduced the denomination to righteousness by faith in 1888 – had imbibed in American Holiness and veered off into physical healing and bodily perfection as necessary for translation. Jones had been comparing these views with England’s Keswick movement (pronounced “Kezick”), which stressed the *suppression* of sinfulness at conversion. During the 1893 GC session, Jones endorsed the holiness views of Hannah Whitall Smith’s *Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* as well as the Methodist magazine *The King’s Messenger*, both of which figured prominently in the *Review* during his tenure as editor (cf. Knight 2011, 192).

²⁷ This third iteration of the Great Awakenings in America meant to address the following question, according to McLoughlin: “How can Christian people reconcile Scripture and modern science in such a way as to deal adequately with the Industrial Revolution?” (McLoughlin 1974, 135).

²⁸ For a helpful discussion on divine healing in 19th-century America, see Hejzlar 2010, 1–40. See also Bebbington 1989, 171–173; Knight 2011, 192–196.

Although Jones had defended forensic atonement in 1888, even claiming at one point that works had no part to play in salvation, by 1897 he was advocating the notion that the expungement of the sinner's record was only available for the "new-born believer"; afterwards, the believer had to develop *imparted* righteousness through the inward presence of the Holy Spirit for the "perfecting of the saints ... that, instead of sin, the life may forever bear the fruits of righteousness."²⁹

Jones' two stages of salvation were in synchrony with Keswick's "second blessing," i.e., that at conversion, the indwelling Holy Spirit triggers a process of suppression of the believer's sinful nature (cf. Dayton 1987, 105–107; Bebbington 1989, 171–173; Knight 2011, 192–196). This imparted righteousness, Jones argued, had a direct connection with health: "Perfect holiness embraces the flesh as well as the spirit; it includes the body as well as the soul. Therefore, as perfect holiness can not be attained without holiness of body, and as holiness of body is expressed in the word 'health,' so perfect holiness can not be attained without health."³⁰ Waggoner developed similar views, stating in 1889: "All the power which Christ had dwelling in Him by nature, we may have dwelling in us by grace, for He freely bestows it upon us," which could manifest itself in "faith healing."³¹

As a Millerite convert from Methodism, Ellen White still held to Wesleyan views of Christian perfection and its heavy eradicationist emphasis, as several of her published statements demonstrate. In 1882, she had warned: "Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement."³² In 1894–1895, she argued that Christ had come to show that believers can become "the manifestation of His divine perfection," and that "[e]ach must obtain a character purified from every stain of sin."³³ Five years later, she contended that "through belief in him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin,

²⁹ Cf. Knight 2011, 57; Jones, A. T. "Unto Perfection." *RH*, Dec. 1897, 6.

³⁰ Jones, A. T. "Saving Health." *RH*, Nov. 22, 1898, 8.

³¹ Waggoner, E. J. "God Manifest in the Flesh." *Signs of the Times*, Jan., 21, 1889, 6–7; *ibid.* 1890, 30. Cf. Whidden 2008, 210.

³² *Testimony for the Church* 31, 210, quoted by Donnell 1907, 25.

³³ Manuscript 95, 1894; "Special Testimony." Sep. 1, 1895, EGWE.

all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity."³⁴ In September of 1900, she echoed Ballenger's camp meeting views on sinless perfection: "To be redeemed means to cease from sin,"³⁵ and as late as March 1903, she continue to contend that "[n]o part of the diseased life of sin is to remain."³⁶

As Jones studied these statements by Ellen White, with an ear to holiness authors, he wove a uniquely Adventist cord of three strands made up of the Holiness Movement's atonement of the body, Ellen White's teachings on perfection and health, and Adventist eschatology. Thus, he would claim in 1893 that "health reform was given to the people of God ... to fit the people for translation."³⁷

The influence of the American Holiness Movement on Adventism was not limited to Christian perfection; Ellen White's views on health reform too reflected a general movement in American society – both religious and secular – towards health and healing, as explored by Ronald Numbers in his seminal book *Prophethess of Health* (Numbers 2008, 127–155; cf. also Blake 1974, 30–50). This interest was due an epidemic of dyspepsia in the United States due to poor dietary habits, as well as society's curiosity for alternative medical treatments, such as the "water cure" developed by Vincent Priessnitz of Gräfenberg, (Austrian Silesia), which had been growing in acceptance America since the 1840s.

Moreover, the Holiness Movement also played a part in the denomination's acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity. For most of its initial decades, Adventists did not accept the personhood of the Holy Spirit. In 1877, Joseph H. Waggoner described it as "that awful and mysterious power which proceeds from the throne of the universe" (J. H. Waggoner 1877, 9). In 1891, Ellen White had warned: "The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery not clearly revealed," and added that, on this matter, "silence is golden."³⁸

During the 1890s, however, Ellen White's understanding of the personhood of the Holy Spirit would undergo a shift, helped by her connection with Herbert C. Lacey, Willie White's brother-in-law. Lacey's family had left the Anglican church in Tasmania to join the Adventist church in 1887, and, like

³⁴ "Christian Perfection." *RH*, April 24, 1897, 1, quoted by Donnell 1907, 12.

³⁵ White, Ellen G. "Self-Exaltation." *RH*, Sep. 25, 1900, 1.

³⁶ *Signs of the Times*, March 11, 1903.

³⁷ *GCB*, 1893, 88.

³⁸ Letter, Ellen White to Bro. Chapman, June 11, 1891 (Letter 7, 1891), EGWE.

others “brought their orthodox Christian beliefs with them into Adventism,” including Trinitarian beliefs, writes Valentine (Valentine 2017, 225 and 231 with fn. 68; *ibid.* 2014, 444–445). Lacey’s decisive encounter with the Holy Spirit happened under the influence of Holiness preachers at a convention in Detroit in March 1894, while he was attending Battle Creek College. Lacey had the occasion to study the works of holiness authors such as Gordon, Pierson and Andrew Murray on the long trip to Australia in September 1895 and was soon enlisted by Marian Davis who was putting together *The Desire of Ages*. Lacey’s holiness connections played a part in the book’s defense of the deity of Christ and the personhood of the Holy Spirit (see Valentine 2017, 221; Burt 2012, 18).

Back in America, the newfound Christian doctrine of the personhood of the Holy Spirit made a significant impact on Adventism, and by the Summer of 1897, Jones and Ballenger teamed up to launch the “Receive Ye the Holy Ghost” revival, a crusade that emphasized sanctification and physical healing by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As Ballenger preached it in camp meetings across North America, Jones would drive it home through the pages of the *Review*.³⁹

For a time, Ballenger was the denomination’s foremost revivalist; in early 1898, he reported 240 baptisms in Battle Creek alone. That productive winter was followed by a busy summer of camp meeting engagements where his revival was accompanied by cases of healing. “The time has now come,” he later concluded, “for healing power to be manifested among the remnant people of God.”⁴⁰ Ballenger was elated that at the 1898 Logansport camp meeting “between thirty and forty people from the city arose for prayer. ... Cleanse the Seventh-day Adventist Church of all uncleanness, and I will promise the loudest cry of the loud cry the same day.”⁴¹ The loud cry had sounded triggering “the sealing-time, the time of the latter rain. Stop sinning. ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’”⁴² Writing to Ellen White in October of 1898, GC president

³⁹ *Logansport Pharos*, Sep. 6, 1898, 21.

⁴⁰ Ballenger, A.F. “Camp-Meeting Notes.” *RH*, Nov. 15, 1898, 12; “Healing a Madalen.” *The Bible Echo*, Dec. 8, 1898.

⁴¹ Ballenger, A.F. “Camp-Meeting Notes.” *RH*, Nov. 8, 1898, 12.

⁴² *Ibid.* “Camp-Meeting Notes.” *RH*, Oct. 18, 1898, 11.

George A. Irwin rejoiced that the 1898 camp meetings had experienced “an unusual degree of the Spirit and blessing of the Lord.”⁴³

Ellen White cheered the renewed interest in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit towards sanctification. “The Laodicean message,” she would write in late summer 1900, “must be proclaimed with power; for now it is especially applicable.”⁴⁴

Self-proclaimed Laodicea was beginning to shake off its slumber, but it would soon experience a rude awakening.

6. Indiana’s “Laodicean” Condition

If the charismatic revival sweeping the denomination in North America at the turn of the century did not rise in a vacuum, but reflected dynamics at work in the larger American religious landscape, neither did the perfectionism about to erupt in Indiana rise *ex nihilo* within Adventism, but merely echoed contemporary denominational currents.

It was at the height of the church’s revival that Donnell arrived in Indiana, in time for the camp meeting at Spencer Park in Logansport (Sep. 1–11, 1898).⁴⁵ Before Ballenger’s arrival as guest speaker, Donnell preached on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a sermon titled “The Future Home: or Where Will God’s People Spend Eternity.”⁴⁶ Donnell’s gifts as a speaker did not go unnoticed by local reporters who described him as “a man of pleasing address and well-liked by the entire population of the camp,” and “a forcible speaker... a gentleman of pleasing personality.”⁴⁷

Ballenger – who had just been at the Arkansas, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois camp meetings – arrived on Sep. 5, 1898 and preached his famous “Receive Ye the Holy Ghost” sermon that same evening and at least two more times later in the week.⁴⁸ Ballenger had preached it the previous year in Logansport and his return added fuel to Indiana’s revival.⁴⁹

⁴³ G. A. Irwin to Ellen G. White, Oct. 3, 1898, EGWE.

⁴⁴ White, Ellen G. “Self-Exaltation.” *RH*, Sep. 25, 1900, 1.

⁴⁵ “Camp-Meetings for 1898.” *RH*, July 12, 1898, 14; “Special Notices.” *RH*, Aug 2, 1898, 13.

⁴⁶ *Logansport Pharos*, Sep. 5, 1898, 5.

⁴⁷ *Logansport Pharos*, Sep. 1, 1898, 21; *Logansport Daily Reporter*, Sep. 1, 1898, 5.

⁴⁸ “Camp-Meetings for 1898.” *RH*, July 12, 1898, 14; *Logansport Pharos*, Sep. 6, 1898, 21; *Logansport Daily Reporter*, Sep. 8, 1898, 5.

⁴⁹ *Logansport Pharos*, Sep. 6, 1898, 21.

Donnell was no doubt happy to see Ballenger again in Indiana. Just a few weeks earlier, Ballenger had preached on the Holy Spirit at the Upper Columbia Conference camp meeting in College Place (May 2–12), where Donnell had announced his departure to Indiana. Almond J. Breed reported that Ballenger's revival in College Place ushered in "one of the most touching spiritual efforts met with in the history of some of the oldest brethren in attendance."⁵⁰ "Experiences mentioned in 'Early Writings'... were actually seen," wrote Breed, referring to Ellen White's call for "primitive faith and practice" as prelude for the "latter rain."⁵¹ Particularly impressive had been the Salem, Oregon, camp meeting (May 19–29), where "for over an hour the shouts of victory went up in rapid succession from those who had been delivered from the bondage of sin,"⁵² and thirty people were healed, Ballenger reported in the *Review*. All North Pacific Conference officials had jumped on Ballenger's holiness train.⁵³

At this juncture, the denomination was still absorbing the shockwaves of the righteousness by faith message delivered in 1888, and law-keeping still made Adventism "dry as the hills of Gilboa," noted Ellen White.⁵⁴ Donnell found a similar state of apathy in Indiana, where Sabbath-keeping was the sole concern.⁵⁵ The Conference's finances were in disarray and Donnell – who had sold his home in Washington at a loss of \$700.00, not an insignificant sum – paid workers out of his own pocket and loaned money to the Conference.⁵⁶

For some time, Ballenger had decried "the lack of power among us" and longed that "apostolic power in preaching and healing shall be restored to the remnant people." The problem, he thought, was "the sinning of the people of God" which had "long deferred the 'latter rain', but ... a remnant within the

⁵⁰ Breed, A. J. "The Upper Columbia Camp-Meeting." *RH*, Jun 21, 1898, 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* "The North Pacific Camp-Meeting." *RH*, June 28, 1898, 10; *Early Writings*, 134.

⁵² Ballenger, A. F. "Notes from the Salem, Ore., Camp-Meeting." *RH*, July 12, 1898, 12.

⁵³ *RH*, Jun 21, 1898, 16.

⁵⁴ Manuscript 10, 1890, EGWE.

⁵⁵ Letter, Joseph M. Davis to William H. Grotheer, Feb. 20, 1959; Jan. 21, 1965, box 5, folder 23, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR. A church member offered to break up his land into parcels and hand them for free to anyone who agreed to keep the Sabbath. One man took him up the offer only to change his mind about the Sabbath once he had the deed.

⁵⁶ Letter, R. S. Donnell to Willie C. White, April 24, 1902, EGWE.

church are gaining the victory over 'every besetting sin' – not for a few days or weeks, but *forever*. There is no excuse for sinning."⁵⁷

The mixture of Ballenger's perfectionism and Jones' "gospel of health" proved to be an irresistible recipe to Donnell. An avid believer in the *Testimonies* – who had joined the SDA church precisely because it had a "prophet" – Donnell had embraced health reform since joining the church in 1875, and believed it was connected to sanctification, a belief that often led to excesses in diet and recurring health issues.⁵⁸ "In Elnora," Indiana (1901–1904), a friend wrote, "we felt he was extreme on the subject of health reform because he tried to live and work without eating meat, milk, butter, cheese or eggs and was soon looking thin, weak and old."⁵⁹ At the time of his retirement in 1907, Donnell looked "haggard and weak," G. I. Butler wrote to Willie White.⁶⁰

The Indiana leadership thought Ballenger's revival meant "death to the formality that has long reigned among us."⁶¹ In late summer 1898, Davis reported to the *Review*: "We have reached the time of the message, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost' and we are actually having pentecostal [sic] times and apostolic experiences."⁶² In his invitation to speak at the Alexandria camp meeting in 1899, Donnell wrote to Ballenger: "I am quite anxious for you to be with us, and I hope that if it can be arranged, you will say nothing that would militate against your coming."⁶³ When the GC could not send Ballenger, Donnell asked for Jones, but that request too was turned down.⁶⁴

There were also signs that all was not well with Indiana's revival. Reporting about the Alexandria camp meeting in the *Review*, A.J. Breed mentioned "some features of the meeting that I was sorry to see, but before it closed, a victory was gained and these were overcome."⁶⁵ Other such negative reports

⁵⁷ Ballenger, A. F. "The Anchor Holds." *RH*, Aug 1, 1899, 11.

⁵⁸ *GCB*, Feb. 22, 1899, 50.

⁵⁹ Letter, Viola Hopper to Jesse Dunn, Feb. 9, 1959, box 5, folder 23, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

⁶⁰ April 11, 1907, EGWE.

⁶¹ Letter, Viola Hopper to William H. Grotheer, 1965; Ballenger, A. F. "Camp-Meeting Notes." *RH*, Oct. 18, 1898, 10.

⁶² Davis, S. S. "Indiana." *RH*, Aug 23, 1898, 11.

⁶³ Letter, R. S. Donnell to A. F. Ballenger, June 27.

⁶⁴ Letter, R. S. Donnell to L. A. Hoopes, June 26; July 6, 17, 1899.

⁶⁵ Breed, A. J. "The Indiana Campmeeting." *RH*, Aug 29, 1899, 560–561.

from Indiana must have reached Battle Creek in 1899–1900, and at the Spring council of the GC Committee, a motion was made to transfer Donnell to Utah as superintendent (the reason given was his wife's health), but Donnell saw "no light in the move" and the motion was rescinded.⁶⁶

In preparation for the 1900 camp meetings, the Indiana leadership called for a two-week workers' meeting in May in Indianapolis in order to "receive the Holy Ghost."⁶⁷ At the meeting, however, a public disagreement arose between Donnell and the more ardent revivalists, and the meetings soon came to a close.⁶⁸ Writing about the meetings to Ellen White in June 1900, Indiana pastor O.S. Hadley and his wife, both of whom opposed the perfectionistic revival, reported that "new light" on the human nature of Christ as sinless as that of the pre-fall Adam (pre-lapsarian), and perfectionism were being preached with zeal in the state.⁶⁹ Up to this point, the Adventist view of the human nature of Christ had been consistently post-lapsarian, i. e., fallen.

In the meantime, opposition to the holiness push in Indiana increased, despite a large influx of new converts under Donnell's leadership.⁷⁰ Seasoned members were uncomfortable with the "new light" on the human nature of Christ, an unbalanced view of sanctification and the quasi-Pentecostal style of worship.⁷¹ Isolated reports of physical demonstrations in worship circulated, including accounts of a "garden of Gethsemane experience" in which a fainting during worship indicated that the individual in question had received the "Holy Spirit."⁷² (This phenomenon was a resurgence of the early Adventist practice of being "slain in the Spirit", i. e., fainting in worship. Ellen White appears to have experienced this during a meeting in Maine in 1845 in which she would lie on the floor, rise, speak and lie down again for most of the meeting. She would later frown upon such expressions.⁷³) Some began calling the

⁶⁶ General Conference Committee Minutes, 1900, 105.

⁶⁷ "Plans of the Adventists." *Indianapolis Journal*, May 16, 1900, 8; May 19, 1900, 3; May 20, 1900, 8; May 21, 1900, 12; *Indianapolis News*, May 17, 1900, 10.

⁶⁸ Roberts, G. A. "The Holy Flesh Fanaticism." D. F. 190, June 11, 1923, EGWE; Statement, Jesse Dunn to William Grotheer, n. d., box 5, folder 36, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

⁶⁹ Letter, O. S. Hadley to Ellen White; Ida V. Hadley to Ellen White, June 1, 1900, EGWE.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Roberts, G. A. "The Holy Flesh Fanaticism." D. F. 190, June 11, 1923, EGWE.

⁷³ Cf. the comprehensive report of the event in Weaver 1988; cf. Hoyt 1987.

revival “the holy flesh movement,” although none of the Indiana ministers used the terminology.

Grant A. Roberts, a young man at the time who later became Conference and Division president, knew Donnell as “a man of earnestness and positiveness [sic]” and sought him in private.⁷⁴ After listening to Roberts, Donnell assured him that he would not have anyone “going over this Conference preaching any such doctrine.” But Donnell would not be able to contain the *faux* “latter rain” that was about to fall in Indiana under his watch.

The increase in new converts must have been a sign to Donnell and his team that their revival was working, despite the occasional excesses. In response to the prophetess’s calls in February 1900, instead of one state-wide camp meeting as in previous years, Donnell planned three that year, ten days each: in Sullivan, Lafayette and Muncie.⁷⁵ In Lafayette, chartered electric street cars were decorated with banners and staffed with musicians to promote the camp meeting.⁷⁶ Special guest Prof. Salisbury from Battle Creek spoke on Christian education and Indiana pastor J. M. Ellis preached on “Christian Temperance,” stating: “Christ took up the work of salvation at the place where Adam failed; that he carried the work out successfully, and now all who trust him can overcome every evil propensity.”⁷⁷ During emotional altar calls in Lafayette, “people would get so enthused ... that some would collapse at the altar,” an observer later recalled.⁷⁸ Prof. Salisbury was “disgusted” with what he saw, wrote a conference worker.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Roberts, G. A. “The Holy Flesh Fanaticism.” D. F. 190, June 11, 1923, EGWE. G. A. Roberts’s statement – written almost 25 years after the fact – contains some inaccuracies, thus, only the most plausible lines of evidence from his statement are quoted here.

⁷⁵ Donnell, R. S. “The Indiana Camp-Meeting.” *RH*, July 10, 1900, 14.

⁷⁶ Statement, Irvin Metzger to William H. Grotheer, Aug 4, 1965, box 5, folder 35, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

⁷⁷ *Lafayette Daily Courier*, Aug 23, 1900. See Ellen White’s identical statement in *Signs of the Times*, June 13, 1900, 3. The landmark study on Ellen White’s views on the humanity of Christ is Whidden II 1997. For a defense of the pre-lapsarian view, see Adams 1994; for a defense of the post-lapsarian view, see Zurcher 1999.

⁷⁸ Statement, Irvin Metzger to William H. Grotheer, Aug 4, 1965, box 5, folder 35, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

⁷⁹ Statement, Jesse Dunn to William H. Grotheer, n. d., box 5, folder 36, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

The camp meeting in Muncie (Sep. 13–22) was attended by GC officers A.J. Breed, Stephen Haskell and wife, and briefly by GC president George A. Irwin. On the first Sabbath Donnell preached “The Cleansing Message.”⁸⁰ The service closed with a protracted altar call and an emotional testimony by a certain brother Hill about a “prophetic” dream he had recently about the worldwide reach of the Adventist message.⁸¹

Tensions between Indiana and GC officials escalated. Haskell had been hearing similar “cleansing” messages around Battle Creek since he arrived from an overseas stay in 1899. “Some of the strangest doctrines I have heard,” he wrote to Ellen White in 1899, “is the Seal of God cannot be placed on any person of Grey Hairs [sic], or any deformed person, for in the closing work we would reach a state of perfection, both physically and spiritual, where we would be healed from all physical deformity and then could not die.”⁸² W.W. Prescott and E.J. Waggoner were the source of “physical righteousness,” namely, that “if a man eats right, he will never die ... he eats his way into heaven.”⁸³

Haskell also thought that Ballenger’s charismatic revivals in the North Pacific in early 1900 would create a shallow experience by focusing on physical healing.⁸⁴ What Haskell saw in Indiana was another iteration of these problematic views on health and salvation competing for the church’s attention at the turn of the century. The denomination’s own brand of the “gospel of health” streaming out of Battle Creek, and not entirely without Ellen White’s support, would soon bifurcate into at least two theological currents in the denomination: Kellogg’s pantheism and Indiana’s perfectionism (see Valentine 2005, 166–172).

During Donnell’s emotional altar call on the first Sabbath in Muncie, Haskell showed his disapproval by going back to his own tent, followed by many who opposed the revival.⁸⁵ There was “strong opposition to his [Donnell’s] re-election by the delegates from some of the other churches,” reported

⁸⁰ “Adventists on Sabbath Day.” *Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 16, 1900, 4.

⁸¹ “Adventists on Sabbath Day.” *Muncie Daily Herald*, Sep. 15, 1900, 5; Hattie Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 22, 1900, EGWE.

⁸² Letter, Stephen N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, Oct. 3, 1899, EGWE.

⁸³ Letter, Stephen N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, Nov. 23, 1899; *ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1900, EGWE.

⁸⁴ Letter, Stephen N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, May 28, 1900, EGWE.

⁸⁵ “Adventists on Sabbath Day.” *The Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 16, 1900, 4; Hattie Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 22, 1900, EGWE.

the *Indianapolis News*.⁸⁶ Scattered groups could be seen arguing throughout the camp, and exertion during worship would cause some to tremble as they rushed to the cafeteria.⁸⁷ Reports of physical healings were also circulating.⁸⁸

In the afternoon, pastor F.M. Roberts preached on the 144,000 and took a swipe at the GC folks for stirring “dissension.”⁸⁹ The following morning, Donnell warned that the camp meeting was the “Minnesota Conference [1888] all over again,” and would have to be discussed.⁹⁰ At another meeting, frustrated by the GC leaders’ meddling and their copious use of the *Testimonies*, Conference evangelist S.S. Davis – a former Campbellite – stated that the gift of the Holy Spirit was not exclusive to one person.⁹¹ Despite these disagreements, other sermons during the camp meeting were fairly orthodox.

On the last Sabbath, Haskell preached a two-hour sermon on the early experiences of SDAs in relation to perfectionism which “fell like a thunder” on the congregation according to his wife. Donnell then stood up and justified the revival and the meeting was dismissed. At the 3 o’clock meeting, Donnell’s topic was “Was Christ of Sinful Flesh?” in which he argued that “that He was born without sin.”⁹² At a later meeting with the ministers, Haskell and Breed explained that “even if they were right, they had gotten ahead of the message, for the rank and file of our people would not endorse it.”⁹³

The battle lines had been drawn. Upon returning to Battle Creek, Haskell and his wife sent Ellen White (just arrived from Australia) a negative account of the camp meeting, describing a mix of theological error and excitement.⁹⁴ The main issue to him seemed to be the human nature of Christ which the Indiana leaders stated was “sinless” while Haskell argued was “fallen.” Haskell

⁸⁶ Cf. *Indianapolis News*, Sep. 14, 1900, 12.

⁸⁷ Statement, Irvin Metzger to William H. Grotheer, Aug 4, 1965, box 5, folder 35, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR; Statement, Burton Wade, D.F. 190, EGWE.

⁸⁸ “New Officers of Adventists.” *Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 20, 1900, 2.

⁸⁹ *The Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 16, 1900, 4; Letter, Hattie Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 22, 1900, EGWE.

⁹⁰ Letter, Hattie Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 22, 1900, EGWE.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² “Adventists Prolong Stay.” *The Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 23, 1900, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Letter, Hattie Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 22, 1900; *ibid.*, Sep. 10, 1900; Letter, Stephen N. Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 25, 1900, EGWE.

thought this view was akin to previous iterations of “holy flesh,” only now it was based on Christ’s “holy flesh” which was promised to the believer in preparation for translation. Writing to GC president Irwin, A.J. Breed saw “nothing especially in it more than simply Justification by Faith, put in another way. It is not so much of what they are preaching as the way they are doing it.”⁹⁵

Not only was Indiana’s revival based on a novel view of the humanity of Christ interspersed with perfectionism, but Donnell had introduced a new worship style and music which shocked the Haskells. “There is a great power that goes with the movement,” he alerted Ellen White, “because of the music that is brought to play in the ceremony.”⁹⁶ The main musical influence appears to have been Donnell’s son-in-law Robert Fuller, director of the Conference’s Lighthouse Mission, where he had been using music in evangelism.⁹⁷ Fuller, a violinist and former Captain in Salvation Army, had just married Nellie and was now contemplating joining the SDA ministry. In Muncie, the band included trumpets, flutes, strings, an organ, tambourines, cymbals, a big bass drum, and a small choir. The hymnal used was *Garden of Spices* (Nelson, Nelson and Birdsall 1899) – a new, non-Adventist anthology of traditional hymns – alongside the SDA hymnal *Christ in Tunes*. Sermons ended with long, emotional altar calls accompanied by extensive shouting – a common practice in early Adventism – and instrumental music (see Graybill 1991 a and 1991 b). Haskell thought the style was “a complete copy of the Salvation Army method, and when they get on a high key, you cannot hear a word from the congregation in their singing, nor hear anything, unless it be shrieks of those who are half insane.”

Haskell took the opportunity to order “a testimony, a fresh one” by Ellen White to address the controversy. The loud outbursts in worship had been “distressing” to them and they obviously did not like the music; Hattie Haskell even used the misnomer “dance tunes” to describe the music, which may explain Ellen White’s reference to “shouting, with drums, music and dancing” in her letter to the Haskells.⁹⁸ But this was an overreaction on their

⁹⁵ Letter, A. J. Breed to George A. Irwin, July 22, 1900, Record Group 9, SDA Archives.

⁹⁶ Letter, S. N. Haskell to Ellen White, Sep. 25, 1900, EGWE.

⁹⁷ Cf. *Indianapolis News*, June 20, 1900, 8.

⁹⁸ Letter, Hattie Haskell to Sarah McEnterfer, Sep. 17, 1900, EGWE; cf. Letter 132, 1900, EGWE.

part; no recorded witness mentions dancing in the camp meetings and Indiana locals present in the Sullivan camp meeting thought that the music was “a very interesting feature,”⁹⁹ and “pleasing” in Muncie.¹⁰⁰ It is more likely that the Haskell’s objections to instrumental music and shouting in worship reflected a critical spirit. Just the year before, Ellen White had harsh words for both: “Your [Hattie] power of criticism and Elder Haskell’s power of imagination are both under the condemnation of God. ... Sister Haskell’s way toward all who do not see things as she does is not the way of the Lord.”¹⁰¹

Ellen White, however, did have some concerns about camp meetings for some time and Haskell’s reports about “holy flesh” and “excitement” in Indiana raised a red flag in her mind. It seemed Donnell had moved “ahead of the brethren” in embracing Jones’ perfectionism and his penchant for the charismatic. She had warned Jones and Prescott in 1894: “If we work to create an excitement of feeling, we shall have all we want, and more than we can possibly know how to manage.”¹⁰²

Indiana’s Rubicon had been crossed and the effects of the tension in Muncie were palpable. In a salvo towards Battle Creek, Donnell wrote in the *Review*, “[t]he manifestation of the Spirit of God was marked at all these meetings, but not so fully at Muncie as at the others.”¹⁰³

Despite the initial opposition to his re-election and a stressful camp meeting, Donnell was re-elected in Muncie, but this new mandate would be short-lived.¹⁰⁴

7. Summned to Battle Creek

For several weeks after returning from Indiana, Haskell continued to agitate against Donnell and the movement afoot there, and the case was brought up during the Fall Council of the GC Executive Committee in Battle Creek (October 11–30, 1900).¹⁰⁵ On the morning of October 24 before the GC Committee, Haskell presented a Bible study on the authority of the *Testimonies* and the

⁹⁹ “Adventist Camp Meeting.” *The Sullivan Democrat*, July 26, 1900, 1.

¹⁰⁰ “Saturday as Sabbath.” *Muncie Daily Herald*, Sep. 17, 1900, 8.

¹⁰¹ Letter 1, 1899; cf. Letter 14a, 1898.

¹⁰² Letter 68, April 16, 1894.

¹⁰³ Donnell, R. S. “Indiana.” *RH*, Oct. 23, 1900, 16.

¹⁰⁴ “With the Adventists.” *Muncie Daily Herald*, Sep. 20, 1900, 8.

¹⁰⁵ General Conference Committee Minutes, 1900, 182.

human nature of Christ. He then asked for comments because “he feared that unless something was done, the brethren would be greatly discouraged, and perhaps some lost.”

Donnell was then called before the Committee on Oct. 25 and met privately with Irwin first. He heard attentively as Irwin read Ellen White’s letter to Haskell (Letter 132, 1900) but said that the testimony “had no bearing upon the work in Indiana, because they did not do any such things,” i.e., the excesses mentioned in the letter.¹⁰⁶ Irwin, who had been present in Muncie, while acknowledging that the revival “had not gone to the extreme,” thought it could get there eventually if changes were not made.¹⁰⁷

Donnell felt blindsided; Indiana had not been brought up for nearly two weeks and the GC Committee waited until he left town to discuss the matter. The Committee asked him if those who had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost were now beyond the grip of temptation, to which Donnell replied: “not a man in Indiana teaches it ... we shall never reach that point in this life.”¹⁰⁸ The Committee also expressed concern about the use of musical instruments, something that some opposed as “innovations not sanctioned in the Bible.”¹⁰⁹ In Muncie, Donnell defended them explaining that “only instruments mentioned in the Bible were used,” but before the Committee, he agreed to drop them.

In addition, articles published in the *Indiana Reporter* (the Conference’s weekly leaflet) appeared to criticize church organization. When asked about any divergent theology he had, Donnell answered: “Only that Christ was in holy flesh.”¹¹⁰ While Donnell repudiated infallible “holy flesh” he appeared to have difficulty articulating his views on sanctification. This raised concerns that a view of the sinlessness of Christ’s human nature could lead to a misunderstanding as to how this holiness is manifested in the life of believer, opening the door to infallible “holy flesh.” Haskell also felt unable to explain his

¹⁰⁶ Letter, George A. Irwin to Ellen G. White, Nov. 4, 1900, EGWE.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ General Conference Committee Minutes, 1900, 182.

¹⁰⁹ *Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 20, 1900, 2; “Convention Has Closed.” *Muncie Morning Star*, Sep. 21, 1900, 6.

¹¹⁰ General Conference Committee Minutes, 1900, 182.

own views of Jesus' "fallen" human nature, he later confessed to Ellen White.¹¹¹

The meeting with Donnell stood at an impasse; the GC Committee pressed him to resign but he did not feel he had "lost the confidence of the people."¹¹² At his suggestion, the entire Indiana Conference Executive Committee was called up.¹¹³ Meeting on October 29, Irwin read a testimony to the effect that "new light" should be submitted "to brethren of experience," as well as the letter from Ellen White to Haskell about Indiana.¹¹⁴ While the Indiana officials acknowledged problems and vowed to "counteract any movement that is detrimental" to the church, they declined to accept Donnell's resignation. When they asked for a copy of Ellen White's letter to Haskell, Irwin refused, feeding suspicions in the mind of the Indiana officials.

With the Indiana Committee's dissent, the call for Donnell's resignation was dropped by the GC, much to Haskell's disgust. "The brethren ... thought probably I was on the extreme in my views when they came to decide on the Indiana matter," Haskell later wrote to Ellen White, but bemoaned that "a great victory" against Donnell had been lost.¹¹⁵

8. Debating Jones on the Human Nature of Christ

The meetings in Battle Creek appeared to galvanize the two opposing camps on the human nature of Christ.

Shortly after the Battle Creek meetings, Donnell published a series of articles in the *Indiana Reporter* (Nov. 20–Dec. 25, 1900) titled "Did Christ Come to This World in Sinful Flesh?" and "The Faith of Jesus," where he lays out his views on the human nature of Christ as being "sinless" like Adam before the fall. Building on Ellen White's statement that Jesus "is a brother in our infirmities, but not possessing like passions,"¹¹⁶ Donnell differentiates between a "liability" and a "tendency" to sin, writing: "Christ took upon himself the liability to sin,

¹¹¹ Letter, Stephen N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, Nov. 1, 17, 1900, EGWE.

¹¹² General Conference Committee Minutes, 1900, 182.

¹¹³ "Seventh Day Adventist Church." *The Indianapolis News*, Oct. 29, 1900, 12.

¹¹⁴ *Testimonies for the Church* 5, 32.

¹¹⁵ Letter, Stephen N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, Nov. 17, 1900, EGWE; *ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1900; Nov. 17, 1900, EGWE.

¹¹⁶ *Testimonies for the Church* 2, 202.

but not the tendency” because “in His flesh the enmity (carnal mind, mind of Satan) was abolished” (Donnell 1907, 7 and 9).

Donnell was listening closely to Ellen White for cues on the degree to which a Christian could be victorious over every sinful propensity. Reflecting Ellen White’s eradicationist views from April 1900 that “[we] need not retain one sinful propensity,”¹¹⁷ Donnell argues that “the only reason why God does not dwell in man is because sin is there, and in order for God to again dwell in man, sin must be eradicated” (ibid., 5; cf. White 1898, 161). A similar statement written in 1882, also quoted by Donnell, leaves little room for quibbling: “Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement.”¹¹⁸ Yet another from 1893 is equally forceful: “Christ came to the world to counteract Satan’s falsehood that God had made a law which men could not keep. ... He showed that it is possible for man perfectly to obey the law.”¹¹⁹ Further, Donnell favoured prooftexts by Ellen White that highlight Jesus’ sinlessness such as: “We should have no misgivings about the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ” – to the detriment of others that stressed his “sinful nature,” such as: “It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man.”¹²⁰

Although Donnell had disavowed “holy flesh” at the meeting in Battle Creek in October 1900, his terminology was closer to Wesleyan and Pentecostal eradicationism than Keswick suppressionism. Donnell’s son-in-law’s former connection with the Salvation Army – known for its eradicationist views – could have been a compelling force, not only in the revival’s worship style, but also theologically. In essence, Donnell was united with Jones, Ballenger and White in advocating eradicationism, only that he did so from a staunch pre-lapsarian view of Jesus’ human nature.

¹¹⁷ “Christian Perfection.” *RH*, April 24, 1897, 1, quoted by Donnell 1907, 12.

¹¹⁸ *Testimony for the Church* 31, 210, quoted by Donnell 1907, 25.

¹¹⁹ Manuscript 48, 1893.

¹²⁰ White, Ellen G. “Tempted in All Points like as We Are.” *Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898; White, Ellen G. “Sin Condemned in the Flesh.” *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 16, 1896; ibid. “The Life of Christ.” *RH*, Dec. 31, 1872, 19.

Shortly thereafter, Jones penned an eight-part editorial series in the *Review* titled “The Faith of Jesus” where he mounted a fierce defense of the “sinfulness” of the human nature of Christ.¹²¹ A moot point for the denomination until the mid-1890s, Jones, Waggoner and Prescott had turned the human nature of Christ into a central point of righteousness by faith (cf. Knight 2011, 167). During the GC session of 1895, Jones preached extensively on it, stating at one point: “Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.’ In how many things? – All things. *Then in his human nature there is not a particle of difference between him and you... Christ’s nature is precisely our nature*”¹²² (italics supplied).

In the *Review* editorials, Jones argued that “when He came to the earth, His nature was the same as the nature of man. ... His likeness to men is not simply in form or in representation, but also in *very substance*. It is *likeness* to men as *they are in all things, exactly as they are...* this is *likeness* to man as he is in his fallen, sinful nature, and not as he was in his original, sinless nature...” (italics original).¹²³ Quoting Galatians 4:4–5: “God sent forth his son, made... under the law, to redeem them that were under the law,” Jones argued that Jesus had been “made ‘guilty,’” not vicariously on the cross, but during a “*whole lifetime in this world of guilt, condemnation and the curse... [He] lived the perfect life of the righteousness of God, without ever sinning at all*” (italics original).¹²⁴ Jones argued that Jesus took upon himself “sin in its tendency, and sin in the act; sin as it is hereditary in us, *uncommitted* by us, and sin as it is *committed* by us”¹²⁵ (italics original). “The faith of Jesus,” is the same faith that the sinner must have,” so we can be victorious like Jesus was, he contended.¹²⁶ Following the editorials, Jones moved to a series on the Ten Commandments.

Jones had essentially argued that Jesus was a “sinner” who had never sinned. Donnell called this reasoning a “fallacy” because it lowered Christ to be “equal with man in his sinful state” (Donnell 1907, 15). “For surely,” rebutted Donnell, “if He actually takes the position, or condition, of the man needing redemption ... He would have nothing with which to redeem other men

¹²¹“The Faith of Jesus.” *RH*, Dec. 4, 11, 18, 25, 1900, 8; *ibid.*, Jan. 1, 8, 15, 22, 1901, 8.

¹²² Jones, A. T. “The Third Angel’s Message – No. 13.” *GCB*, 1895, 231, 233.

¹²³ “The Faith of Jesus.” *RH*, Dec. 25, 1900, 8.

¹²⁴ “The Faith of Jesus.” *RH*, Jan. 1, 1901, 8.

¹²⁵ “The Faith of Jesus.” *RH*, Jan. 22, 1901, 8.

¹²⁶ “The Faith of Jesus.” *RH*, Jan. 29, 1901, 8.

from bondage ..." (ibid., 16). "His sinful, fallen condition would constitute him an imperfect offering, an atoning sacrifice of less value than Adam before his fall," Donnell contended (ibid., 9).

Jones had always been hyperbolic in his views and was prone to "overreach the mark," as Ellen White had come to realize.¹²⁷ Jones "was an extremist who had never mastered the Christian virtue of temperance," writes George Knight (Knight 2011, 59). His pupil Donnell was equally attracted to extreme prooftexts on character perfection by Ellen White, but had failed to balance these with the forensic justification he had embraced in 1888. Jones and Donnell's extremism in matters of obedience had effectively eclipsed the good news of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the believer's only hope.

In sum, Jones and Donnell defended sinless perfection, but from differing views on the human nature of Christ. Jones had told Indiana minister O.S. Hadley that the Indiana revival was "darkness and would lead to fanaticism."¹²⁸ The rift effectively placed Donnell in Jones' enemy camp.¹²⁹

Advocates of both pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian views on the human nature of Christ in Adventism throughout the 20th century and beyond would continue to defend their views using essentially the same lines of argument used by Jones and Donnell. In the 1950s, after dialogues with Evangelical theologians, mainstream Adventism would lean toward pre-lapsarianism.

9. The General Conference of 1901

During the initial months of 1901, tensions between Indiana and Battle Creek subsided, but back home, opposition to Donnell mounted. Sometime in late 1900 or early 1901, Indiana minister S. G. Huntington published *The Son of Man* a booklet targeting Adventists in which he attacks the "sinless" nature of Christ. Like Jones, Huntington comes short of ascribing sin to Jesus when he writes that he had the "same nature and propensity" and "the inclinations of sinful flesh" as fallen humans (Huntington n. d., 2). Jesus overcame "through His implicit faith in His Father, He was fortified so that His divine nature overwhelmingly triumphed over His sinful nature and hereditary tendencies" (ibid., 8.16). Further, Huntington explained Indiana's eradicationism:

¹²⁷ Letter, Ellen White to A. T. Jones, April 9, 1893, EGWE.

¹²⁸ Letter, Ida V. Hadley to Ellen White, June 1, 1900, EGWE.

¹²⁹ "The Faith of Jesus." *RH*, Jan. 8, 1901, 8.

“accompanying the sinless flesh [of Christ] doctrine is another we will not consider, viz., that at conversion the desires, inclinations, and propensities of the flesh, and the hereditary tendencies are all taken away; that the *warfare* with the *flesh* ceases and that from thenceforward our temptations are all from without – none coming from within” (italics original; *ibid.*, 13).

But Battle Creek’s truce with Donnell would soon come to an end. At the GC session of April 17, 1901 in Battle Creek – like a thunder booming over the prairies of Indiana – Ellen White addressed the controversy: “Instruction has been given me in regard to the late experience of brethren in Indiana and the teaching they have given to the churches. Through this experience and teaching the enemy has been working to lead souls astray.”¹³⁰ “All may now obtain holy hearts,” she declared, “but it is not correct to claim in this life to have holy flesh. ... It is an impossibility.”¹³¹ In addition, she chastised their worship style stating that “mere noise and shouting are no evidence of sanctification, or of the descent of the Holy Spirit.” By scapegoating the Indiana revival, Ellen White had effectively rejected all “holy flesh” theories accosting the church at the time – including physical righteousness oozing out of Battle Creek – and the charismatic emphasis by Ballenger and Jones. One of the first shockwaves of Ellen White’s message in Battle Creek was the replacement of Jones by Uriah Smith as editor of the *Review*, much to Ellen White’s delight.¹³²

Donnell addressed the GC assembly on the morning of Thursday April 18, stating, among other things: “As nearly all of you know, in the Testimony of yesterday morning the test came to me. But brethren, I can thank God this morning that my faith in the Spirit of prophecy remains unshaken. God has spoken. He says I was wrong, and I answer, God is right, and I am wrong.” (Donnell would later claim that his confession was incorrectly printed in the GC Bulletin, probably because it may have been shortened.¹³³) The confession

¹³⁰ GCB, 1901, 419; cf. White 1958, 31–36. William H. Grotheer noticed an anachronism in the original compilers’ note for chapter 3, “The Holy Flesh Doctrine” in *Selected Messages*, volume 2. See his correspondence with the White Estate and Arthur White in Grotheer 1973, 57–60, available online at <http://adventistalert.com/holy.flesh.movement/holyflesh.htm>.

¹³¹ GCB, 1901, 419.

¹³² Letter 47, Feb. 5, 1902, EGWE.

¹³³ GCB, 1901, 422. Donnell’s confession was followed by those of the evangelist S. S. Davis, P. G. Stanley, A. L. Miller, A. L. Chew, F. M. Roberts. Cf. Letter, Judson S. Washburn to Willie C. White, April 11, 1907. Donnell’s original confession is not in the conference’s transcripts.

was later followed by the motion to transfer him to Wilmington, North Carolina. Willie C. White, however, objected and proposed a meeting with the church at large in Indianapolis ten days later.¹³⁴

During the meetings in Indianapolis (May 3–5), Donnell approached Willie and asked for a meeting with Ellen White. When Willie relayed his request to Ellen White the next morning, he was overheard in an adjacent room by the sanitarium cook who had the impression that Willie was “dictating” to Ellen White what to say to Donnell (see Moon 1993, 271–273). Donnell’s meeting with Ellen White never materialized, but the conversation between Willie and his mother was later conveyed to Donnell by the cook at the Greenfield camp meeting, raising questions that the prophetess had been told by Willie what to do.¹³⁵ (Willie later explained to Ira Hankins that he had simply reminded his mother of what she had already recommended in Battle Creek, i. e., that Donnell resign.¹³⁶)

On Sunday morning, May 5, Ellen White addressed the issue again.¹³⁷ By day’s end, nearly all Indiana officials involved with the revival had been replaced.¹³⁸

10. The Aftermath of the Indiana Perfectionism

Donnell remained a minister in Indiana, trustee and supportive member of the Conference Executive Committee, but questions about his involvement with the now-disgraced revival lingered.¹³⁹

In a letter to Ellen White in March 1902, Donnell asked for guidance on whether he should leave the ministry, but never got a reply.¹⁴⁰ Writing to Willie White in August, he regretted that his attempt to correct things in Battle Creek had not been fully accepted and placed a large part of the blame on Willie for the “unchristian ... ungodly” effort to ostracize him and the publication of all Conference dealings to the church at large, “making it almost an

¹³⁴ GCB, 1901, 356, 448.

¹³⁵ Cf. Letter, Judson S. Washburn to Willie C. White, April 11, 1907, EGWE.

¹³⁶ Letter, Willie C. White to Ira. J. Hankins, Dec. 24, 1901, EGWE.

¹³⁷ GCB, 1901/1902, 511–512.

¹³⁸ Jones, Alonzo T. “General Meeting in Indiana.” *RH*, May 14, 1901, 12–13.

¹³⁹ Letter, Percy T. Magan to Willie C. White, Sep. 19, 1901, EGWE; *Indiana Reporter*, Jan. 15, 1902; Nov. 12, 1902; *RH*, Oct. 1, 1903, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Letter, R. S. Donnell to Ellen G. White, March 3, 1902, EGWE.

impossibility for me to get a place in the work anywhere.”¹⁴¹ The whole debacle, Donnell believed, was a confirmation of a dream he had had a year before in which he was demoted and a new president “hanged” him.¹⁴² In his reply, Willie reaffirmed the leadership’s “duty to encourage you to go forward with the work of the ministry,” and suggested an unreached part of Indiana.¹⁴³

By the Spring of 1903, Donnell’s evangelistic efforts started paying off.¹⁴⁴ Around this time, Hankins, new Indiana conference president, sent Donnell and S. S. Davis eight questions about their views on the human nature of Christ and sanctification.¹⁴⁵ In answer to the question “Do you believe that this testimony condemned certain things which you and others taught in the State?” Donnell answered: “For myself, no. . . . As to the doctrine of ‘Holy Flesh’, no man ever heard me preach it. I have maintained, and do still maintain, that in order to live a holy life, we must eat and assimilate the flesh and blood of Christ . . . we must be made new creatures in Him” (Donnell 1907, 18–19)¹⁴⁶. In answer to question number eight “Do you believe that conversion embraces both the mind and the body, so that the body in this life is fully cleansed and is brought back to the condition of man before the fall, or is this a work that begins now, and is completed at the resurrection...?” Donnell responded, “Yes. The mind surely, and also the body, so far as its life and actions are concerned” (ibid., 24).

Donnell added: “I teach that those who fully appropriate the power of the Gospel of Christ need not die” (ibid., 25). This idea was not at all original with Donnell but reflected the intersection of consummated soteriology (sinless perfection) and accelerated eschatology (the imminence of the end) prevalent in the denomination at the time. The 144,000, a symbolic number of the saved living at the end as taught by the denomination, would reach that state of

¹⁴¹ Letter, R. S. Donnell to Willie C. White, Aug. 24, 1902, EGWE.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Letter, Willie C. White to R. S. Donnell, Aug. 31, 1902, WCW-LB 20, 453–456, EGWE; Letter, Willie C. White to Arthur G. Daniells, May 24, 1901, EGWE. There had been discussions about a transfer to California and GC president Arthur G. Daniells asked Willie to intercede on Donnell’s behalf, but he was hesitant to have Donnell around. Cf. Letter, Willie C. White to P. T. Magan, Sep. 24, 1901, WCW-LB 17, 408–411, EGWE.

¹⁴⁴ Donnell, R. S. “Give Yourselves to God.” *Indiana Reporter*, March 4, 1903.

¹⁴⁵ Donnell’s answers were later published in *What I Taught in Indiana* (Donnell 1907), and Davis’ answers are found in Box 5, folder 24, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. White, Ellen G. *Testimonies on Education*, 33.

perfection before the end.¹⁴⁷ The “Laodicean message” would lead to “translation faith” for the Second Coming, an event that was ever so imminent, especially in light of the enactment of Sunday laws. Advocates of sinless perfection could only defend provisional immortality rationally within the confines of the imminent end of the world.¹⁴⁸

Following this interaction with the new Conference president, Davis left the ministry in 1904 and the family was pushed out of the SDA church in 1910 when their church in Elnora was reorganized without them.¹⁴⁹ Donnell moved to Tennessee in early 1904 to help reorganize the Memphis church.¹⁵⁰

Their departure removed the last remnants of Indiana’s “cleansing message,” but that was hardly the end of “holy flesh” theories in Adventism. As early as 1903, in an editorial titled “Translation Faith,” new *Review* editor and advocate of physical righteousness W.W. Prescott explained it: “‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.’ This is translation faith, and a people who are preparing for translation must have just this faith. ... [A] people to be translated without seeing death.”¹⁵¹

As for the originators of the “Adventist Holiness Movement,” Jones would leave the denomination in 1906 and join Pentecostal Sabbath-keepers (cf. Knight 2011, 61). Ballenger soon followed, although his disagreement was on the doctrine of the sanctuary (cf. Edwards and Land 2000, 131–146).

11. Leaving the Ministry

Donnell’s work in Tennessee from 1904–1906 led to the reorganization of the Memphis church with about 60 members.¹⁵² During his time in Memphis, Donnell sent his pen pal S.S. Davis a paper titled “The Nature of Christ and Man,” which rehashed his previous positions on the human nature of

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Haloviak 1980, 10 who argued that Donnell believed in immortal “holy flesh.”

¹⁴⁸ Letter, Viola Hopper to William H. Grotheer, 1965.

¹⁴⁹ “News and Notes.” *Indiana Reporter*, March 16, 1904. Ballenger called this the “Florida method”: “this method is to disband the church, with or without a vote of the congregation, and then reorganize, leaving out the heretics ...” (See Edwards and Land 2000, 183).

¹⁵⁰ *Indiana Reporter*, Jun 23, 1903; *Indiana Reporter*, Mar. 2, 1904; *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 23, 1904, 13; *Signs of the Times*, May 17, 1905, 13.

¹⁵¹ *RH*, April 7, 1903, 3. Cf. also Prescott, W.W. “Higher Ground.” *RH*, Jan. 13, 1903, 1.

¹⁵² Donnell, R.S. “Tennessee.” *RH*, Aug. 9, 1906, 19–20; *RH*, Jan. 18, 1906, 18; Cf. *RH*, Feb. 4, 1890, 76.

Christ.¹⁵³ Despite somewhat orthodox statements, Donnell's paper oozes with the fundamentals sinless perfection he had learned under his former partners in holiness, and supported by Ellen White's perfectionistic statements.

Despite leading a successful ministry in Tennessee, the Southern Union, whose president George I. Butler had evangelized Donnell back in 1875, removed his credentials on February 24, 1907 for teaching "holy flesh."¹⁵⁴ In response to his dismissal, Donnell published *What I Taught in Indiana* (ca. 1907), a booklet containing the articles he had published in the *Indiana Reporter* in 1900 and his answers to the questionnaire sent by Hankins in 1903. "I taught the same things in Memphis, Tenn., that I taught in Indiana," he wrote, because "the Laodicean message involves the nature of Christ."¹⁵⁵

Donnell's dismissal caused a split in the Memphis church, which was disbanded and reorganized with only fifteen members. A signed statement by twenty-seven of those who left affirmed they "never heard Elder R.S. Donnell advocate or mention the doctrine of 'Holy Flesh,' neither have we heard one thing that, by logical deduction or sequence, could be construed as such."¹⁵⁶ Many of Donnell's defenders later returned, but he retired to a farm in southern Missouri.¹⁵⁷

After his dismissal, Donnell engaged in a two-year letter-writing campaign to Willie White and other church officials to protest the removal of his credentials and his sustentation after over a quarter century of service to the church, but no action was taken to restore his sustentation.¹⁵⁸ In 1915, an operation for gallbladder stones forced Donnell to quit farming and move back to Memphis. He soon applied for sustentation, and a retirement benefit of \$8 per week was

¹⁵³ Donnell, R.S. "The Nature of Christ and Man." Unpublished paper, n.d., 5.

¹⁵⁴ Letter, George I. Butler to Willie C. White, April 11, 1907, EGWE; Letter, George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Feb. 2, 1907, EGWE.

¹⁵⁵ Donnell 1907, 1, Box 5, folder 29, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR; Letter, Judson S. Washburn to Willie C. White, April 11, 1907, EGWE. Cf. Knight 2011, 62.

¹⁵⁶ Statement, March 12, 1907, SDA Archives.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Letter, Judson S. Washburn to Willie C. White, April 11, 1907; *ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1908; Letter, George I. Butler to Willie C. White, April 20, 1907, EGWE; Letter, Robert M. Kilgore to Willie C. White, April 1, 1909, EGWE; *Central Union Outlook*, July 30, 1912, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Letter, Willie C. White to George A. Irwin, March 22, 1909, LB 37, 820, EGWE; Letter, Charles McVagh to Willie C. White, March 10, 1909, EGWE.

approved by the GC in 1916. His name appears as “honorary” minister of the Southern Union in the SDA Yearbook for 1927.

12. Final Years

Donnell lived his final years in solitude and poor health. His wife Nannie died in 1919 and his daughter Nellie died in 1924.¹⁵⁹ Around 1930, Paul C. Dysinger moved with his family to Memphis in order to start a self-supporting ministry and was told to seek Donnell’s support. Dysinger writes: “I talked to him about the work we felt the Lord had called us to do in the city and he was immediately very interested ... we had never met before and I was nearly struck dumb when he pulled out his purse and began to count out bills.” In all, Donnell loaned Dysinger \$1,700.00 to get his ministry started (approx. \$25,000.00 in today’s currency).¹⁶⁰

As time went on, Donnell took a less dogmatic view of sinless perfection, as reported by Dysinger: “ Never once did he subscribe to the doctrine of Holy flesh any more than that he did believe that God did expect perfection and holiness in all His people through the grace of God and the merits of the blood of Christ.”¹⁶¹

Around mid-1932, in advanced stages of dementia, Donnell was placed in the care of the Tennessee River Conference after being bilked out of all his money. In March 1933, Dysinger and his wife took Donnell into their home and cared for him until he died in his sleep on Nov. 28, 1937 at the age of 91.¹⁶² He was buried in the Old Fountain Head cemetery in Portland, Tennessee, near what is now Highland Academy.¹⁶³

Dysinger’s two children, William and Ruth, now in their nineties remember how Donnell would recount his days as an evangelist. He was known as a “wonderful Christian” and “very fine man, a very gracious and kindly individual,” a “sincere, conscientious, educated Christian ... whom we all loved,”

¹⁵⁹ Nickless, Arva. “Elder R.S. Donnell.” *RH*, Dec. 30, 1937, 22; cf. Wood, D.P. “Donnell.” *RH*, March 18, 1920, 31; cf. *United States Census*, 1930.

¹⁶⁰ Letter, Paul C. Dysinger to William H. Grotheer, Feb. 22, 1965, box 5, folder 29, Coll. 287, William H. Grotheer Collection, CAR.

¹⁶¹ Letter, Paul C. Dysinger to William H. Grotheer, Feb. 22, 1965; *ibid.*, March 3, 1965.

¹⁶² State of Tennessee, Division of Vital Statistics. “Certificate of Death.” The certificate reflects an 1844 date of birth but that is unsupported.

¹⁶³ Letter, Paul C. Dysinger to William H. Grotheer, Feb. 22, 1965

wrote a family friend.¹⁶⁴ “Even in his senility,” recalled Dysinger, “he would kneel and offer the most wonderfully worded prayers, and I never doubted the Lord heard him.”¹⁶⁵

13. Conclusion

Robert Sloan Donnell’s career in Adventism highlights a transformational period in Adventism marked by interest in the human nature of Christ, Christian perfection, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the end-times. His biography not only opens a window into this fascinating denominational period, but is loaded with contemporary implications.

Living at the confluence of epochal theological and organizational currents in the denomination, Donnell was the quintessential Seventh-day Adventist: an avid reader of the *Testimonies*, health reformer (to a fault), indefatigable evangelist, zealous administrator and charismatic salesman who dedicated his prime years, family and finances in the service of the church. He is still remembered during church anniversaries in the American Midwest and South.¹⁶⁶

The camp meetings in 1900 showed Donnell to be an innovator, open to incorporating new methods in evangelism, such as taking his camp meetings from mostly *a cappella* music to singing accompanied by musical instruments, even some percussion. The move to advance Adventist music clearly backfired and because of the events in Indiana “Adventist music has been constrained,” observed church historian Arthur Patrick.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Letter, Joseph M. Davis to William H. Grotheer, Feb. 20, 1959; Letter, Viola Hopper to William H. Grotheer, 1965.

¹⁶⁵ Letter, Paul C. Dysinger to William H. Grotheer, Feb. 22, 1965, CAR. Donnell used to say that during the meeting in Indianapolis, Ellen White warned GC officials “to be careful how they treated Elder Donnell for he was a man of God and had great light.” A slightly different version of this story found in letters from the Davis’s family reads “deal gently with these brethren for God has given them great light.” What Donnell thought this “light” might have referred to or whether this statement was ever made is impossible to ascertain.

¹⁶⁶ “South Bend Church Celebrates Centennial.” *Lake Union Herald*, Oct. 2000, 19; “Yakima Church Celebrates Faith of Pioneers.” *Gleaner*, Feb. 2010, 20; “Mid-America Union.” *Adventist Review*, Feb. 18, 1982, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Patrick, Arthur. “Later Adventist Worship, Ellen White and the Holy Spirit: Further Historical Perspectives.” Published online at http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/discern/flesh.htm#N_2_.

Significantly, Donnell opposed the longstanding Adventist view at the time that Jesus had “sinful flesh” or a “fallen” nature. His position on Jesus’ human nature was “ahead of the brethren,” and would eventually become the church’s official position with the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* (1957) whose editors stated: “Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam. He was ‘without sin,’ *not only in His outward conduct, but in His very nature*” (italics supplied).¹⁶⁸

Looming large in the soteriology of the period are Ellen White’s views on Christian perfection which contributed to the rise of the perfectionism at the turn of the 20th century. Even as the Indiana camp meetings were taking place, she would write that “[t]o be redeemed means to cease from sin.”¹⁶⁹ Such statements continued long after the demise of the Indiana perfectionism; in April 1902, she wrote: “The Saviour ... came to this world and lived a sinless life, that in His power His people might also live lives of sinlessness.”¹⁷⁰ The following year, she warned: “No part of the diseased life of sin is to remain,”¹⁷¹ and in 1908, she alerted that the cleansing of “appetites ... *will have to be done before His people can stand before Him a perfect people*” (italics supplied).¹⁷² The inherent tension between consummated soteriology (sinless perfection) and accelerated eschatology (the imminence of the end) in her writings would become a defining trait of the Adventist experience well into the 21st century.

Considering the fact that the denomination as a whole was inebriated by the perfectionistic leanings of Ellen White, as well as Ballenger, Jones, Waggoner, Prescott and their propensity towards charismatic manifestations, the “holy flesh movement” was simply an excrescence of the larger theological currents at work within the denomination at the time. The bias against the “holy flesh movement” as an anomaly within the denomination clamours for the historian’s attention.

But “holy flesh” dies hard in Adventism; it was soon reborn as Last Generation Theology (LGT), a concept proposed by M.L. Andreasen in the 1930s and published in his landmark study *The Sanctuary Service*. In his own words:

¹⁶⁸ *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (original title) 1957, 383 and 647–660.

¹⁶⁹ White, Ellen G. “Self-Exaltation.” *RH*, Sep. 25, 1900, 1.

¹⁷⁰ “Instruction to Church Members.” *RH* April 1, 1902, 1.

¹⁷¹ *Signs of the Times*, March 11, 1903.

¹⁷² Letter 162, 1908. Cf. Manuscript 182, 1905.

The final demonstration of what the gospel can do in and for humanity is still in the future. Christ showed the way. He took a human body and in that body demonstrated the power of God. Men are to follow His example and prove that what God did in Christ, He can do in every human being who submits to Him. The world is awaiting this demonstration (Romans 8:19). When it has been accomplished, the end will come. God will have fulfilled His plan. He will have shown Himself true and Satan a liar. His government will stand vindicated. (Andreasen 1937, 299)

Through this eschatological empowerment, Andreasen explains, “God gives the final demonstration that men can keep the law of God and that they can live without sinning” (ibid., 315).

If White and others planted the seeds of a hybrid theology of Christian perfection for the end of the world to be matured by the “latter rain,” Andreasen and his disciples reaped a mighty harvest: in their theological construct, the arrival of the end actually *depends* on the last generation of believers achieving sinless perfection *before* the close of probation (cessation of Jesus’s intercession in heaven) and the Second Coming. At that moment, believers will have fully matured “translation faith” and be beyond the reach of temptation; their salvation secured by their individual, meritorious sinlessness (since Christ no longer intercedes). LGT perfectionists would eventually claim that their “later emphases are an essential and integral part of what Ellen White endorsed as the ‘Minneapolis message,’” posits Woodrow Whidden (Whidden 2008, 207). Andreasen’s *The Sanctuary Service* continues to be sold and promoted by the church.

LGT has enlisted prominent Adventist leaders and theologians and continues to be bankrolled by the deep pockets of fundamentalist independent ministries in the United States. Among its most prominent supporters are GC presidents Robert Pierson (1911–1989) and Ted Wilson, who has promoted LGT ministries such as the Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) and Amazing Facts (White 2017, 69; cf. Bruinsma 2018, chapter 2; Knight 2000, 144–145). During his long career, influential theologian and author Herbert E. Douglass (1927–2014), developed his “harvest principle,” i.e., that “God will wait for the maturing of Christian character in a significant number of people as the

chief condition for determining those events which affect the time when probation for the world will close" (Douglass 2001, 65–81).¹⁷³

But the effects of perfectionism on the SDA church suggest other, less sunny agricultural metaphors. Like a genetically modified crop of former "holy flesh," LGT perfectionism lays its roots deep into the Adventist psyche, spreading its fundamentalist views of Christian living and sectarian eschatology. Our modern-day perfectionists are simply more dignified descendants of their shouting ancestors, with two main differences: (1) sinless perfection derives from Christ's *fallen* human nature as the believer's example in sinless perfection; (2) the "latter rain" falls softly at the sound of traditional music and formal worship – lest the use of drums in worship should inadvertently accelerate the close of probation.¹⁷⁴

Ironically, however, the exuberance with which LGT perfectionists defend sinless perfection as "possible" is only matched by their inability to show its fruits. Thus, rather than ushering in the end, their failure sets the close of probation into an ever-receding horizon; while seeking to hasten the end by their own efforts, they end up delaying it.

Ultimately, the fact that the Seventh-day Adventist church continues to struggle with varying degrees of "holy flesh" today – more than a century after the denomination vowed to stamp it out – is a testament to the perpetually contentious nature of Adventist soteriology and the way it encroaches on its eschatology.

¹⁷³ For a more recent book defending LGT, see Kirkpatrick 2005. See the chapter "Last Generation Theology: What Is It and Where It Came from" in: Bruinsma 2018. A helpful synoptic view of four views on perfectionism is found in: Douglass, Heppenstall, LaRondelle and Maxwell 1975. Lastly, see the helpful study of Ellen White's statements on perfection in: Ott 1987.

¹⁷⁴ Based on a misreading of Ellen White's statement that "shouting, with drums, music and dancing" were part of a Satanic ploy to disrupt worship (cf. Letter 132, 1900; cf. White 1958, 36).

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Zusammenfassung

Robert Sloan Donnell (1846–1937) war ein Pastor, Evangelist und Administrator der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten. Donnell war Präsident der Indiana Conference in der Blütezeit der perfektionistischen Erweckung (auch bekannt als Bewegung des “heiligen Fleisches” [“holy flesh”]) in diesem Bundesstaat im Jahr 1900. Donnells Karriere in der Konfession weist auf eine Zeit von Veränderungen im Adventismus hin, die durch veränderte Ansichten über die menschliche Natur Christi, die Taufe im Heiligen Geist und das Ende der Welt gekennzeichnet ist, wie sie in den Werken von A. T. Jones, A. F. Ballenger, E. J. Waggoner, W. W. Prescott und Ellen White zu finden sind. Donnells Kampf mit dem Perfektionismus – insbesondere in Fragen der Gesundheit – ist nicht nur für damalige bedeutende theologischen Strömungen innerhalb der Konfession emblematisch, sondern auch für die Art und Weise, in der viele heute weiterhin eine bestimmte Sicht der vollendeten Soteriologie (sündlose Perfektion) mit der beschleunigten Eschatologie des Adventismus (bevorstehendes Weltende) zusammenführen zur Theologie der letzten Generation („Last Generation Theology“).

Résumé

Robert Sloan Donnell (1846–1937) était un pasteur, évangéliste et administrateur adventiste du septième jour. Il était président de la Fédération de l’Indiana au moment du réveil perfectionniste (également connu sous le nom de mouvement « Holy Flesh ») qui fleurit dans cet État en 1900. La carrière de Donnell au sein de l’Église met en lumière une période de transformation de l’Adventisme marquée par des changements de points de vue sur la nature humaine du Christ, le baptême du Saint-Esprit et la fin du monde, comme en témoignent les œuvres de A. T. Jones, A. F. Ballenger, E. J. Waggoner, W. W. Prescott et Ellen White. La lutte de Donnell contre le perfectionnisme – en particulier en matière de santé – est emblématique non seulement des courants théologiques à l’œuvre dans la dénomination à l’époque, mais aussi de la façon dont beaucoup continuent à confondre une vision particulière de la sotériologie réalisée (la perfection sans péché) avec l’eschatologie imminente de l’adventisme (la fin est proche) aujourd’hui sous la forme de la Théologie de la Dernière Génération.

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Preparing Converts for the Second Coming of Christ

The Encounter of Seventh-day Adventist Missionaries with Indigenous Issues in Nigeria from 1900 to the 1940s¹

Chigemezi Nnadozie Wogu

Abstract

This article explores the intricate and complex relationships of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries with indigenous issues during their mission work in Nigeria. It argues that despite their relative success, the approach of the missionaries to indigenous culture was coloured by points of conflict and the stark difference to their vision of Christ's *Parousia*. As a result, indigenous issues like the position of women in the society and public matters, polygamy and charismaticism in worship were divested of cultural significance and in some cases demonized and replaced with the Adventist alternative. Preparing converts for the second coming of Christ meant the disengagement of any cultural practice that seemingly turned the focus of converts away from the imminence of the kingdom of the otherworldly.

1. Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist conviction of an imminent return of Christ pushed them to the far ends of the world. This is a ubiquity that cannot be overemphasized. That conviction brought Adventist missionaries to Africa with an “invitation to join an eschatological community” (Bosch 1991, 123)

¹ I am most grateful to the editors and especially the peer-reviewers whose critical comments provided the necessary improvements made in this article.

that proclaimed the Three Angels' Messages. However, an end-time proclamation also meant an encounter with challenges of various indigenous cultures and practices. How Adventist missionaries dealt with complex cultural issues while preaching the future Christ event still remains an engaging academic endeavor in mission history.

There are a number of scholarly works which analyze the encounter of western missionaries with indigenous cultural issues in Africa. Issues like power relations, colonialism, ancestor worship, rites of passage have played significant roles in the discourse. While many have viewed western missionaries as soul mates of colonialism, others have focused on the positive contributions of missionaries to the development and civilization of African cultures and societies (Kaplan 1995, Samson 2004, Fiedler 2018). Among Adventists in general, there is a dearth of academic treatment of such discourse. An exception is Stefan Höschele's *magnum opus*, *Christian Remnant – African Folk Church*, which analyses Adventist missionary engagements with the traditional Tanzanian culture among other themes (Höschele 2007).² Particularly in Nigeria, there are only two main works that highlight the encounter of Christianity and African cultures (Kuranga 1991 and Alalade 2008).

Consequently, the key question to be explored in this article is how Seventh-day Adventist missionaries dealt with indigenous issues during their mission work in Nigeria. As will be shown in this paper, in the face of the imminent *Parousia*, the missionary approach to indigenous culture was marked by points of conflict and stark difference. It has to be maintained that not all elements of culture were demonized or discouraged. Those practices that were seemingly considered harmless were even used for the purposes of mission propagation. For instance, the ancient talking-drum, an element of communication across Nigeria's various ethnic groups, was used to call people to worship on Sabbath morning (Maxwell 1936). In some mission reports, aspects of culture like hospitality and the manner of singing have been praised. In fact, one female Adventist missionary, Mary J. Vine, once compared the manner in which native Abuans (a tribe in Southern Nigerian) learnt and sang Adventist hymns to the type of singing that may emanate from the 144,000 in Revelation (Vine 1931). Thus, what follows is not a complete historical account of Adventism in Nigeria, which has been attempted

² See chapter 7: "Adventism and Culture in Traditional and Modern Tanzanian Society," 259 ff.

by some, albeit incomplete in several ways.³ Rather, this is a historical reflection on and analysis of the subject of Adventist missionizing in Nigeria, from 1900 to the 1940s with reference to three crucial cultural issues: the position of women in society, polygamy, and charismatic tendencies in worship. After highlighting the peculiar context of Nigeria, the nature and approaches of the missionaries will be outlined. This will pave way for the three case studies that form the major enquiry in this article.

2. Establishing an Adventist Mission in Nigeria: Context and Beginnings

While the earliest Christian mission to Nigeria can be traced back to the 16th century⁴ and Protestants arrived in the late 1840s, Seventh-day Adventists arrived at the beginning of the 1900s and officially established their mission in 1914. 1914 was the year Lord Frederick D. Lugard of the British Empire amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates to form today's Nigeria, a product of British colonization. The colonization of Nigeria was a prolonged development (Falola and Heaton 2008, 109).

In the case of Nigeria, Falola and Heaton have argued that colonization "brought under the sole rule of the United Kingdom previously independent states that had been interconnected commercially and to some extent culturally over the previous centuries, but had not experienced political unification of any kind" (ibid.). Before the colonial period there had existed nation states of the Hausa-Fulani, Oyo, Ijebu, Ife, Kanem Bornu, the many Igbo kingdoms, the Benin kingdom, etc. Hence, the 1914 amalgamation succeeded in lumping together several nation states and kingdoms (Falola and Oyeniyi 2015, 23 ff.). No wonder Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor General of Nigeria (1919–1925) once dismissed the idea of Nigeria as a nation: he argued Nigeria is "a collection of independent Native states, separated from one another by great distances, by

³ Nigerian Adventists have attempted to document the history of Adventism in Nigeria. Most have taken time frames, thematic or regional approaches to trace Adventist history in Nigeria. Yet until now, there is no one definite attempt to document the history of Adventism in Nigeria. Nevertheless, what exists remains commendable: Agboola 1987; Alalade 2008; Kuranga 1991; Maigadi 2005.

⁴ "The first Portuguese ships anchored off the cost of the west-central Africa kingdom of Kongo in 1483. Catholicism survived, in an indigenized form, until the late nineteenth century, when a new wave of missionary activity began. It was introduced into the Niger Delta kingdom of Warri in the 1570s; despite long periods without missionaries, it endured until the mid-eighteenth century" (Isichei 1995, 45).

differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers” (Coleman 1971, 194). These barriers seen by Sir Hugh Clifford in the 1920s also bring to mind the description of Nigeria by Ken Post and Michael Vickers as a “conglomerate society” where citizens struggle to balance various social identifications (Post and Vickers 1973). It was this environment that Adventism entered. Undeniably, the coming of Seventh-day Adventism to Nigeria happened in two phases (Wogu 2019, 1–13). The first phase comprised the mission attempts of commissioned laymen and self-supporting missionaries. The first attempt to establish the denomination in Nigeria was carried out by James M. Hyatt, a black layman missionary from the United States. Hyatt had been working in Ghana and Sierra Leone and went to Nigeria between 1906 and 1907. Around the same time, in the very South of Nigeria, a young Ghanaian Adventist, Sydney Hayford, was employed as colonial government schoolmaster in Bonny. Simultaneously, he began doing some Adventist mission work and introduced Benjamin I. Tikili to Adventist beliefs. Tikili and his group of growing believers remained “Adventists” until an official Adventist missionary, Jesse C. Clifford, arrived Aba in 1923. Thence, they officially became Adventists after baptism. Tikili later became an ordained Adventist minister in 1924 (Wogu 2019).

Contrastingly, the second phase of the Adventist mission started around 1913 with ordained and commissioned missionaries who built upon the work started in the first phase. This phase brought David C. Babcock together with three other West African workers: R. P. Dauphin (an ordained minister), Samuel D. Morgue and James J. Hamilton (commissioned licentiates). After the Nigerian mission was officially organized in 1913, the Babcock team arrived in 1914 focusing their attention to the West of Nigeria while based in Ibadan. In 1923, the Southern part of Nigeria got its official missionary, Jesse C. Clifford, who got in touch with Benjamin Tikili in Aba, from where Adventism spread in the South of Nigeria (*ibid.*, 1–8). By the mid 1930s, Adventists had touched the major regions of Nigeria. The mission work was now established. The question was how to maintain and grow the burgeoning church in the most populous black nation of the world with its diverse cultural and contextual issues.

3. Mission through Institutional Organizations

As the 1940s set in, Adventism experienced further growth as it used institutions for missionary purposes. George Knight, a key Adventist historian, has

argued that the Adventist denominational mission has always been managed structurally through such organizations: the formation of publishing, administrative, educational, and medical institutions is a distinguishing feature of Adventist mission. It was a feature which began, though unintentionally, early in church's history and was replicated in various mission fields. The use those four types of institutions as mission strategy is what George Knight calls "Adventism's missiological quadrilateral" (Knight 1995, 81).

Specifically, in Nigeria, Adventism's missiological quadrilateral was replicated to a large extent. By the 1940s, Adventism in Nigeria operated educational (notably: Teacher's Training School, Ibadan), health (Ile-Ife Hospital and Jengre Hospital, 1947) and printing institutions (Advent Printing Press, Oke Bola, 1935). These early institutions contributed to the growth of the church as it supported evangelistic efforts and Bible study classes. They not only provided services of education, health and printing resources; they were avenues for training new Adventist converts. In addition, they meant job opportunities for a significant number of these converts. In essence, missionary Adventism in Nigeria began functioning as a holistic movement where the spiritual, mental, social and physical/psychological welfare of the members was catered for. This was not unusual for Protestant missions in those days; other mission organizations also built schools and hospitals alongside their evangelistic mission activities. Nevertheless, the Adventist movement in Nigeria clearly mirrored principles of American Adventism.

4. Encountering and Dealing with Indigenous Issues

Having explored the major approaches of Adventist missionaries especially early in the history of Adventism in Nigeria it is important to note that they were successful in gaining converts (Izima 1973, 43). However, the missionaries at the time faced tremendous challenges in maintaining the established mission. In their encounter with culture, Adventist missionaries faced peculiar complexities in relation to indigenous practices of their converts. This section will focus on the challenges that arose. Hence, in what follows, issues like the position of women in the society, polygamy, spiritism and charismatic influences will be highlighted.

4.1 *The Place of Women in Society and in Adventist Mission Praxis*

The following case study of the Igbo, among whom Adventism progressed steadily in the 1930s and up to the 1960s, shows that the important position of women in the society was not taken seriously by Adventist missionaries. Igbo women had a history of battling male oppression through communal efforts. Moreover, Igbo women played a powerful social, political and economic role in the society. They formed political, social and economic systems or institutions for governing their own issues in the Igbo Traditional society (Ezeigbo 1990 and Nnoroviele 1998). However, colonialism and Christian missions seemed not to recognize this fact. While British colonial authorities excluded women from political power through the indirect rule system, Christian missionaries often had their own agenda for women.

As much as Christian missionaries made education a priority for their converts, according to Van Allen, the purpose of educating girls was to train them largely “to be Christian wives and mothers, not for jobs or for citizenship” (Van Allen 1975, 25). She continues, missionaries

were not necessarily against women’s participation in politics – clergy in England, as in America, could be found supporting women’s suffrage. But in Africa their concern was the church, and for the church they needed Christian families. Therefore, Christian wives and mothers, not female political leaders, was the missions’ aim. (Ibid.)

This will be demonstrated in two ways: (1) the involvement of in traditional rites and (2) women’s participation in political and public order.

4.1.1 *Women and Traditional Rites: The “Fattening” Rite of Passage*

The Adventist missionaries had similar views of training women and girls. William McClements, in his plea for funding to start a girl’s school in Nigeria, decried the lack of educated Christian girls and especially the difficulty in finding Christian wives for the educated men of the mission. For McClements, when the Adventist young men left the training school to the mission field, there was need for “good intelligent Christian wives to help them in their homes and in their work” (McClements 1930, 5). Why was this so important for McClements and the Adventist mission in Nigeria? McClements claimed that the new crop of educated young men already had enough “degrading customs” to contend with outside their homes. These customs should not be seen in Adventist

homes. Yet, as McClements complained, “homes of several of our brightest teachers are blighted by the influence of unsuitable wives” (ibid.).

Citing the popular Igbo tradition of *Iru-mgbede* or *Nkpu* “fattening,” young women of marriage age were separated for a period of six months before marriage. The women are to do no work but eat and sleep as well as go through traditional education and initiation. McClements demonized the practice by asking, “how can young Adventist teachers take such wives; I am glad to say our members have taken their stand against this heathenish practice, but still things are not what they should be” (ibid.). Hence the need for an Adventist Girls’ school. Yet McClements and other Adventist missionaries⁵ failed to understand that *Iru-mgbede* or *Nkpu* was a rite of passage. It was one of the most famous pre-marriage preparations where participants were specifically given marriage instructions.⁶ However, Mary Vine saw the rite as an ill-treatment of young women. She argued that some were made to endure the practice for six months if they could afford it. In this vein, any girl who could only partake in the rite for a month was “more fortunate, though she doesn’t realize it, only being subjected to it for one month” (Vine 1933, 11–12).

Obviously, the lack of cultural understanding is apparent in the portrayal of this cultural practice. These missionaries were confronted with the otherness of an alien culture which they must have unconsciously regarded as heathen or degrading when compared to the ideals of their Victorian civilization. In reality, degrading words like “heathen” or “pagan” were popular in the missionaries’ *zeitgeist*. Yet, if Adventist missionaries had forgone their ethnocentrism and undertaken a careful investigation of the practice in discussion, they may have concluded otherwise. The rite was based on a holistic philosophy that gave a single woman ample time to be prepared by older women through intellectual, emotional and physical education for the status of becoming a married woman. As Dioka concluded, during the period of fattening, the women were “formally taught the virtues of womanhood, fidelity to husband, pregnancy rules and childcare, house craft and other necessary requirements for a happy married life” (Dioka 1980, 43).

⁵ See Vine 1933. The rite of passage in itself was not just heathen or degrading, Vine saw the whole elements and practices attached to marriage as “ugly,” “uncivilized” or without “enchantment” as in England.

⁶ The best treatment of this cultural practice is executed by Gregory Okorobia Onwuzurigbo: Onwuzurigbo 1990, 469–472.

The attempt of creating a substitute for a rite that was viewed as ineffective and incompatible to Adventism is similar to Steven Kaplan's conception of "Christianization".⁷ Kaplan used the term to "characterize those cases in which missionaries sought to create Christian versions of traditional African rites and practices" (Kaplan, 1995, 17). Kaplan's treatment shows that advocates of this process were not full supporters of traditional practices. They acknowledged the valuable social and educational functions of the rites. Western missionaries subscribed to this process to cleanse and purify some practices resulting in eliminating the bad and substituting the good. Consequently the process ensured that, "the form generally remained African, the content became Christian" (Kaplan, 1995, 17).

By way of contrast, the Adventist version of Christianization saw no positive value in the fattening rite. Hence, a complete alternative with recourse to Adventist education was proffered as the best solution. Therefore, not only were the missionaries wrong in hastily demeaning and vilifying this cultural practice; they glossed over an enviable opportunity to assimilate a good practice into their mission education program. Instead of appreciating the tradition, the missionaries had an agenda that saw a replacement for this "degrading custom" among Igbo women with Adventist education. By so doing they were creating a system that served as substitute sub-culture which had its own religio-cultural ethos.

4.1.2 Women and Public Order: The Aba Women Riots

Secondly, to the extent that women were the majority of the converts to Christianity, missionaries may have conceived their role in the society to be submissive even though indigenous women protested against unfair authorities. For instance, around December 1929, when Jesse Clifford returned from furlough in England, the Adventist mission buildings in Aba were temporarily used to keep injured refugees as a result of the Women's Riot that had just erupted in November of that year. The riots led by women were the first major challenge to British colonial authority in Nigeria and British West Africa. They began as anti-tax protests by women who were upset with the colonial authorities' plans

⁷ Christianization was one element in the typology of Kaplan developed to show how western missionaries responded to African indigenous cultures. Others were toleration, assimilation, translation, acculturation and incorporation.

to impose direct taxes on Igbo market women. This resulted in the massive opposition of women and came to be known as the “Women’s War” among Nigerians and “Aba Riots” among the British.⁸ By November and December of 1929, women from Owerri, Aba and Calabar had looted factories, destroyed native court buildings and properties including the homes of those associated with Native Courts (Falola and Heaton, 2008, 133).

According to Falola and Heaton, the fact that the Women’s War was organized and carried out by women who did not even have access to education at that time, was an “indication of how frustrated average Nigerians were with the colonial regime and its puppet indirect rulers” (Falola and Heaton, 2008, 133), who were men. The event showed and illustrated the “capacity of average Nigerians to organize and voice their opposition to colonial policy despite the obstacles” (Falola and Heaton, 2008, 133). It is also an identifier of the political and social power controlled by women during these colonial periods. The women protests were one of the most formidable avenues for fostering anti-colonial resistance. It is now widely seen as a turning point in the trajectory of anti-colonial resistance (Falola and Heaton, 2008, 135), which in many ways slipped into the Christian missions. The many schisms of the 1930s which were locally led and resulted in several new indigenous churches, especially in Igboland, testifies to this fact.

What remains relevant from the 1929 event is that as a result of the war, colonial authorities began recognizing women even as Warrant Chiefs as well as members in the Native Courts. It is not sure if Adventist missionaries joined the bandwagon to appreciate this type of local initiatives from women. What is sure is the denouncing of the 1929 event.

Clifford, leader of the Adventist mission in the Southeast reported negatively on the event. According to Clifford, the 1929 event was a “mob, consisting of thousands of native women,” who went around the district,

⁸ Before the 1929 event, a census had been conducted in 1926 to determine those who were eligible to pay tax in the Southeast region. In 1928, an assistant district officer in the Owerri Province ordered local warrant chiefs to conduct a follow up census. In the process, “Women in the region feared that a new census meant they were soon to be taxed as well. Already burdened with supporting families and helping men to pay their taxes, the women of Southeastern Nigeria held mass demonstrations and spread the protests throughout the regions” (Falola and Heaton, 133).

“destroying the post office, looting the stores, releasing the prisoners, and destroying the houses of their chiefs. The markets are closed, for they rob all they meet, and Aba is like a dead town” (Clifford 1930a, 8).

Again, what we see is a hasty conclusion of the priorities of indigenous women. However, there is a more important cause for the way Clifford sounded in his report. Clifford’s emphasis on public order and the disruption of social and political activities was centered on because he could not continue his work as an Adventist missionary (1930a, 8):

It seems rather trying to be thus held up after furlough when there is so much to be done, but we hope it will soon be over, and that it will work out to the advancement of the cause. Truly we must work now, or our ‘little time of peace’ will soon be in the past.

The missionary’s portrayal of the women uprising betrayed his pacifist views and perhaps his implicit support of colonial structures. Nevertheless, what really bothered Clifford was the fact that the uprising brought the advancement of the Adventist cause to a standstill. As a result of the activities of some unscrupulous elements in the society, this missionary was hit with the inability to go about his urgent missionary duties of proclaiming Christ’s *parousia*. This was a setback to a missionary who took the urgency of Christ’s soon return to heart. This claim can be readily gleaned from the mission reports of Clifford. After establishing the mission in Aba, Clifford began a Bible class where he primarily taught his students about the Sabbath and the second coming of Jesus (Babalola 2001, 81). Moreover, when he moved to Ghana, Clifford left a mission legacy colored with “a high focus on eschatology and the second coming of Christ” (Owusu-Mensa 2001).

Therefore, what Clifford conceived was a typical pessimism of premillennialism, as Rick Langer would term it, that “looks ahead to a rising world crisis that will only be averted by the return of Christ Himself. Things do not get better and better before the return of Christ, but quite the opposite” (Langer 2012, 29–30). As Langer further argues, this kind of thinking impeded cultural engagement. Thus, Clifford’s denouncement may have been as a result of his preoccupation with a mind-set that encouraged an optimism of the otherworldly rather than this-worldly. It shows that to a large extent some Adventist missionaries were culturally disengaged, as it seems to appear. Understanding the nature and significance of the women’s uprising would have

been an avenue to adequately incorporate the culture and ethos of indigenous women into the Adventist system in Nigeria.

4.2 *Polygamy*

In many other cases, the Adventists neither engaged with the culture of the mission field nor built on those converts who held the Sabbath truth and seemed closer to their own faith and beliefs. For instance, around 1930, after Tikili was ordained (Clifford 1930b, 13–14), Clifford and especially Tikili sought converts in the hinterlands of the Brass Tribe and Abua, a riverine area of the South known as Niger Delta (Clifford 1930c, 3). In those hinterlands, the Adventist workers met with other Sabbath keeping groups. One was the Church of Christ Seventh Day. Clifford was faced with the dilemma of taking this group of sabbatarians as foundational members of the Seventh-day Adventist church there. In other places, a number of indigenous Sabbath-keeping groups were incorporated into Adventist congregations (Maxwell 1936, 1). However, Clifford decided otherwise. Why did he make such decision? Since most of the sabbatarians “were polygamists and engaged in other strange practices and customs” (Alao 2004, 34), they did not stand a chance of being incorporated into the body of Adventists.

In respect to the issue of polygamy, Clifford’s decision was understandable since Adventist missionaries, like many other Christians of the period, were not supporters of the practice. In 1921, after Malcolm N. Campbell, then British Union Conference president, took a tour of West Africa, he condemned and discouraged polygamy as the “most difficult institution” faced by missionaries. He encouraged workers to continue to act under deep conviction of the truth so that converts would make the adequate sacrifice and abandon the practice (Campbell 1921, 1). McClements (1925, 4) not only saw the practice as the greatest hindrance to mission; plurality of wives was “the curse of Africa”. In fact, the General Conference Session of 1926 had taken an action not to admit any man living in polygamy into the fellowship of the church (Cormack 1926, 1).⁹ Hence, the treatment of the practice, its practitioners and especially, polygamous converts by Adventists was somewhat inconsiderate. Two cases are explored in this respect.

⁹ See original decision in “Polygamy,” General Conference Session Action, 1926, Box 3811, subject: Polygamy, General Conference Archives, Silver Spring Maryland, USA.

In the first case, Clifford praised a convert named Sampson who resisted the temptation of going into polygamous marriage by inheritance. In a mission report, Clifford claimed that after the death of Sampson's father, the Igbo native law compelled him to take his father's inheritance which included the young wives. However,

Sampson refused to do this, and chose to lose his father's inheritance rather than be forced to go contrary to God's will. When he had taken this stand, the women themselves used every persuasion to induce him to take them, but he stood firm. Finally, after a long period of persecution, they left him alone. (Clifford 1930d, 19)

In another polygamous case, William, a rich man, had been married with five wives before becoming an Adventist. When he accepted the Adventist faith, he and all his family joined the church. However, while William desired baptism and the opportunity to preach the Adventist message, this was not possible since the leaders refused. Eventually, Williams decided to find husbands for his four wives. He did find three young men from the Adventist church to marry his former wives. Unfortunately, this led the women to leave the Adventist faith because they saw the transfer of husbands as a disgrace to them in their traditional society. They did not deserve divorce. Vine (1933, 15) explained that

William's heart failed him. The salvation of those women meant much to him, and of the two wives that remained, if any one of the five had been dearer to him than the rest, she whom he must now send away was the one. A good, faithful woman, she, a sort of self-constituted deaconess in the church. William wavered and prayed and prayed and wavered, and surely as a result of the praying, Sabinah herself made the decision. 'It is not right that I should stay,' said she, 'only let me live in your compound until such time, William, as you have found another husband for me' – truly a noble course of action which rejoiced William's heart. But what was William's horror and surprise when Cordelia, his first and now only remaining wife, and hitherto quite faithful, grew tired of her drab existence as the lone mistress in her establishment, and went astray with other men.

The two stories are fascinating illustrations of the complexity that arose in the missionary encounter with indigenous Nigerian practices. In principle, polygamous converts were not accepted into Adventist congregation. However, we see a kind of toleration where polygamous converts who seem to have been participating in Adventist rituals. What changed? By 1930, the 1926

General Conference action was changed. A new policy resolved that in places where “where tribal customs subject a cast-off wife to lifelong shame and disgrace, even to the point of becoming common property,” polygamists maybe “admitted to baptism and the ordinances of the church and be recognized as probationary members.”¹⁰

While the interesting dynamics of how this change came about at the Adventist top tier body has been analysed by Höschele,¹¹ insight from Kaplan’s analysis of “missionary toleration” proves most helpful. Toleration was used by Kaplan to “characterize those cases in which missionaries agreed to accept the continued existence of certain African social customs” while maintaining their incompatibility with Christianity (Kaplan 1995, 10). As a fitting example, Kaplan alludes to polygamy which, in theory, most missionaries were opposed to. However, the practice was tolerated because of its extensive manifestation. This helps to understand the 1930 decision and the reasons why the polygamists were participating in Adventist practices. However, as Kaplan rightly observes, in respect to a tolerant attitude towards polygamy, “we should not be misled into reading decisions passed by a majority as if they had unanimous support” (Kaplan 1995, 11). Among Adventists, there was no unanimous support for the decision. As Höschele perceived, although the 1930 resolution had a missiological strength, “its weakness was the lack of support by those engaged in missionary service” (Höschele 2015, 39). Therefore, although a decision was made in the “ivory tower”, those in the field had different opinions. Hence, while tolerating the polygamous converts as “probationary members” the missionaries ensured that such members were not fully “admitted to full membership unless or until circumstances change so as to leave them with only one companion.”¹²

Nonetheless, deeper than issues of policy, polygamy was considered by missionaries as a hindrance to the Adventist vision. This turned the outlook of the missionaries from the social wellbeing of the converts, the social and cultural significance of the practice to the perceived conflictual barrier erected

¹⁰ Fall Council Action, 1930, 74–75, Box 3811, subject: Polygamy, General Conference Archives, Maryland, USA.

¹¹ Höschele traces the reasons why the change came about especially through the intervention of “William H. Branson, the leader of the denomination’s African region and later General Conference president.” See Höschele 2015, 38 ff.

¹² Fall Council Action, 1930, 74–75, Box 3811.

by polygamy. Therefore, while Clifford did not raise the question of who would take care of the former wives of Sampson's father or how they would fare, he was more interested in showing the general Adventist public, especially those in the West, back home, that the Adventist message was progressing such that young men in the church like Sampson had begun rejecting local customs and traditions while accepting Adventist ways of life.

In the case of William, while his place and position in the society was lost, his place and position in the Adventist church was gained. As Vine reported, William

had been a respected man because of his affluence; now he is nothing but extremely poor. Which illustrates very forcibly the unconverted Ibo woman's attitude of mind, and, incidentally, one of the greatest problems we missionaries have to face. (Vine 1933, 15)

Although this inquiry does not necessarily support polygamous practice, it is very easy to take sides and be sympathetic with William and his wives. Therefore, aside from sympathy, a number of questions that may not be fully explored comes to mind.

Since Vine was aware that having other women to talk to and cook with was a sign of good luck and prestige (Mitchison 1960, 82), could she have intervened in trying to convince Cordelia, William's first wife to stay? Was Vine more interested in having a truly converted member, William, as a church member than losing all four women? Why was Vine not interested in repercussions of William's action and his position in the society as well as the prestige of Cordelia? Unlike Clifford, Vine seemed to be interested in telling the Adventist public how difficult it was to work among "heathen" Igbo women who took pride in standing firmly to their traditional customs. Did this mean that the greatest opponent of the mission work was not polygamy¹³ but unconverted women? Could there have been special missiological programs for those women? Or could the voices of those women in polygamous marriages be taken seriously?

Possibly the issue of power relations was present. As was the case in several of those societies, social upward mobility was taken seriously. Therefore,

¹³ This would seem to contrast the 1925 claim of William McClements that polygamy was the greatest hindrance to the Adventist message (McClements, 1925, 4). Other Christians had the same mindset. For instance, Anglican missionaries considered polygamy also as their greatest enemy; see Jones 2011.

questions in relations to William's actions come to mind. Was William acting on his own accord? Or was he merely interested in gaining position and power in the Adventist church while substituting his status in the society? These questions create more confusion than resolution. Answering these questions may recourse to speculations since the reported story only appears once in the history of Adventism in Nigeria. In view of further explorations, it can be established that aside from hastily judging their host cultures, Adventist missionaries in Nigeria at that time failed to exhibit any form of flexibility towards local meanings in the face of misconceptions.

4.3 *Spiritism or Indigenous Charismatics in the Church?*

In the late 1930s, the Adventist Church was rocked by a schism in the Southeast of Nigeria. Unsurprisingly, before the schism, the Southeast region continued to have the influence and direct contribution of Tikili until the end of 1930s when he left Adventism pulling several others with him. What led to the unfortunate disassociation of Tikili from the Adventist Church? In 1938, the world Adventist Sabbath School lesson featured topics related to "Spiritual Gifts" and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost for the first quarter in its study guide (Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly 1938, 11–17; Izima 1973, 23–24).¹⁴ During this time, the membership of the growing denomination in Aba believed in the imminent manifestation of the latter rain. By July and August, a kind of "spirit movement" began. This charismatic movement saw several members claiming the power of the Spirit to see visions and dreams, power to heal the sick, raise the dead and make the lame to walk, etc. While others prophesied and spoke in tongues, others openly confessed their sins and were flogged publicly to gain forgiveness (Izima 1973, 23–24).

Surprisingly, the movement brought about two conflicting opinions. While some saw those manifestations as satanic counterfeits, another group most probably led by Tikili, the indigenous and influential pastor, believed the authenticity of the movement. When C. A. Bartlett, an Adventist regional leader, attended the workers' meeting in August, his lecture on "Try the Spirits

¹⁴ The related topics included "The Church of God" (January 29, 1938), "Spiritual Gifts" (February 5, 1938) and most especially "Spiritual Gifts (Concluded)" which centred on the topic of Pentecost (February 12, 1938).

whether *They Are of God*” seemed to diminish or quell the movement’s momentum and restored the much-cherished order known in Adventist circles. This may come as an astounding move since McClements had earlier given an account of “Pentecostal Experiences in Nigeria” in 1937. McClements (1937, 7) began his report with an ostentatious claim of “a new record of the Acts of the Holy Spirit.” In narrating the deliverance of a convert from evil spirits, the healing of a woman who had been ill for nineteen years through prayer, and the conversion of a juju priest; McClements recounted how the Adventist message had exerted “a strong influence” in Nigeria (*ibid.*). Here again, a missionary seems to have been interested in the resulting effect of the Adventist message.

Implicitly, the direction of McClements’ report painted an interesting picture. It seemed to have claimed that the “Pentecostal experience” was possible only in the process of evangelization. Consequently, the Holy Spirit was limited to releasing those in bondage of evil spirits or giving power to the prayers of Adventist preachers. Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit is done immediately converts accept Adventism. It is no wonder, then, that McClements solicited his readers “to pray for our workers and believers, that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit and prepared to do their part in finishing the working in Nigeria” (McClements 1937, 1). Therefore, McClements’ vision helps to explain Bartlett’s lecture that branded the movement as counterfeit.

Nonetheless, if McClements saw the filling of the Holy Spirit as limited to finishing the mission work, Tikili’s vision differed. The Holy Spirit’s power can be bestowed upon those who have already professed Adventism. This can be evidenced in church life, during worship, and in the public engagements of God’s people. Furthermore, the supernatural and charismatic elements that characterized the movement were not new to Tikili. Interestingly, in June of that year, Tikili recounted his conversion to Adventism. In the process, he told the Adventist public of his special gifts: visions and healing. Of his vision, “In 1924”, Tikili (1930, 1) claimed,

the Lord showed me a night vision in which I was in a boat of pure gold, clear as glass. This boat took me to a certain village where there was a tree standing on the water’s edge. Suddenly three eagles came and stood on its extensive boughs; and as I looked these birds said in a very loud voice, as of a cathedral bell, ‘Repent, for the world is coming to an end.’ This seemed to reach every part of the world. At these words the whole village turned out weeping. The boat stood there for about five minutes and turned me round without anybody rowing it.

In respect to his healing power, Tikili maintained that God “has cured my diseases and has through me cured other men and women by prayer and a little first aid. I am known to many ... as the ‘doctor without medicine.’ For by prayer I have given them release” (Tikili 1930, 1–2). The account was re-published in a number of other Adventist magazines like *Canadian Union Messenger*, *Lake Union Herald*, *Pacific Union Recorder* and *Atlantic Union Gleaner*.

Unfortunately, the aim of the report cannot be fully harnessed due to lack of historical data. Yet on a closer look, the report was an abridged version of Tikili’s own account. In this vein, a further insight could be made though at the danger of speculation. Perhaps, Tikili had sought to give credence to the 1938 movement by resorting to his empirical and lived experiences from the time he was converted, called to pastoral ministry until the crisis. If he had experienced visions and miraculous healing, then the ordinary Adventists could also experience the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, in the African worldview, the cosmos as we have it is populated by benevolent and malevolent spirits. The malevolent spirits are capable of causing misfortune, wreaking havoc and bringing lack of progress in individual and communal lives. Being able to control the cosmos and knowing the causation of the misfortune is a prime preoccupation of their metaphysics (Ilogu 1965). Hence, they recourse to magic and divination in order to gain power from the benevolent spirits to protect them from the unseen evil forces. It should not be surprising then, that what was branded a “spirit movement” in 1938 was only a yearning for the power of God through the Holy Spirit to permeate the practicality of the new Adventist faith. The converts who experienced the charismatic renewal understood the Adventist theory of spiritual gifts in their own context by tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, they were able to see visions (the unseen), had power to heal and power to overcome evil forces.

However, this vision was not shared by the mission leaders who possibly did not fully understand the Nigerian metaphysics and the lived realities of indigenous life. Aside from branding the renewal as “ungodly”, they discouraged extemporal and vibrant worship interspersed with what was perceived as noisy clapping singing and dancing. With less support from the church leadership on this matter, Tikili eventually resigned and established his own Church (Seventh-day Church of God) taking with him a number of followers

(Izima 1973, 23–24).¹⁵ The resignation of Tikili should not be a surprise considering his African traditional background. He must have seen the manifestation of the Spirit as part of indigenizing or localizing Adventism and making it culturally relevant (Ilogu 1973).

Understandably, the Adventist leaders were wary and highly suspicious of such manifestations since it was becoming rampant among other Christian bodies. For instance, in 1930, just after the rise of Joseph Ayo Babalola, the foremost leader of Aladura Churches in Nigeria, other indigenous movements of this kind began springing up. Especially among members of the Faith Tabernacle Church in Ibadan, West of Nigeria, a prophet emerged. The name of this prophet is not mentioned in the report of W. G. Till. Till, an Adventist missionary leader, described the activities of the new leader-prophet and his followers as signs of the end time. It is likely that this was Daniel Orekoya, the healing prophet of the Oke-Bola revival in 1930, who laid the foundation for the indigenous Christ Apostolic Church, an Aladura (charismatic) movement.

Till's report through the Denomination's flagship magazine, *The Review*, branded the leader as a false prophet. Accordingly, when some inquirers came, they, the Adventist leaders, were able to point out that (Till 1930, 21):

there are false prophets as well as true, and the Bible teaches that in the last days Satan will work miracles. This surprised many, and they have asked how they can differentiate, and so we have been given opportunity to witness for the truth.

The opportunity to witness for the truth was a needed ingredient for the end-times. Notwithstanding issues of doctrine and the end-time mantra, Till was unhappy with the charismatic style of worship practised by the prophets and their followers. He complained that there was little preaching among the new indigenous Christians. Instead, there were much "so-called singing and chanting, interspersed freely with the clanging of a bell" (Till 1930, 21).

Interestingly, the "spirit movement" among Adventists at end of the 1930s also coincided with other indigenous revivals and schisms that occurred in

¹⁵ This resignation may have been around the end of 1939 or early in the 1940s for Tikili is pictured with other Adventist workers in the June 1939 edition of *Advent Survey* (Bartlett 1939, 1). Interview with Solomon O. Agharaumuna, August 2019. Agharaumuna is generally considered the oldest living Adventist in Aba. See also "Bible Sabbath Association Organizational Profile Interview with The Joint Church of God 7th-Day Fellowship." *The Sabbath Sentinel*, September–October 1999, 13–14.

the Apostolic Church, Assemblies of God Church as well as other mission churches in Igboland and in Nigeria. It seemed to be the time of disagreements and disavowal of orthodoxy and orthopraxis between foreign Christian leaders and local Christian leaders (Burgess 2008, 68–72) that led to innovation and invention of new ecclesial traditions with roots in the culture of the people of Nigeria. It was a contextual sign that Christianity in Nigeria moved towards cultural rootedness and this could have been taken seriously by the Adventist missionaries instead of the response of denial and replacement. Such disagreements in opinions, theology and praxis led to a schism which might have been avoided by Adventists through dialogue and patient cultivation of a positive view of their host cultures.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Nigeria, a multifaceted milieu with its immense cultural diversity, welcomed Adventist missionaries as latecomers to its religious scene. Generally, institutional organizations became the avenue for maintaining the Adventist mission in Nigeria. However, after establishing their mission in Nigeria, Adventist missionaries were faced with the challenges and task of maintaining what they had started. By exploring how Adventist missionaries encountered the three cultural issues and practices in Nigeria, this paper established that Adventist missionaries consciously or unconsciously sought avenues to replace elements of traditional culture, misunderstood the value of cultural practices, exhibited impatience towards the status of their converts and often held negative views of their host cultures. Aside from providing a substitute religio-cultural system that eventually became a sub-culture for converts to Adventism, any cultural practice that seemingly conflicted with the vision of a coming kingdom was discouraged. By implication, leaning on Langer's insights (2012, 30), Adventist missionaries in Nigeria seemed to envision a "triumphalistic" attitude to culture. This attitude sought a cultural disengagement or the conquest of the cultural elements through Adventist ethos and ecclesial praxis.

Nonetheless, it must be maintained that Adventist missionaries contributed in positive ways to Nigeria. This is evident especially in the educational and health facilities which contributed to a holistic view of humanity. However, the triumphalist engagement of missionaries with the indigenous culture as was demonstrated in this article bear significance for the historiography of Adventist mission in Nigeria.

The treatment and role of women seems to be an underexplored theme. While Adventist mission history does not undervalue the contribution of women to its history, the perception and engagement of Adventist missionaries with women in the host cultures has not been given adequate significance. What needs further academic engagement lies in the following questions: what views of women did Adventist missionaries bring to the mission field? Did Adventist missionaries fuel the colonial undermining of women or did they contribute to women empowerment over and against colonial structures?

Secondly, when it comes to polygamy, Adventist missionaries in Nigeria not only demonized the practice, they destabilized families which in some ways brought disrespect to individual converts. The issue of polygamy has been explored by Höschele (2015) in the East African encounter with Adventism. Yet a fuller engagement of the theme can reveal if the Adventist standpoint on the matter constituted a problem to the success of the mission in Nigeria. It can also reveal if there were Adventist missionaries who did not openly support the practice but condoned it for the sake of the mission or the converts.

Thirdly, the case of indigenous charismatic renewal which missionaries characterized as counterfeit may not be too surprising in the overall treatment of Adventist mission historiography. What may be interesting is if charismatic influences were ever seen in a positive light by Adventist missionaries. Moreover, since the case presented in this paper led to a split, exploring the perspective of those who left may bring a richer perspective in exploring the dynamics of end-time rhetoric claimed by those who learnt from Adventist missionaries but added more layers of discussion to the eschatological vision of the world. Unfortunately, this remains unexplored.

Finally, the historical analysis attempted here is not just a departure from institutional mission approaches which are incapable of taking into account the complex interaction between missionaries and various local elements. It is a departure from a Eurocentric or American centric avowal that sees everything done by missionaries as noble. It is an example of a critical engagement of mission history that attempts to grasp the unique instances and dynamics of Adventism's crossing of social, cultural, philosophical and linguistic barriers. It is an attempt that should be encouraged in doing Adventist mission history. Therefore, the need to continue investigating the engagement of missionaries and indigenous cultures is sustained. Yet, further explorations may

need to critique the theological underpinnings of missionaries in Nigeria so as to harness missiological principles for today's mission work.

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Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel untersucht die komplizierten und komplexen Beziehungen von adventistischen Missionaren mit einheimischen Themen während ihrer Missionsarbeit in Nigeria. Es wird argumentiert, dass die Annäherung der Missionare an die indigene Kultur trotz deren relativen Erfolgs geprägt war von Konfliktpunkten und von einer stark unterschiedlichen Vision der Parusie Christi. Infolgedessen wurden indigene Themenbereiche wie die Stellung der Frau in der Gesellschaft und in öffentlichen Angelegenheiten, Polygamie und Charismen im Gottesdienst ihrer kulturellen Bedeutung entzogen; sie wurden in einigen Fällen dämonisiert und durch eine adventistische Alternative ersetzt. Die Vorbereitung der Bekehrten auf das zweite Kommen Christi bedeutete demnach die Abkehr von jeder kulturellen Praxis, die scheinbar den Schwerpunkt der Bekehrten von der Unmittelbarkeit des außerweltlichen kommenden Reiches ablenkte.

Résumé

Cet article explore les relations complexes et délicates entre les missionnaires adventistes du septième jour et les questions indigènes pendant leur travail missionnaire au Nigeria. Il fait valoir que malgré leur succès relatif, l'approche des missionnaires à l'égard de la culture indigène a été marquée par des points de conflit et par la différence flagrante avec leur vision de la Parousie du Christ. En conséquence, les questions indigènes telles que le rôle des femmes dans la société et les affaires publiques, la polygamie et le charisme dans le culte ont été dépouillées de leur signification culturelle et, dans certains cas, diabolisées, pour être remplacées par l'alternative adventiste. La préparation des convertis à la seconde venue du Christ impliquait le désengagement de toute pratique culturelle qui semblait détourner l'attention des convertis concernant l'imminence du royaume à venir.

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Forgotten Scriptures

Allusions to and Quotations of the Apocrypha by Ellen White*

Matthew J. Korpman

Abstract

Since Arthur White's initial release of Ellen White's comment about the Hidden Book (Apocrypha), it has been maintained that Mrs White never referred to or appeared to make use of apocryphal writings at any point in the years of her ministry that followed. In contrast to this working assumption, this article conducts a survey of her writings, identifying instances in which Mrs White appears to draw upon a considerable amount of apocryphal material in her writings. The conclusion of this article is that Ellen White made extensive use of the Apocrypha not only in the years prior to her comments in 1850, but long after, concluding only near her death. The article argues that her utilization of the material, synonymous with her attitude toward other biblical quotations, adds support that her early visionary claim in 1849 that the Apocrypha was the Word of God continued to function as a personal proposition for her in the ensuing decades of her ministry.

1. Introduction

Among the peculiarities of early Adventist history is the little examined topic of the Old Testament Apocrypha. In a previous century (and those preceding it), these books were included in most Protestant Bibles, nestled between the

* Deep thanks is owed to my past professors, Kendra Haloviak-Valentine and Gil Valentine of the H. M. S. Richards Divinity School, for their guidance and counseling of my initial undergraduate thesis on the topic. Their feedback and belief in my work has my eternal gratitude. Thanks is also due to the numerous peer reviewers of the article and their suggestions, as well as André Reis for his exceptionally helpful critiques.

two testaments in many family-sized King James Bibles (as well as others).¹ In other words, the Apocrypha was read as a component of the standard Bible by most early Adventists in the 19th century, and research has revealed that certain books retained a semi-canonical status for numerous members in the church until the early years of the twentieth century.² This background for both the larger world of Protestantism and Adventism helps to focus attention on the figure of Ellen White within this context. Part of the reason for the lack of research on her relationship to this material is due to the fact that for a long time, few knew it was a topic needing such investigation. Aside from two statements in which Mrs White commented directly on the Apocrypha, comments which were only released to the public in 1985 and 2014 respectively, the earliest knowledge of Ellen White's relationship to these writings came from "scripture references" provided in a single early edition of an early Adventist tractate known as *A Word to the Little Flock*.

During the period following soon after Ellen White's death, her son William C. White began his leadership of the White Estate. At some point during the 1920s or 30s, W.C. White received a question from a concerned Adventist who inquired regarding those references to the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras in that early Adventist pamphlet. The reader wished to know both why Ellen White had quoted from something apocryphal and, likewise, to understand why the references had, in his mind, disappeared in subsequent editions of the pamphlet. W.C. White's answer, co-authored with D.E. Robinson, was to set the ground work for all future responses by the Estate.

¹ For further discussion of the reception of the Apocrypha by Protestantism as a whole, and how Adventism fits within that discussion, see the upcoming publication: Korpman 2021.

² For further discussion of this, see Korpman 2018. The reference to "numerous" is in respect to denominational leaders and published voices (the only ones whose voices we still retain), the majority of which during certain decades of the church promoted certain books of the Apocrypha (particularly 2 Esdras) as scripture. In particular, the comments of James White and other denominational leaders in the *Review* stating that they recommended Adventists read 2 Esdras, Wisdom of Solomon and 1 Maccabees is particularly enlightening on this point with regard to the earlier period. See: Editors. "To Correspondents: Old Style and New." *Review and Herald* 12.12, 1858, 96. Likewise, the comments of the *Signs* in the early 1900s that "some" believe 2 Esdras is scripture is instructive on the latter period. See: Editors. "Question Corner." *Signs of the Times* 40.26, 1913, 402.

W.C. White's response was expressly defensive. He accused the writer of having written an "unfair and misleading" question. Why was it unfair? Because "it intimates Sister Ellen G. White introduced passages from the Apocrypha into her writings." This, he adamantly stated, "she never did." He followed this emphatic declaration with another, announcing that "we [the Estate] cannot find evidence in any of her books or manuscripts that she ever made quotations from the Apocrypha."³ W.C. White then rhetorically asks why such a question would even be posed and then, to answer his own question, points to two pages of the pamphlet where he mistakenly states that there are only two references listed for 2 Esdras in the document (in fact, there are six references).

A most important aspect of the response W.C. White gave was to attribute the references to his father, James White. This was to become a line of argument that would define the approaches of all who addressed the same issue afterward. As he notes, the *Word to the Little Flock* tractate did explicitly state that Ellen White's husband had himself supplied the scriptural references. Thus, W.C. White claimed in his letter that the references to 2 Esdras were "inserted by James White" and that since they do not appear in other reprintings, this must imply that "evidently ... Mrs White did not choose to use any of these references." He adds again that they were "added ... inserted ... by her husband."⁴

LeRoy E. Froom, not much later, responding to a similar question, would write,

Those who have spent a lifetime studying and classifying the writings of Ellen G. White state that she never quoted the apocryphal works in her testimonies, articles, or books, nor did she ever cite them in her footnotes. The groundless impression of some that she did – and especially the charge of critics to this effect – springs, doubtless, from the one instance wherein James White expressly states that he supplied the footnote references.⁵

³ White, W. C. and D. E. Robinson. "Reference to the Apocrypha." Estate File: DF 1016.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Froom, LeRoy E. "Mrs. White and the Apocrypha." Estate File: 31-C-2. The file does not state an author, but the document is a copy of an article published by Froom.

It is unknown what “critics” Froom could be referring to, as it appears that the subject of the Apocrypha and its relationship to Ellen White was almost a mute subject by the time he wrote. Presumably, these critics were not writing their complaints, but verbally communicating them. No record at least remains of any such critical evaluations of Mrs White or James White in this regard. It is also not known who “those” could be referring to. Other than perhaps W.C. White and D.E. Robinson, there does not appear to be any record of others speaking out on this subject at the time.

However, much like W.C. White before him, Froom notes that the references are due to Ellen White’s husband and states “that explains it all.” He writes that “Sister White was not responsible for these references that were appended by her husband at the request of friends, and which included six citations to the Apocrypha.” It was not the case, Froom said, that James White recognized that Ellen White had quoted from the Apocrypha (or any scripture), but rather that “expressions in Sister White’s message” had “reminded Brother White of certain expressions he had read in the Apocrypha.” Froom goes on to conclude that because Mrs White had not reprinted the footnote references, “this is adequate evidence that Mrs White was not responsible for, nor did she approve, the footnotes with allusion to the Apocrypha.” Rather confidently, he finishes with the statement: “Thus the matter stands, stripped of all mystery on implication of Mrs White.”⁶

During Arthur White’s leadership of the Estate, further discussion of the topic occurred periodically. In the late 1950s, A. White received a question about his grandmother, once again dealing with the subject of the footnoted references (A. L. White 1956).⁷ He responded, much like others, by quoting the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ In 1953, the office secretary of the Estate, (Miss) Bessie Mount, responded to a question by a reader who was confused because his Catholic Bible’s “2 Esdras” didn’t match the references in *Word to the Little Flock*. She explained at length how different Bibles contained different editions of the Apocrypha and then made the following argument. “I might add that Sister White herself never quoted from the Apocryphal books. In ‘A Word to the Little Flock,’ which was prepared by James White, these scripture references given at the bottom of the pages evidently were added by him, and are not included in the material written by Sister White herself. She described what she saw without, without using references.” (Miss) Bessie Mount. “‘Word to the Little Flock’ and the Book of 2 Esdras.” Nov. 3, 1953, Estate File: 43-C-11. Fagal, in 2001, again wrote to a confused reader (regarding the references in *WLF*), that “I would not put great stock in the fact that James

same section of the tractate and noting that, to him, "it is very apparent ... that the Scripture references and the references to Esdras were added by James White. We cannot in any sense hold Ellen White responsible for these references." He continues elsewhere, stating that: "We have no instance in the E. G. White writings where she quoted from the Apocrypha. Therefore, we cannot assume that she placed her approval upon it, or upon its use." A. White then makes an appeal for sympathy, asking for understanding due to James White's young age and implied lack of knowledge. He writes that,

We must remember that back in 1847 those we think of as pioneers were feeling their way along. James White was a young man, some 24 or 25 years of age, working quite separated from others who were later united with him in the development of the work. The old Bibles in those days had the Apocrypha in them, and apparently James White observed some similarity in the description given by Ellen White of what was shown to her first vision and some things which were recorded in the book of Esdras. (A.L. White 1956)

These views stand in stark contrast to the present state of Adventist research. Unlike these early commentators we have reviewed, it is now generally acknowledged by Adventist historians that Ellen White *did* knowingly utilize and quote from the Apocrypha in her first vision and that such references do not stem from her husband. The four leading authorities in Adventism who have written on this topic currently agree with Ronald Graybill's sentiment that "the language and imagery of 2 Esdras formed a part of the youthful Ellen Harmon's repertoire" (Graybill 1994, 11) and that "it is not surprising that Ellen White would have been familiar enough with 2 Esdras as to have used its language in her early visions" (Graybill 1987, 31). Denis Fortin acknowledges that the references in *Word to the Little Flock* are indeed "allusions to the Apocrypha," that they "reflect her familiarity with and interest in these texts in her Bible," and that "Ellen White was likely conscious of the content and wording of 2 Esdras and *The Wisdom of Solomon*" when she quoted them (Fortin 2002, 12). Likewise, Donald Casebolt has recently written that it

White cited the apocrypha at this time in his experience, unless it was supported by his consistent practice later." He went on to note that he believed the references were added by James White "and perhaps by Joseph Bates." He noted in conclusion, like those before him, that "they do not represent Mrs. White's own writing" (Fagal 2001).

was a “fact” that Mrs White “incorporated them [the Apocrypha] into a description of what she saw in heaven” (Casebolt 2018, 70).

One of the reasons that this shift in understanding has occurred is due in part to the work of Graybill, who revealed to many historians’ surprise that early Adventists viewed the Apocrypha positively. His groundbreaking article was the first to rediscover this forgotten history. Moreover, the recent release of Ellen White’s comments endorsing the Apocrypha in 1849 and 1850 have forever changed the dynamics of this conversation. In the wake of the newest manuscript’s release in 2014 and its record of Ellen White praising the Apocrypha as the Word of God (Manuscript 5, 1849), it is now not a question of whether Mrs White *would* have quoted from the Apocrypha, but *where* did she do so?

As such, this study intends to examine the extent to which Mrs White alluded to the Apocrypha and whether it can or cannot be determined that her allusions and quotations were intentional, rather than happenstance as Fortin wondered (Fortin 2002, 12). A brief review of the document *A Word to the Little Flock* is pursued, after which a new set of proposed quotations/allusions are outlined from various apocryphal books and from all periods of Mrs White’s lifetime. The results of this brief and initial study, it is hoped, will provide greater insight into the practical relationship between Ellen White and the Apocrypha throughout her life.

2. Defining the Terms: What Makes an Allusion or Quotation?

Before beginning this survey of Ellen White’s literary relationship to the Apocrypha, it must be first detailed what is meant by the language employed to describe it. For the purposes of this paper, the definitions of quotation, allusion, and echo are adopted from those listed in Christopher Beetham’s book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Beetham 2008). In that work, Beetham outlines the following guidelines for determining what each of the three are.

Quotation: An intentional, explicit, verbatim or near verbatim citation of a former text of six or more words in length. A *formal* quotation is a quotation accompanied by an introductory marker, or *quotation formula*; an *informal* quotation lacks such a marker ...

Allusion: A literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be understood fully. An allusion is less explicit than a *quotation*, but more explicit than an *echo*. In this study, a linear marker of five words or less is considered to be an allusion ...

Echo: A subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor. An author's wording may echo the precursor consciously or unconsciously and/or contextually or non-contextually. (Beetham 2008, 17–24)⁸

Because the issue of whether something is an allusion or an echo is sometimes a topic of contention (in fact, this has proven to be the single most divisive issue for every editor of this paper since its original composition to its current publication), the criteria of Beetham will be employed as well. When describing what defines an allusion, he outlines the following propositions.

Four items are essential to the definition of an allusion. First, an allusion is an intentional conscious attempt by an author to point a reader back to a prior text The second item that is essential to allusion is that an allusion has "in each instance, a single identifiable source." With the employment of allusion, the author attempts to point the audience to a specific predecessor Third, an allusion must adequately stand out in order to be perceived by the audience This presupposes that the author and reader share a common language and tradition. For an allusion to be successful, the prior text must be "... part of the portable library shared by the author and his ideal audience." If the work is unfamiliar to the reader, the allusion will race past the ear like an arrow that missed its target The final item essential to allusion is that an author employing it expects that the audience will remember the original sense of the previous text and link the appropriate components that the new context requires in order to be fully understood. (Ibid., 18–19)

⁸ It should be noted that Beetham admits that "the line, however, between quotation and allusion, however gray, needs to be drawn somewhere and therefore is drawn at the five- and six-word range for this study" (ibid., 17: fn. 27). Readers are not asked to agree with this specific number but to make their own decisions when understanding the use of terms in this paper.

In contrast, an echo is more difficult and can be judged by four criteria as well:

First, unlike allusion, an echo may be either a conscious or unconscious act.... Echoes are faint enough that often it is impossible to gauge whether its appearance in the text was consciously or unconsciously performed by the author.... Second, like allusion, echo has "in each instance, a single identifiable source." Hollander states that echo is a form of citation in that it refers back to a particular precursor. Every echo derives from one specific text.... If the echo is a textual or literary echo, it stems from a text that the author has read (or heard) at some point in the past. Third, unlike allusion, by echo the author does not intend to point the audience to the precursor.... Echo is a linking of texts accomplished without the aim to render a communication for public consumption. Perri writes concerning echo that "such subtle incorporations of markers may appear to be for the poet himself, something we 'overhear,' thereby contributing to a quality of lyrical privacy." ... Nevertheless, a reader with a deep familiarity of the texts read by the author may overhear the author's otherwise private "flashes in the brainpan" with their well-attuned ear. Echoes surface in a text largely because the author's mind is saturated with the source text. For the apostle Paul, the sacred Scriptures of Israel constituted such a source text. Fourth, unlike allusion, an echo is not dependent upon the original sense of the precursor to be understood. The meaning in the new context is not tied to the previous context; that is, the audience does not need to "recognize, remember, realize, and connect" the two texts to grasp the author's intended public communication in the new context. The original context may or may not have been taken into consideration.... Therefore, the reader may miss an echo of a previous text yet still can comprehend the text within which the echo is embedded.... The component intended as public communication is adequately conveyed apart from recognition of the echo.... Upon first discovery of an echo by a reader, the author may appear to have done nothing more than borrow a rich or rare expression, word, or concept due to its particular attractiveness in the way it looks, sounds, or turns a phrase. If, however, a reader also recollects the source text, he or she may discover unexpressed links that suggest rich stores of otherwise unnoticed insight. (Ibid., 20-22)

As will be seen by the end of this paper's argument, Ellen White never formally quotes anything from the Apocrypha. On the other hand, there are cases where she appears to quote informally from the Apocrypha, citing verbatim or near verbatim six or more words. At other times, Mrs White alludes to the Apocrypha, clearly expecting her audience to know what she is referring to. However, many examples of Mrs White's references may better fit the example of conscious echoes which do not require or expect her audience to know the reference to understand her point. These definitions will be employed throughout the paper whenever these words are given as descriptions for Mrs White's use of the Apocrypha.

3. *A Word to the Little Flock and the Apocrypha References*

When Ellen White's first vision was reprinted from the *Day Star* paper (January 24, 1846) in the 1847 printing of *A Word to the Little Flock* (from here on to be referred to as *WLF*), James White added a list of "scriptural references" under his wife's visions, so that readers could see *biblical* evidence that her visions derived from and agreed with inspiration. A curious feature of those listed scriptures is that they include not only the canonical works, but apocryphal as well. Amongst the references to Isaiah and Revelation, are citations of 2 Esdras and the Wisdom of Solomon. In total, there are about seven *printed* references to those works (six for Esdras, one for Wisdom).⁹

A few examples shall suffice to illustrate this usage, all listed and acknowledged by the White's themselves in *WLF*. Thus, whether one finds the parallels always convincing, these are the parallels that the White's acknowledged themselves. Parallels between Mrs White and the Apocrypha are noted by the use of italics here and throughout the paper:

⁹ What makes these references important is that they are not the afterthought of James White who just happened to see similarities between his wife's work and various scriptures, but rather Mrs White's very vision demonstrates in its language that it deliberately drew upon the works for its imagery.

Ellen White	2 Esdras
<p>“We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when <i>Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads</i>” (WLF, 14).</p>	<p>“And in the midst of them there was a <i>young man of a high stature, taller than all the rest, and upon every one of their heads he sets crowns, and more exalted which I marvelled greatly.... Then said I to the angel, What the young person is it that crowneth them, and giveth them palms in their hands? So he answered and said unto me, It is the Son of God, whom they have confessed in the world</i>” (2 Esdras 2:43.46.47).</p>
<p>“Dark <i>heavy clouds came up and clashed against each other</i>” (WLF, 19).</p>	<p>“Behold <i>clouds from the east and from the north unto the south, and they are very horrible to look upon, full of wrath and storm. They shall smite one upon another...The great and mighty clouds shall be puffed up full of wrath...</i>” (2 Esdras 15:34.35.40).</p>
<p>“Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount sat glorious temple, and about it were <i>seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lillies, and I saw the little ones climb,.... and he said, you must go back to the earth again, and relate to others, what I have revealed to you</i>” (WLF, 17).</p>	<p>“I Esdras saw upon the mount Sion a great people, whom I could not number... And as many fountains flowing with milk and honey, and <i>seven mighty mountains, whereupon there grows roses and lillies, whereby I will fill thy children with joy... then the angel said unto me, Go thy way, and tell my people what manner of things, and how great wonders of the lord thy God, thou hast seen</i>” (2 Esdras 2:19.42).</p>

The last example given about the mountains and roses is an example of an informal quotation by Mrs White. Although one might think in isolation that the reference to heavy clouds could be an echo, it takes place in a document (her visionary report) which employs informal quotations and allusions (such as the first example about the crowns). When taken together, every possible echo become by necessity an allusion, since the presence of other allusions and informal quotations assumes that the author intends for the readers to

recognize the source of the statements (the defining characteristic of an allusion). The point here is that even without James White citing the reference on page 17 to 2 Esdras 2:19.42, it would still be understood as an informal quotation derived by the author herself.

While it is true that there are seven *noted* references in *WLF*, this is not the actual number of references that are contained within the text of Ellen White's writings. Graybill, in the course of his early research into this issue, noted that Mrs White had made an eighth allusion to the Apocrypha which James White had overlooked. This allusion, unsurprisingly, was from the work of 2 Esdras.

Ellen White describes Jesus as welcoming the saints into the New Jerusalem with the words: "You have washed your robes in my blood, stood stiffly for my truth, enter in." 2 Esdras 2:47 says "Then I began greatly to commend them that stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord." The parallel phrase evidently became a common one among early Adventists, for as late as 1856, one believer writes the *Review and Herald* to say "We mean to be of that company that Esdras saw who stood stiffly for the truth." (Graybill 1987, 31)

While Graybill was able to note this extra citation from 2 Esdras, not identified in the original *WLF* footnotes, I would argue that there are two more additional citations that have been overlooked by Graybill and others. First, in 2 Esdras 7:30–31, it appears to indicate that after Christ comes to bring judgment on the world, the earth will be thrown into a period of symbolic silence for seven days. This appears to correspond to Mrs White's seven-day journey she experiences with the 144,000 on their way to heaven.¹⁰ While this might be possible to explain as a mere coincidence, the fact that the vision is filled with already established allusions to 2 Esdras suggests otherwise. This connection to Esdras is strengthened by noting that the second part of the *same* sentence in 2 Esdras is already noted in the pamphlet to be an intentional reference by Mrs White to 2 Esdras 2:43. If she quoted part of that verse once before, it can be presumed that this second time is indeed probable since she was aware of the text and sought to make that connection with her readers.

The other overlooked reference to the Apocrypha, this time from 1 Maccabees, can perhaps be seen in her description of the Sabbath as the final conflict

¹⁰ *WLF*, 14: "We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads."

at the end of time. Mrs White describes a vision in which she “sees” that the Papacy will force all Christians at the end of time to observe Sunday (rather than Saturday) as the true Sabbath. This revelation is followed with a description of how “in the time of trouble, we all fled from the cities and villages, but were pursued by the wicked, who entered the houses of the saints with the sword” (*WLF*, 19). This description appears to indicate a heavy influence from the narrative of the Maccabean persecution as recounted in 1 Maccabees (and to some extent, 2 Maccabees). Particularly, 1 Macc. 1:43–45.53 and 2:28–32 reveal how Antiochus IV. Epiphanes came against Judah and ordered that the Sabbath observance be stopped (under the threat of persecution and death). Likewise, when some Judeans fled from the cities (toward the mountains), Antiochus’ government forces are said to have made war with them by the sword, pursuing these Judeans out of the cities. This narrative’s similarity to Ellen White’s own vision points toward the idea that these references from the Maccabees potentially stand behind Mrs White’s use of the imagery and that they represent an allusion intended to remind her readers of the apocryphal book.

Noting this evidence, it raises a major question: Why did James White list 2 Esdras and the Wisdom of Solomon as “Scripture” references? Did he believe they were scripture? The evidence from his usage of the work elsewhere in *WLF* in his own writings and in other publications appears to confirm that this is indeed the case. Since the purpose of including those “scripture references” was to validate that Ellen White was inspired by demonstrating evidence of her agreement with scripture, it should be noted then that by James White referring to the Apocrypha as scripture, he assumed that early Millerites in their social circles would be in agreement with this assessment. In short, James White assumed that agreement with the Apocrypha was considered the same as agreeing with the spirit of inspiration. They were both biblical or scriptural and lent evidence to his wife’s inspired visions. Given that evidence, this raises an even bigger question: did Ellen White, like her husband, *also* believe that they were scripture?

Several points appear to confirm that Mrs White did believe this at the time. We can assume that Mrs White knew that her husband was referencing these texts as “scripture” and that her silence approved of the description. Furthermore, since we can tell that these quotations and allusions to the Apocrypha are intentional to Mrs White’s visionary descriptions, informally quoted and

employed with many allusions, it indicates that she was using such descriptions in the same way that she used the other scriptural descriptions she included. There is nothing to distinguish her utilization of the apocryphal material from canonical. And finally, as will be explored in the following section, Mrs White a few years later declared the Apocrypha to be part of the Word of God, a fact that, when combined with everything else, makes it unreasonable to assume those beliefs were not true a few years earlier.

4. Overlooked References to the Apocrypha: 1847–1849

For those who have commented on this subject, there has remained for quite some time now a working assumption that Ellen White only quoted from or alluded to the Apocrypha (specifically 2 Esdras) in her earliest visions preserved in the small pamphlet *WLF*. However, this appears to be a mistaken assumption. Not only did she quote from the book of 2 Esdras in her first two visions, but in two further visions which followed these in 1848 and 1849, she again draws from the apocalyptic work, drawing on the same verses as in the past two visions.¹¹

2 Esdras (KJV)	Ellen White
Behold <i>clouds</i> from the east and from the north unto the south, and they are very horrible to look upon, <i>full of wrath and storm. They shall smite one upon another...</i> The great and mighty clouds shall be puffed up full of wrath..." (2 Esdras 15:34.35.40)	Dark, heavy <i>clouds</i> came up and <i>clashed against each other</i> . The atmosphere parted and rolled back; then we could look up through the open in Orion, whence came the voice of God. (1848)
So he answered and said unto me, It is the Son of God, whom they have confessed in the world. Then began I greatly to commend them that <i>stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord</i> . (2 Esdras 2:47)	I saw some <i>who were not standing stiffly for present truth</i> . (1849)

Both references are repetitions of the same two texts from 2 Esdras that she drew upon previously in her first two visions, demonstrating that the same texts that informed her first visionary experience continued to be intricately

¹¹ Compare White, *Early Writings*, 41 (Dec 16, 1848) and *ibid.*, 44 (Mar 24, 1849) with 2 Esdras 8:2 and 2:47.

woven with those that continued afterward. It is within *this context* that, between late 1849 and January 1850, she made her comments while in vision about the “Hidden Book,” her own name for the collection we call the Apocrypha.¹² By noting these other examples of allusions, it strengthens the integration of her thinking with her practice at the time. The aforementioned two comments by Mrs White are shared below, but will not be explored in this paper at any great length:

(Taking the large Bible containing the apocrypha) Pure and undefiled, a part of it is consumed, holy, holy, walk carefully, tempted. The Word of God, take it ..., bind it long upon thine heart, pure and unadulterated. How lovely, how lovely, how lovely ... Thy word, thy word, thy word, a part of it is burned unadulterated, a part of the hidden book, a part of it is burned. Those that shall despitefully trea[t]¹³ that remnant would think that they are doing God service. Why? because they are led captive by Satan at his will. [The] Hidden book, it is cast out. Bind it to the heart. Bind it to the heart. Bind it to the heart. Bind it to the heart. Bind it, bind it, bind it ... let not its pages be closed, read it carefully. Snares will beset on every side, take the strait truth[,] bind it to the heart. Bind it to the heart. Bind it to the heart. Le[s]¹⁴ everything be cast out. (“Remarks in Vision.” Manuscript 5, 1849)

I saw that the Apocrypha was the hidden book, and that the wise of these last days should understand it. (Manuscript 4, 1850)

To repeat, these comments were made by Mrs White in the context of two visionary experiences. Noting her practical use of these apocryphal works,

¹² It is not known that any other person besides Ellen White ever referred to the Apocrypha by the designation “the Hidden Book,” and as such, may represent her own unique term for it. It is not likely that she picked it up from other early Adventists since the term is not found employed by them either.

¹³ This was a suggested spelling correction by the White Estate and the context seems to require it. While it might be possible to make sense of the original record of “tread,” since it connotes disrespect, the correction to “tre[a][t]” seems more plausible since it would have been more grammatically correct to have said “tre[a][d upon]” had “tre[a][d]” been the original spelling. Spelling mistakes are rampant throughout the transcription of this vision and so assuming mistakes such as this is quite natural.

¹⁴ I believe that the transcriber of Mrs. White’s words has misspelled “lest,” given that this word makes better sense in the context of the passage and because there is rampant misspelling throughout the document.

alongside her commendation of them to the “wise,” and her references to them as part of the “Word of God,” we can recognize that she was treating them much like other biblical texts she would draw from or quote. The fact that she believed they were part of the “Word of God” certainly helps elucidate why she treats them the same as any other biblical texts in *WLF*. Her statements exhorting early Adventists to bind the Apocrypha to their hearts is an extraordinary complimentary injunction by itself. These positive attitudes would indeed perfectly agree with the designation of *WLF* of these texts as “scripture” and demonstrates that the decision to call them such was likely as much Mrs White’s own, as it was also her husband’s.

5. Ellen White’s (Continued) Relationship to the Apocrypha: Post-1850

One aspect about all of the previous discussion is that it reflects Mrs White’s views and/or activities prior to 1850 and thus represented the mind of a young woman whose role in the Adventist movement was just starting. Thus, some might be led to believe that her views were subject to change. This perspective, of course, may not be agreeable to some more conservative perspectives, given the fact that these statements stemmed directly from visionary experiences and would, as such, not seemingly be subject to such radical changes. Regardless of such differences in the interpretation of Mrs White’s inspiration, the issue matters little with regard to this particular topic. The historical evidence we have indicates that she did not change her youthful attitude toward the Apocrypha. Although it has been purported since the White Estate’s initial publication of Mrs White’s vision to the present day, that “in her subsequent 65 years of writing... [she] never again referred to the Apocrypha” (Fortin 2013, 606), such an assertion is actually flawed if it is intended to be understood in a broad scope. While it is true that she does not use the word itself, it is not correct to infer from this that she does not still reference those works which the word signifies.

5.1 Continued Use of 2 Esdras

Nine months after she stated in vision that the Apocrypha was for the wise to read, she once again drew upon the work to describe yet another vision.¹⁵ In truth, it is a dramatic example of her use of the work, as it can be argued that

¹⁵ Compare White’s *Early Writings*, 54 (Sept 1850) with 2 Esdras 13:5–6.8–11.20–21.25–26.29–32. Her description of “fire from God” being “breathed upon them” is taken directly from 2 Esdras 13:9–11.

part of the vision preserved in *Early Writings (EW)* is not simply an elaborate allusion, but even an abridgment of the specific vision recorded in 2 Esdras. The chart below demonstrates how similar the two texts actually are when compared to one another in parallel tables.

2 Esdras 13 (KJV)	Ellen White (EW 52–54)
<p>And after this I beheld, and, lo, <i>there was gathered together a multitude of men, out of number, from the four winds of the heaven, to subdue the man that came out of the sea [the Son of God].</i> But I beheld, and, lo, <i>he had graved himself a great mountain, and flew up upon it...</i> And, lo, as he saw <i>the violence of the multitude that came,</i> he neither lifted up his hand, nor held sword, nor any instrument of war: But only I saw that <i>he sent out of his mouth as it had been a blast of fire, and out of his lips a flaming breath, and out of his tongue he cast out sparks and tempests.</i> And they were all mixed together; the blast of fire, the flaming breath, and the great tempest; and <i>fell with violence upon the multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them up every one, so that upon a sudden of an innumerable multitude nothing was to be perceived, but only dust and smell of smoke: when I saw this I was afraid...</i> And he answered unto me, and said, the interpretation of the vision shall I shew thee... Behold, the days come, when the most High will begin to deliver them that are upon the earth. And he shall come to the astonishment of them that dwell on the earth. <i>And one shall undertake to fight against another, one city against another, one place against another, one people against another, and one realm against another.</i> And the time shall be when these things shall come to pass, and the signs shall happen...</p>	<p>It is at the close of the one thousand years that <i>Jesus stands upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount parts asunder and becomes a mighty plain.</i> Those who flee at that time are <i>the wicked, who have just been raised.</i> Then the Holy City comes down and settles on the plain. Satan then imbues the wicked with his spirit. He flatters them that the army in the city is small, and that <i>his army</i> is large, and that <i>they can overcome the saints</i> and take the city. While Satan was rallying his army, the saints were in the city, beholding the beauty and glory of the Paradise of God... Then the wicked saw what they had lost; and <i>fire was breathed from God upon them and consumed them.</i> This was the execution of the judgment. The wicked then received according as the saints, in unison with Jesus, had meted out to them during the one thousand years. The same <i>fire from God that consumed the wicked</i> purified the whole earth. The broken, ragged mountains melted with fervent heat, the atmosphere also, and all the stubble was consumed. Then our inheritance opened before us, glorious and beautiful, and we inherited the whole earth made new. We all shouted with a loud voice, "Glory; Alleluia!"</p>

Among the striking parallels between the two passages is that both depict the Son of God¹⁶ as standing upon a mountain, both state that fire came from Jesus'¹⁷ or God's mouth to consume the wicked, and both identify the wicked as raising an army. Some might wish to propose that another possible parallel is Rev. 20:7–10, and they would not be wrong. It is clear that a number of elements in Mrs White's vision derive from this passage, such as the role of Satan and the New Jerusalem. However, those elements previously mentioned that parallel 2 Esdras do not find parallel in Revelation. For example, Revelation does not say that the fire comes from Jesus' or God's mouth standing on the mountain, but rather states it comes from above the earth in Heaven. Likewise, no mountain plays any role in Revelation's parallel. These factors suggest that Mrs White utilized the imagery of both Revelation and 2 Esdras together in equal fashion, even going so far as to choose Esdras' description of fire coming from the mouth of Jesus/God standing on a mountain over and against the description in Revelation that it came from above the earth in Heaven.

It indeed appears that Graybill was right that "the language and imagery of [Esdras]... formed a part of the youthful Ellen Harmon's repertoire" (Graybill 1994, 11). Moreover, in the years that followed and up until 1858, she would again make allusions to or quote from many of the same verses of 2 Esdras she drew from in the past, indicating that the language and material of Esdras continued to be for her a useful resource even past her days of youth.¹⁸

¹⁶ In the interpretation of the vision given to Ezra, it is explained by God that "the man that came out of the sea" (13:5) is "my son" (13:32.37.52).

¹⁷ Although at first glance it may seem anachronistic to identify the figure in 2 Esdras as Jesus Christ, for the version of the book which early Adventists were using, it was exegetically sound. In the version of 2 Esdras which Ellen White and other early Adventists utilized, the King James Version, the Son of God is identified in 2 Esdras 7:28–29 as Jesus Christ. This was due to a later corruption of the Latin original by Christian copyists and is not present in modern translations which remove the reference. However, the early Adventists who utilized the KJV version of 2 Esdras were not aware of this, and furthermore, even if the reference were not already made explicit in their own version, early Adventists such as Ellen White naturally would have identified the "son" of God as Jesus (what other "son" of God was there, in their view?).

¹⁸ Compare *Early Writings*, 118 (Feb 17, 1853) with 2 Esdras 2:47 (the third time she alludes to this verse). See also for example the parallel between *ibid.*, 281 and 2 Esdras 15:22.25.27, the same set of verses earlier quoted from in her first vision. Also compare *ibid.*, 285 and 2 Esdras 8:11.

Another significant reference to 2 Esdras comes from a piece she wrote for the *Review and Herald* in 1862. Shortly before the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was officially formed, she referred to Ezra as a prophet.¹⁹ The statement is significant as there is no mention of the exilic priest having the gift of prophecy or acting in the capacity of one anywhere in the canonical sixty-six works recognized by Protestants. It was also not a description used by other protestants for Ezra. On the other hand, this detail can indeed be found throughout the work of 2 Esdras and other Adventists only refer to Ezra as a prophet in reference to 2 Esdras. Thus the statement functions as an explicit allusion to 2 Esdras by Mrs White and reveals that she continued to hold to the belief that the work of 2 Esdras was not only useful for imagery “to paint our picture of heaven” (Graybill 1994, 11), but was moreover a work of historical and prophetic significance. This seems to be confirmed again nearly a decade later by another allusion to 2 Esdras in 1872, in which she described Jesus as taller than the angels, a reference drawn from the same vision of Esdras that she drew upon in her first vision of 1847.

2 Esdras 2:43.46–47	Ellen White (<i>Spiritual Gifts 4a</i> , 115)
And in the midst of them <i>there was a young man of a high stature, taller than all the rest</i> , and upon every one of their heads he set crowns, and was more exalted; which I marveled at greatly... Then said I unto the angel, What young person is it that crowneth them, and giveth them palms in their hands? So he answered and said unto me, It is <i>the Son of God</i> , whom they have confessed in the world.	Before <i>Christ</i> left Heaven and came into the world to die, he <i>was taller than any of the angels</i> . He was majestic and lovely. But when his ministry commenced, he was but little taller than the common size of men then living upon the earth. ²⁰

Later, in an article published in 1899 in the *Review and Herald*, Ellen White describes briefly the work of Nehemiah and Ezra. In her description of the two men, she clarifies, in distinction to Ezra, that “Nehemiah was not set apart

¹⁹ E. G. White 1862, 37f. “The prophet Ezra, and faithful servants of the Jewish church, were astonished...”

²⁰ White also referenced this same aspect of 2 Esdras elsewhere. See *Spiritual Gifts 1*, 208 and *Early Writings*, 287.

as a priest or a prophet, but the Lord used him to do a special work.”²¹ The statement appears to intimate that in contrast to the exilic priest Ezra (who implicitly *does* have the gift of prophecy), Nehemiah is not a priest or a prophet. Like her comment in 1862 which affirmed that Ezra was a prophet, this later comment appears to indicate Ellen White’s continued reading and belief of 2 Esdras’ account of Ezra. By stating that Nehemiah was not a prophet like Ezra, she alludes intentionally to the only work that touches on the topic, a work that was immensely popular among Adventists at the time.

Between 1907 and 1908, further allusions to 2 Esdras were made in Mrs White’s works. Describing the work of the biblical Ezra, she later comments that he “became a teacher of . . . the prophesies in the schools of the prophets.” She remarks that during the time of Ezra, “the knowledge of God’s will had to some extent been lost,” and “he published copies of [the scriptures] among God’s people,” the latter being an allusion to the description of Ezra’s situation found in 2 Esdras 14:19–26.²² With language evocative of a prophet, she wrote that he “became a mouthpiece for God.”²³ Finally, a month later, she wrote of Ezra’s “painstaking, life-long work of preserving and multiplying copies of the Old Testament Scriptures.”²⁴ This final description from Ellen White’s pen regarding the work of Ezra, as pointed out before, is only suggested in 2 Esdras, which details an entire narrative about how Ezra did this.

5.2 *Use of 1 and 2 Maccabees*

As mentioned earlier in the previous section on *WLF*, as early as 1847 Ellen White appears to show influence from 1 Maccabees, such as her ideas suggesting that the Sabbath would be made illegal and that believers would subsequently flee. Mrs White also shows evidence of familiarity with 1 Maccabees in 1858, which coincidentally (or not?) was the same year that her husband James White, the editor of the *Review and Herald*, announced to the Adventist community his recommendation of 1 Maccabees as the third most important work of the Apocrypha for Adventists to read.²⁵

²¹ White, Ellen G. “An Example of Faithfulness – No. 1.” *Review and Herald* 76.18, 1899, 273.

²² Ellen White to M.N. Campbell, Letter 100, 1907.

²³ White, Ellen G. “The Return of the Exiles – No. 12.” *Review and Herald* 85.5, 1908, 8.

²⁴ White, Ellen G. “The Return of the Exiles – No. 12 (concluded).” *Review and Herald* 85.6, 1908, 8.

²⁵ Editors. “To Correspondents: Old Style and New.” *Review and Herald* 12.12, 1858.

While discussing the intertestamental period, she mentions the idea that “the gift of prophecy ... disappeared for a few centuries,” a concept that only finds its origin and reference in 1 Macc. 9:27 which notes that there was a time of great affliction when “a prophet was not seen among” Israel any longer (*Spiritual Gifts* 1,5). This idea would continue to be referenced by her again later in 1870 (*Spirit of Prophecy* 1,8). 28 years later, in 1898, Mrs White, referring to the same idea, explicitly makes clear that she is referring to the events of 1 Maccabees’ narrative when she writes in *The Desire of Ages* that:

The prophecy of Daniel revealed the time of His advent, but not all rightly interpreted the message. Century after century passed away; the voices of the prophets ceased. The hand of the oppressor was heavy upon Israel, and many were ready to exclaim, “The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.” Ezekiel 12:22. (White 1898, 31)

Though one might imagine that the “oppressor” spoken of was in reference to the Romans, the indirect connection with 1 Macc. 9:27 suggests that the one spoken of is actually Antiochus Epiphanes IV., the main villain of the book’s history. Yet, the clearest indication that Mrs White has in mind the text of 1 Maccabees itself, as opposed to merely the general events of that history, is the reference that “not all rightly interpreted,” which appears to allude specifically to 1 Macc. 1:54 and 6:7 where the book reports that Daniel’s prophecy was fulfilled. As far as we know, and those in Ellen White’s time also knew, there were no similar attempts to declare Daniel’s prophecies fulfilled by the Jewish people during the Roman occupation. Moreover, prophecy had not ceased during the Roman occupation, for there were prophets mentioned by the Gospels such as Simeon, Anna and John. With all these points considered, it appears that Antiochus is the strongest candidate to fit the reference within the context of her passage.

Furthermore, evidence of Mrs White’s familiarity with 1 Maccabees may be seen in another comment of hers. Again, like above, it is in connection with the work of Daniel, when she notes that “The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecies of the eleventh of Daniel have almost reached their final fulfillment.”²⁶ The reference to “spirit of war” appears to be a reference

²⁶ White, Ellen G. “The Day of the Lord is Near, and Hasteth Greatly.” *Review and Herald* 81.47, 1904, 16. Repeated again, with variation, in *Testimonies for the Church* 9, 14: “The world is stirred

to the conflicts that enveloped the Maccabean oppression under Antiochus Epiphanes. In response to statements like this that seem to include a preterist understanding of 1 Maccabees connection to prophecy, a number of early Adventists appear to have embraced a similar view, and at least one possibly embraced it on the presumption that Ellen White did, according to the transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference. Several of the participants proposed that prophecies in Daniel could have this sort of function in which they repeat as a “wheel within a wheel.”²⁷ Some in more modern times, notable among them being Desmond Ford, have also from time to time argued that Ellen White appears to be indicating, by her use of “final fulfillment,” the idea that there had been a previous fulfilment (or rather, partial fulfilment) of the prophecy in Daniel 11. This previous fulfilment could only be, they have proposed, the events recorded in 1 Maccabees (Ford 1980, 319). This understands Mrs White’s description of “final fulfillment” as literally referring to the last of more than one fulfilment, as opposed to more conservative interpretations that assume “final fulfillment” refers merely to the “final (part of the) fulfilment.”

Why might Mrs White have accepted a dual fulfilment or a partial fulfilment view of Daniel’s prophecy? Likely the answer lies in the fact, as previously noted, that she had explicitly affirmed the Apocrypha as the Word of God in her vision of 1849. James White’s reference to them as scripture was likely, given this context and her own usage, reflective not only of his own estimation of the work, but also that of most around him including Mrs White herself. Given that 1 Maccabees identified Antiochus Epiphanes’ work as connected with Daniel, Mrs White may have reasonably wanted to honour that identification (as she would with any other piece of Scripture), while avoiding a strictly preterist understanding of the prophecy. A high view of the Bible as a whole, apocrypha and canonical, appears then to have led to this balanced approach.

with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment.”

²⁷ For further discussion of these issues, please see Korpman 2020.

Mrs White's allusions to 1 Maccabees are not the only ones to reference a Maccabean work though. Ellen White made further allusions to the Apocrypha, specifically the work of 2 Maccabees. She cites a story about righteous men of God hiding the Ark of the Covenant on several occasions between 1864 and 1870.²⁸ Her account mirrors the account of 2 Macc. 2 in which a story is recounted which details that the prophet Jeremiah took the Ark and hid it in a mountain. A subsequent reference to the same passage in 2 Maccabees occurs in her book *Great Controversy* published in 1888 (E.G. White 1888, 639). This time, she skips the reference to the act of hiding the ark and goes straight to the moment in the future when it is revealed with the Decalogue inside (an event predicted by the passage in 2 Macc. 2). Later, she returns to the same description and allusion of 2 Maccabees again and expands her description from the *Great Controversy* in a letter in 1902.²⁹

5.3 Use of the Apocryphal Additions to Daniel

Ellen White, perhaps unsurprisingly, appears to be familiar with the apocryphal additions of the book of Daniel, and specifically the story of Susanna. She makes reference in 1902 to Daniel, but utilizes him as an example of something not depicted in the canonical work. She writes:

And many a lad of today, growing up as did Daniel in his Judean home, studying God's Word and His works, and learning the lessons of faithful service, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in halls of justice, or in royal courts, as a witness for the King of kings. (E.G. White 1902)

The analogy and connection between Daniel and legal courts is odd, since no such connection exists within the book of Daniel in Hebrew. The Greek apocryphal additions do however provide exactly just such an analogy in the story of Susanna, which focuses on a story of Daniel saving a righteous Judean woman from two corrupt judges during a legal investigation. Furthermore, Mrs White makes reference to Daniel as a "lad," or young man, giving further evidence that the story of Susanna is the reference behind her thought, as that apocryphal story specifically and uniquely mentions that it takes place in

²⁸ Compare *Spiritual Gifts* 4, 114–115, *Spiritual Gifts* 1, 414 and 4a, 114 with 2 Maccabees 2:4–8.

²⁹ Ellen White to Brother and Sister Haskell, Letter 47, 1902.

Daniel's early youth. One other possible reference to the work may be detected from a few years earlier in 1896 ("Qualifications Essential for the Work of God." Manuscript 14, 1896).³⁰

There is also the possibility of an allusion to the Song of the Three Youth in one of her letters.³¹ She references the fiery furnace from the Danielic chapter within the context of the saints in the New Jerusalem, and using the metaphor, describes them as singing songs. The reference to the story of the furnace in connection with the act of singing may point to the apocryphal passage as a possible inspiration, since the apocryphal addition describes Daniel's three friends singing songs praising God amidst their fiery ordeal.

5.4 *Use of the Apocryphal Additions to Esther*

Mrs White's use of the additional material related to Daniel was not unique, as she appears to make use of the Greek additions to Esther as well, treating their details as true and authentic. One of the key markers for recognizing her dependence on this material is her reliance on one detail that the canonical book of Esther never included: prayer. Again and again, Mrs White refers to Esther's prayers, an idea absent from the canonical version of the book.

The crisis that Esther faced demanded earnest, quick action; but both she and Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, all their own feeble efforts would be unavailing. So Esther took time for communion with God, the source of her strength...³²

³⁰ Manuscript 14, 1896: "Daniel manifested the most perfect courtesy, both toward his elders and toward the youth. He stood as a witness for God, and sought to take such a course that he might not be ashamed for heaven to hear his words or to behold his works." Mrs White's reference to "elders" does not at first strongly appear to be the same as Susanna's elders, instead appearing more a description of age. Yet, her reference to Daniel not being "ashamed for heaven to hear his words" is a strikingly close similarity to the same phrase in Susanna's story where Daniel speaks for heaven to hear. This might indicate it was either intentional as a reference or demonstrated that the story was in her mind.

³¹ Ellen White to J.N. Andrews, Letter 71, 1878.

³² White, Ellen G. "The Return of the Exiles – No. 11." *Review and Herald* 85.4, 1908, 9. Emphasis my own.

At a time when it seemed that no power could save them, Esther and the women associated with her, by fasting *and prayer* and prompt action, met the issue and brought salvation to their people.³³

Though one might assume that Mrs White was merely adding what the canonical book of Esther could presumably imply, another explanation appears more reasonable. Given all of the preceding information and her own admissions regarding the status of the Apocrypha, it seems more plausible that the most likely source or background referent for this quote lies in her King James translation of the additional chapters of Esther. In those passages, she could readily find prayers attributed to Esther and Mordechai, presented at length (13:8–17; 14:3–19). Moreover, that Mrs White identifies one of Esther's supplications as having come directly before she saw the King appears to confirm that she is specifically referring to these, since Esther 14 provides a prayer with the explicit identification that it was given shortly before she visited the King (15:1). The statement by Mrs White that Mordecai knew that they needed help from God may even be an allusion to his own prayer in Esther 13.

In this way, we see again that Ellen White, as late as 1911, continued to show evidence of drawing upon and trusting in the authenticity of certain books and material in the Apocrypha, just as she had claimed all Adventists should do in her earliest visions. It is also of interest to note that around the same time that she wrote this, another Adventist periodical had published an article on Esther in which the apocryphal material was highlighted as authentic.³⁴

5.5 *Use of the Wisdom of Solomon*

Ellen White's use of the Wisdom of Solomon in her writings can prove to be a quite difficult task to identify. Due to its genre as wisdom literature, its language can seem generic at best and difficult to find definite echoes of in Mrs White's works. Sometimes she may employ a turn of phrase from it or allude to a specific description of a biblical story from it. At other times, her way of speaking about some things echoes material from Wisdom. In order to organ-

³³ Ellen White to Brother Ruble, J. A. Burden, I. H. Evans, Letter 22, 1911. Emphasis my own.

³⁴ Editors. "ESTHER Apocrypha." *Bible Training School*, 1905, 136–138.

ize and categorize these references, careful attention must be given to identifying instances in which Mrs White employs a phrase or detail found in the King James translation of Wisdom, but not in the rest of her King James Bible. When such instances are found, a reasonable case for echoes, allusions, or direct quotation can be argued.

We know of only one confirmed usage of the document in the pamphlet *WLF*. There, among canonical and apocryphal citations (i.e. 2 Esdras), there is one reference to Wis. 5:1–5. Although one might hope that such an example would provide a firm foundation for further study, the opposite in fact proves to be the case. The reference, if not clearly stated by *WLF*, would likely never be proposed by anyone otherwise.

Wisdom 5:1–5 (KJV)	Ellen White (WF)
<p><i>Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. ²When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. ³And they repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit shall say within themselves, This was he, whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: ⁴We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: ⁵How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!</i></p>	<p><i>The Israel of God stood with their eyes fixed upwards, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah, and rolled through the earth like peals of loudest thunder! It was awfully solemn. At the end of every sentence, the saints shouted, Glory! Hallelujah! Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God; and they shone with the glory as Moses' face did when he came down from Sinai. The wicked could not look on them, for the glory.</i></p>

The two texts are only loosely connected by a common theme of the trembling wicked seeing the salvation of God’s people. There is no direct literary correspondence between the two texts. And Mrs White’s statement that “the wicked could not look on them” might be understood to be her interpretation of what it meant for Wisdom to say that the wicked “shall be troubled with terrible fear” and “repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit.” Despite the fact that the two texts appear only to be related in theme, *WLF* lists Wis. 5:1–5 as the “scripture” which proves the inspiration of Mrs White’s vision. And this raises an important question: how could this have happened? There are

many more texts in the traditional canon and even the Apocrypha that could better fit the theme as a citation, so how did such an obscure and generic text get cited instead?

The early arguments by W. C. White and others tried to distance *WLF* from Ellen White by stating that her husband had simply read the visions of Mrs White and found similar ideas, having cited them as he was impressed. Yet the reference to Wisdom clearly appears to defy such a suggestion. It makes little sense to assume that such a generic and tentatively connected text from the Apocrypha would be cited in comparison to any host of other “scripture” texts that would have better fit the description by Mrs White. Instead, the counter argument seems more plausible: that James White cited this obscure text precisely because he was dependent on the author of the vision, Mrs White herself, to inform him that it was the text that came to her mind when writing.

This then appears to be an example of a conscious echo by Mrs White, as opposed to an allusion meant to evoke a story in her reader’s minds. Strikingly, the echo is so faint that it is almost impossible to state with certainty when this might equally be the case elsewhere. As such, the following study has limited itself to examining the most explicit echoes and allusions that can be found.

To begin, we can examine a few examples of what appear to be echoes of Wisdom.

Wisdom of Solomon	Ellen White
But when the <i>unrighteous</i> went away from her in his anger, he perished also in the fury wherewith he murdered his brother. (Wis. 10:3)	He himself is <i>unrighteous</i> like Cain, who was disobedient. (“Condemned By the Jews.” Manuscript 104, 1897; emphasis my own)
When they were thirsty, they called upon thee, and water was given them out of the <i>flinty rock</i> , and their thirst was quenched out of the hard stone. (Wis. 11:4)	Moses smote the rock, but it was Christ who stood by him, and caused the water to flow from the <i>flinty rock</i> . (<i>Spiritual Gifts</i> 3, 256; emphasis my own) ³⁵

³⁵ See also from Ellen White: Ibid. 4 a, 17.39.41.121; *Spirit of Prophecy* 1, 227.283.315.337; “The Law of God.” *Review and Herald* 45.19, 1875, 146–147; “The Law from Sinai.” *Signs of the Times* 4.10, 1878, 73; “The Burning at Taberah.” *Signs of the Times* 6.30, 1880, 349–350; White 1890, 44; “Our Constant Need of Divine Enlightenment.” Manuscript 16, 1890; “Draw From the Source of Strength.” *Signs of the Times*, October 17, 1892; “To the Church at Cooranbong.” Letter 24b, 1896

Wisdom of Solomon	Ellen White
... let them know how much better the Lord of them is: for the first <i>author of beauty</i> hath created them. (Wis. 13:3)	If we ... would take greater delight in the Lord's created works, we would be ... more like the divine <i>Author of beauty</i> and joy. ("Notes of Travel." <i>Review and Herald</i> 61.45, 1884, 705) ³⁶

It is not possible to know whether these were conscious or unconscious echoes, but they demonstrate how saturated in the language and vocabulary of Wisdom she was. Illustrating this, there is one example of a plausible unconscious echo to be found in her advice to “draw these aged men to Jesus, that when the ‘house of this earthly tabernacle’ shall fail, they may die rejoicing in the hope of a home in the kingdom of God.”³⁷ Though intended to be a quotation of 2 Cor. 5:1, she misquotes it. A possible explanation for how this happened is that she recited it from memory. The Pauline quote says in the King James translation “earthly house,” not “earthly tabernacle.” While it could be just a simple slip of memory, it’s more likely that Mrs White was mixing up Paul’s quote with Wis. 9:15 which describes the body as an “earthly tabernacle” that weighs down the mind. Further confirmation of this can be seen from the fact that the same text from Wisdom also uses the language of the “corruptible body,” which is seen referenced by Mrs White several times with reference to Wis. 9:15.³⁸

[Variant]; “The Test at Rephidim.” *Signs of the Times*, September 10, 1896; “The Lord Our Strength.” *Signs of the Times*, September 17, 1896; “The Barren Fig Tree.” *Signs of the Times* 25.7, 1899, 2; “The Importance of Home Training.” *Review and Herald* 76.23, 1899, 353; “Parables of the Vineyard.” Manuscript 138, 1899; “Rephidim.” *Review and Herald* 80.14, 1903, 7.

³⁶ “If we would seek less anxiously for the artificial, and would take greater delight in the Lord’s created works, we would be freer from gloomy feelings, more simply honest and true, more like the divine Author of beauty and joy.” Emphasis my own.

³⁷ Ellen White to “Friends in Australia,” Letter 146, 1903.

³⁸ *Spirit of Prophecy* 3, 40: “When Christ shall come again to earth it will not be to purify and refine the characters of men, and to fit them for Heaven. His work then will only be to change their corruptible bodies and fashion them like unto Christ’s most glorious body. Only a symmetrical and perfect character will in that day entitle men to the finishing touch of immortality.” Cf. *ibid.* 4, 463. Again, though there is a small similarity between Mrs White’s statement and 1 Cor. 15:53, the exact parallel with Wis. 9:15 and her use of its other imagery elsewhere removes doubt about her apocryphal source.

Aside from echoes, there are a number of allusions to Wisdom which can be found in Ellen White’s writings. One might be found in something Mrs White wrote in 1870. Here she connects the idea of Satan, Envy, the Fall of Adam and Eve, and the consequences of death all within the same context.

Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 (KJV)	Ellen White
Nevertheless <i>through envy</i> of the devil <i>came death into the world</i> : and they that do hold of his side do find it.	With the earliest history of man, Satan began his efforts to deceive our race. He who had invited rebellion in Heaven desired to bring the whole creation to unite with him in his warfare against the government of God. His <i>envy and jealousy</i> were excited as he looked upon the beautiful home prepared for the happy, holy pair, and he immediately laid his plans to <i>cause their fall</i> . (<i>Spirit of Prophecy</i> 4, 351; Emphasis my own) ³⁹

These elements, as listed before the quote, are not found together anywhere else. However, all these elements do appear in Wis. 2:24, which appears to be the inspiration for Mrs White’s statement. This is the only part of Mrs White’s Bible which links the word envy with Satan. In linking this well-known apocryphal description to Satan in her work, she not-too-subtly invited other Adventists to hear the allusion. Others, of course, have previously argued that the description of Satan being envious is drawn from or inspired by (either first hand or second hand) John Milton’s poem *Paradise Lost*. While this is possible, and studies have shown a familiarity of Mrs White with that work, it is also plausible, given the evidence of this study, that Mrs White found the view (or reinforced it) using the text from the Apocrypha. Unlike *Paradise Lost* which she claimed not to have read, Wisdom of Solomon was a text part of a collection she had admitted to cherishing. As such, it seems safest to conclude the primary reference would derive from it.

³⁹ See also *The Great Controversy* (White 1888), 531, where Mrs White repeats this but simplifies “envy and jealousy” simply to the phrase “Satan’s envy.” See also *Spirit of Prophecy* 1, 34: “The angels united with Adam and Eve in holy strains of harmonious music, and as their songs pealed forth from blissful Eden, Satan heard the sound ... And as Satan heard it his envy, hatred, and malignity increased, and he expressed his anxiety to his followers to incite them (Adam and Eve) to disobedience and at once bring down the wrath of God.”

Another example of allusion can be found in a series of statements that began in 1873, but which are repeated in fast succession in a six-year period between 1889 and 1895.⁴⁰

Wisdom 9:17 (KJV)	Ellen White
<p>And thy <i>counsel</i> who hath known, except thou give <i>wisdom</i>, and send thy <i>Holy Spirit</i> from above?</p>	<p>We need ... heavenly <i>wisdom</i> to move in the counsel of God ... Our earnest cry is for the direction of God's <i>Holy Spirit</i>. ("Diary, June 1873." Manuscript 8, 1873; emphasis my own)</p> <p>I have prayed night and day that the Lord will imbue you with His <i>Holy Spirit</i> and give you heavenly <i>wisdom</i> that you will have the mind of Christ and move in His <i>counsel</i>. (Ellen White to W.C. White, Letter 66, 1893; emphasis my own)</p> <p>... you must constantly feel the need of higher <i>counsel</i>. Do not fail to seek <i>wisdom</i> from God. Unless you do go to God for <i>wisdom</i>, and understand for yourselves the way of the Lord, you will not be able to understand things clearly. You must have the enlightenment of the <i>Holy Spirit</i> to give you clear views of Jesus and His love. (Ellen White to "Workers at the Health Retreat," Letter 34, 1891; emphasis my own)</p>

In short, the combination of the terms "counsel," "wisdom," and "Holy Spirit" are unique only to the Wisdom of Solomon. It is not found elsewhere in the King James Bible or any other translation. Moreover, the formula Mrs White uses in which she states that either she prays for wisdom and the Spirit to come to her from God in order to have counsel or she prays for God to give

⁴⁰ Additional statements (and as such, references to Wis. 9:17) from Ellen White, not counting the ones cited beneath this footnote, can be found in Ellen White to W.C. White, Letter 131, 1893; "Walk in the Spirit." *Signs of the Times* 20.8, 1893, 118; *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers* 3, 30 (from 1895). See also "Diary, December 1889." Manuscript 24, 1889: "I pray to the Lord for *wisdom* that He will give me His *Holy Spirit* in all my speech." Emphasis my own.

wisdom and the Holy Spirit to discern God's counsel, points directly to the reference in Wisdom of Solomon. In short, not only do the three words not repeat elsewhere, but even Mrs White's invocation of them is in the same manner as the apocryphal text, inviting her readers to hear the reverberations of the text they originated from.

Another potential dependence comes from the same chapter in Wis. 9:3 where it states that God ordered "the world according to equity and righteousness, and execute(s) judgment with an upright heart." The phrase "equity and righteousness" is unique to Wisdom and is not reproduced in the King James translation of the canonical Old and New Testaments. Ellen White makes a number of references to the same term, calling them "the eternal principles of equity and righteousness."⁴¹ Likewise, underscoring her potential dependence from the text in Wisdom, she utilizes the term at times in connection with judgment, just as Wis. 9:3 makes the same connection in the second half of its sentence. In those instances, she clearly remarks that God disapproves of "unfair dealing" and that "His work is to be established in equity and righteousness."⁴² Or on another occasion, she uses the phrase to note how a good judge should act, referring to bad judges as those who turned from these principles.⁴³

A significant example of Ellen White's influence from the Wisdom of Solomon can be seen in its second chapter, which has traditionally been understood in Christian history as a prophecy of Jesus' death. One of the final scenes describes the wicked preparing to put to death the person claiming to be the "son of God," saying to themselves: "let us condemn him with a shameful death..." (Wis. 2:20). Mrs White applies this description to Christ and refers to Jesus' death almost 115 times using this designation. On some occasions

⁴¹ "Instruction to Men in Positions of Responsibility." Manuscript 154, 1902; "Extracts Regarding the New England Sanitarium." Manuscript 27, 1907; "The New England Sanitarium." Manuscript 59, 1908. See also other examples of her use of the term: Letter 52, 1891; Ellen White to "J.H. Kellogg and all others concerned." Letter 47, 1895; "Speedy Preparation for Work." Manuscript 10a, 1895; "Sin Condemned in the Flesh." *Signs of the Times* 22.3, 1896; "Diary/Corruption of the Cities and Unfaithful Shepherds." Manuscript 233, 1902.

⁴² Ellen White to A.G. Daniells, W.W. Prescott, G.A. Hare, Letter 223, 1904.

⁴³ "The Echo Office and Commercial Work." Manuscript 47, 1898; "Mingling Error with Truth." *Review and Herald* 87.10, 1910, 7.

her writing appears to use the term with direct reference to the passage in Wisdom.⁴⁴

The following box places this parallel along with several others to illustrate more examples of various allusions Mrs White made to the apocryphal work.

Wisdom of Solomon (KJV)	Ellen White
<p>For if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from <i>the hand of his enemies</i>... Let us condemn him with a <i>shameful death</i>: for by his own saying he shall be respected. (2:18–20)</p>	<p>His <i>enemies</i> would not be satisfied until he was given into <i>their hands</i>, that they might put him to a <i>shameful death</i>. (<i>Spiritual Gifts</i> 3, 176; emphasis my own)</p>
<p>For <i>God made not death</i>: neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living. (1:13)</p>	<p>Evil, sin, and <i>death were not created by God</i>. (<i>Testimonies for the Church</i> 5, 503; “Unholy Knowledge.” <i>Review and Herald</i> 87.31, 1910, 3)</p>
<p>For he that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by thee, that art the Saviour of all. (16:7)</p>	<p>There was no virtue in the serpent of brass to cause such a change immediately in those who looked upon it. The healing virtue received by their looking upon the serpent was derived from God alone. (<i>Spiritual Gifts</i> 4a, 42)</p>
<p>Though they be punished in the sight of men, yet <i>their hope is full of immortality</i>. (3:4)</p>	<p>We want to know if you have a <i>hope full of immortality</i>? (“Sermon: The Privilege of Being a Christian.” Manuscript 16, 1886)</p>

These allusions, spread across the book, demonstrate her familiarity and continued engagement with the work, as well as her intention for her audience to hear the original “scriptural” text being referenced. However, she not only echoed and alluded to the text of Wisdom, but also informally quoted from it at times, such as when she wrote that “at this time, even more than then, we need to *seek the Lord in simplicity of heart*.”⁴⁵ Compare that with the

⁴⁴ See among the many examples: *Spiritual Gifts* 3, 176.

⁴⁵ “A Call to Consecration.” Manuscript 139, 1907; see also from Ellen White: *Spiritual Gifts* 3, 278; *Spirit of Prophecy* 1, 246; Ellen White to Emma and J.E. White, Letter 36, 1876; “The Idolatry of Israel.” *Signs of the Times* 6.18, 1880, 205; “A Peculiar People.” *Signs of the Times* 15.42, 1889, 657–658; “Result of Studying Harmful Textbooks.” Manuscript 5, 1890; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 319; “The Vision at Salamanca.” Manuscript 40a, 1890; “Devotion to God Needed in the Publishing

opening words of Wis. 1:1, where it implores readers to “think of the Lord with a good (heart,) and in simplicity of heart seek him.” Not only does Mrs White produce a near exact quotation of six or so words in this one instance, but she does so many times in her writing career.

The number of echoes, allusions, and quotations from the Wisdom of Solomon, in contrast to the earlier presumption that at most there was only one, suggests that the actual number of allusions and references, including less direct quotations (like the one found in *Word to the Little Flock*), might be exponentially higher than the current number this study has pointed to. If previous research has for so long missed sight of these, it is entirely plausible that there are far more left to be found (many of which may be quite subtle). It should not be a surprise that James White wrote in 1858 as editor of the *Review* that the Wisdom of Solomon was the second most recommended book of the Apocrypha for Adventists to read, right after 2 Esdras.⁴⁶ And knowing that helps us to recognize that many Adventists would not have failed to pick up on the allusions and quotations that Mrs White employed for this book.

6. Conclusion

Some may, with perfect moderation, wonder if the allusions and quotations to apocryphal material are in fact simply the result of Ellen White unconsciously drawing on her own memory of verses or themes which she utilized from her youth, without necessarily thinking about their apocryphal nature. In other words, could these be unconscious echoes? Could Mrs White have grown up hearing about 2 Esdras and Wisdom of Solomon, and merely become accustomed to certain phrases and concepts from them which she then later echoed, unaware or unconcerned anymore of their origin? Such could certainly be the case with her allusions to John Milton’s work *Paradise Lost*, which she likely heard either quoted widely or even echoed by preachers who may not have been aware that they were alluding to the work. But was this the case for the Apocrypha?

The answer to this, I would argue, is that it is implausible. To understand the weight of this, one must both note what facts we do know about her

House.” Manuscript 62, 1890; “The Vision at Salamanca.” Manuscript 40, 1890; Ellen White to Byron Belden, Letter 6 a, 1893; etc.

⁴⁶ Editors. “To Correspondents: Old Style and New.” *Review and Herald* 12.12, 1858, 96.

opinion on the topic, all of which have already been stated previously, and also recognize how distinct Ellen White's statements and activity is when compared to both the earlier Millerites and the Sabbatarian Adventists around her on this topic. To begin, we know that Mrs White was reading the Apocrypha between 1845–1850 precisely because:

(1) She allowed the publication of *WLF* which provided citations of her visions to apocryphal texts described as "scripture" (1847). The fact that these works could be described as scripture suggests that the community she participated in was aware of and interested in such works. The fact that almost all those citations came from 2 Esdras, and the one from 1 Maccabees is not formally cited, suggests (along with the comments made by James White and the *Review* in 1958) that 2 Esdras was valued primarily, if not almost exclusively, by this community.⁴⁷

(2) She implored Adventists in a vision to bind it to their hearts and declared it to be part of the Word of God (1849).

(3) In another vision, she implored the wise (presumably Adventists) to understand it (1850).

(4) She was said by witnesses to have given a supernatural Bible study on it (around 1850; cf. A.L. White 1990, 66).

(5) And finally, during all these years, she produced writings that both informally quoted and alluded to various books of the Apocrypha.

Due to those factors, we can plausibly surmise that she was indeed reading the material at the time and not unconsciously echoing material she no longer remembered. We can likewise know that Mrs White was not echoing other people's views or quotations of material by noting how distinct her own views were from everyone else's.

(1) Unlike many of the Millerites who had only accepted 2 Esdras as inspired, she accepted the entire collection according to her vision (1849).

(2) Unlike her husband who only accepted certain apocryphal books as scripture (1847) and admitted as late as eight years after his wife's visions that he wasn't sure exactly which of the apocryphal books were inspired or not (1858), Mrs White had unequivocally stated the entire collection was the Word of God (1849).

⁴⁷ This was in fact a common sentiment that continued to be echoed by Adventists until the beginning of the twentieth century. See Korpman 2018.

(3) Unlike all other Adventists both at the time she had her vision (1849) and those after, she was the only Adventist to advocate for the entire collection without reservation.

(4) While 2 Esdras may have been heard in Millerite circles, other apocryphal books were not widely utilized in those early years. Mrs White's interest in the other apocryphal works stands out as unique against the backdrop of her surrounding atmosphere.

Given those preceding four points, it is possible to recognize that rather than being influenced by those around her, Ellen White was more likely to be the one who influenced them. In her first two visions, references can only be found to 2 Esdras, Wisdom, and 1 Maccabees, the very same three books that James White and the *Review and Herald* endorsed, while admitting they weren't willing to make a public and concrete declaration about inspiration, such as Mrs White had previously done. Thus, any allusions to other apocryphal books would plausibly have not come from second hand, but from direct reading since those references were not likely to be heard in public discourse. *WLF* already provides cited evidence of Mrs White reading 2 Esdras and Wisdom of Solomon, while analysis of that same work suggests influence also from 1 Maccabees for the same visions.

In order for an alternative theory to be proposed, one would need to assume that Mrs White declared the collection the Word of God without having previously read the material, never read the material when she declared it inspired (or after), and that when she told others to be wise and understand it, that she herself did not. One would have to also conclude that she somehow promoted an idea (the total inclusion of the Apocrypha as a whole) in contrast to those around her, despite having supposedly been influenced by their more reserved views. And then, moving beyond 1850, one would also need to assume that although the church largely was debating the issue of the Apocrypha's inspiration all around Mrs White until the beginning of the twentieth century, and James White and others had rejected Mrs White's visionary counsel about it, that somehow we should assume it plausible that any and all informal quotations, allusions, or echoes are the result of her decades earlier secondary knowledge about the material rather than continued reading. The alternative theory is that despite the fact that Ellen White owned a Bible with the Apocrypha in it and had easy and constant access to such works, that we should find it more plausible that she never opened it throughout her life

or read it regularly. Such a position seems most implausible given the evidence presented in this article. It should be rejected in light of the alternative proposal: that Mrs White meant what she said, read what she promoted, and for reasons yet to be determined, remained silent on making statements about the topic in the years following her visions, despite continuing to draw from the material.

In conclusion then, this study has attempted to demonstrate that the claim that Mrs White did not draw upon, quote, allude, and echo the books of the Apocrypha past 1850 was a mistaken one. The study here presented is done in the hope that by providing this necessary foundation, further analysis and historical research can be conducted in the future, building on and challenging the findings presented. Mrs White quoted apocryphal texts alongside canonical and declared them part of the Word of God in 1849. Her continued habit of drawing upon such texts throughout the rest of her lifetime, also alongside canonical texts, suggests the possibility that her views did not change. Her utilization of them, and in particular 2 Esdras, points us toward the possibility of an emerging consensus: that Mrs White personally did not appear to share the same canon, or always sense the limits of our canon, which we now have. This certainly appears to be well established when she was younger, but seems at the very least plausible for her later life given her continued utilization of the material.

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Zusammenfassung

Seit Arthur White erstmals Ellen Whites Kommentar über das „verborgene Buch“ (Apokryphen) veröffentlichte, wurde behauptet, dass Frau White in den folgenden Jahren ihres Dienstes zu keinem Zeitpunkt apokryphe Schriften erwähnte oder diese zu verwenden schien. Im Gegensatz zu dieser Arbeitshypothese bietet der Artikel einen Überblick über bestimmte Schriften von Ellen White, in denen sie offenbar auf eine beträchtliche Menge apokryphen Materials zurückgreift. Die Schlussfolgerung dieses Artikels ist, dass Ellen White die Apokryphen nicht nur in den Jahren vor ihren Kommentaren zu diesen Schriften im Jahr 1850, sondern auch lange danach bis kurz vor ihrem Tod ausgiebig verwendet hat. Es wird im Artikel argumentiert, dass ihre Verwendung des apokryphen Materials, ähnlich wie ihre Vorliebe für andere biblische Zitate, als Beleg herangezogen werden kann, dass sie in den folgenden Jahrzehnten ihres Dienstes – übereinstimmend mit ihrer frühen Vision von 1849 – weiterhin persönlich von den Apokryphen als Wort Gottes ausging.

Résumé

Depuis la publication initiale par Arthur White du commentaire d'Ellen White sur le 'livre caché' (Apocryphes), il a été soutenu que Mme White n'a jamais fait référence ou n'a jamais semblé utiliser des écrits apocryphes à aucun moment au cours des années suivantes dans son ministère. Contrairement à cette hypothèse de travail, cet article mène une enquête sur ses écrits, identifiant les cas dans lesquels Mme White semble s'inspirer d'une quantité considérable de matériel apocryphe dans ses écrits. La conclusion de cet article est qu'Ellen White a fait un usage intensif des Apocryphes non seulement dans les années précédant ses commentaires en 1850, mais longtemps après, s'arrêtant seulement peu de temps avant sa mort. L'article soutient que son utilisation de ces textes, en parallèle avec son attitude envers d'autres citations bibliques, vient appuyer le fait que sa première affirmation visionnaire en 1849 selon laquelle les Apocryphes étaient la Parole de Dieu a continué à fonctionner comme une affirmation personnelle pour elle dans les décennies suivantes de son ministère.

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The Prophet as a Model of a Spiritual Leader¹

Miguel Gutierrez

Abstract

The article investigates the role of the prophet in Israel's society, in order to provide a model for the church today. The first part offers a brief description of Israel's society according to the covenant, especially of its "power system." The power system in Israel appears as a "mobile power system" (Trigano), which combines reality with a "utopian vision" of the world. Furthermore, in that power system the prophet appears as its "mobile part," a permanent correction: "God's voice in the city" (Trigano). In a more concrete way, the prophets call to follow a "politics of justice" in the name of the covenant.

The second part tries to apply the "prophetic ministry" to the life of the church. We observe that the gospel integrates the prophets' "politics of justice" with the mission of the church – cf. Lk 4:16–21. Accordingly, we try to describe the church's mission as an "integral evangelization," which includes this "politics of justice" as a fundamental part of its mission. We also try to define the role of the pastor in two categories which derive from the "prophetic ministry:" the "pastor-evangelist" and the "pastor-theologian."

Prophets and prophetism form a vast field of research. There is a long history of prophetism and there are many different expressions of it.² It would not be possible to present such a complex phenomenon in a short article like this,

¹ This article is based on my presentation at the ETTC in Collonges (France), 24–27 April 2019. This meeting was dedicated to the discipline of practical theology. My paper sought to contribute to that field from an Old Testament perspective. It did not try to give an exhaustive description of the prophet, but touched on just a few points in order to present the prophet as a "spiritual leader," who could serve as a model for contemporary church leaders.

² For a good overview of research on the prophets, see Petersen 2009.

even if I were to limit myself to just a part of it. So, we need to choose a particular aspect and also the way of handling it. I have chosen to study the role of the prophet in the context of the covenant. This presentation, or at least a part of it, can be described as a kind of sociological study. However, I will not focus on the historical role of the prophet in Israel's society, but on his ideal role according to the covenant. I will build on some observations of Norbert Lohfink (1977) about the "separation of powers" in Israel, and especially on the sociological reflections of Shmuel Trigano (2011), a Jewish French sociologist, about the role of Israel in world history, which include important observations about the role of the prophet in Israel's society.³

1. The society in Israel⁴

Israel, according to the covenant, has at least two fundamental characteristics. It is not just a religious community but also a political project.⁵ That is the reason for the presence of the various collections of laws in the Pentateuch – a thing that has puzzled many Christian readers. That being said, this legal corpus has a particular characteristic that has not always been at the center of attention and has not always been well defined. What we mean is the "utopian" character of a good number of these laws.⁶ A good example of this characteristic is the military service law in Deuteronomy 20:1–9. It contains an almost comical aspect. The officials address the troops and mention four cases

³ There are some studies of the social role of the prophets, but the emphasis is almost always on the role of the prophets in society in general, not on Israel's particular society, with reference to the (ideal) covenant laws. For a review of research on the prophets in society in general, see Blenkinsopp 1996, 30–39.

⁴ I begin with a brief description of Israel's society according to the covenant, because the role of the biblical prophet is better understood in the context of that particular kind of society.

⁵ I use the adjective "political" in a neutral sense: "things related to public life in a society." This aspect of the covenant has sometimes been described from the perspective of the "ethics (of the covenant)." This is not necessarily wrong, but it does not give enough attention to the description of the project of the covenant as a whole, which is really the construction of a "new society."

⁶ I use the adjective "utopian" in its etymological sense ("u-topian," "without a place"), to describe the "transcendent dimension" of the covenant laws. I could also have used the term "transcendent" to describe this characteristic of the covenant. But the term "transcendent" has the disadvantage that it tends to indicate the religious side of the covenant, whereas in this article we are more interested in its "political dimension."

of dispensation from the army, the last one excusing from military service those who “are afraid and disheartened” (vs. 8)! We surely agree that this kind of law would not function in any army in today’s world; it is in some way “other-worldly.” That is precisely the characteristic I am trying to describe with the term “utopian”: the covenant proposes different “utopian” laws.⁷

According to Trigano (2011) there is a “double center” (*double foyer*) in all laws and institutions of the covenant. Those laws and the covenant itself find themselves “at the crossroads of the transcendence and the immanence.”⁸

Between the (utopian) laws of the covenant we find one which prescribes a “separation of powers” in Israel’s society. We mean the text in Deut. 16:18-18:22, which could be called the first example of a separation of powers in history (Lohfink 1977, 57). This law recognizes four “authority offices” in Israel: the judge, the king, the priest and the prophet. So, this text brings us to our subject, the prophets. They are conceived of as one of the four “authority offices” in Israel.

Before we speak about the prophets, let us take a brief look at this particular system of “authority offices.” What strikes us in this system is that the different offices are given to different persons. This is a revolution in the context of the ANE (Ancient Near East). In the ANE all those offices were normally held by the king – including the religious ones. In Israel, this is not just a recommendation or a preference, but it is a law, and the guiding principle is the separation of powers (Lohfink 1977, 72). Specifically, in this law the power of the king is restricted. He is not the first in the list, but comes after the judges (cf. Deut. 16:18–17:13). This seems to indicate the priority of justice in Israel’s society: the judge comes before the executive power (Wright 1996, 208).

Moreover, coming to the description of the king’s power, we can hardly recognize a “normal” king (cf. Deut. 17:14–20). The Law says that he cannot appoint himself to the office, he must be chosen by God (vs. 15). Then three other restrictions follow, each one more remarkable than the other. We notice especially that the king should not have “many horses” (v. 16), which means

⁷ Even a historian like M. Liverani uses the term “utopian” to describe the “transcendent characteristic” of the covenant laws; cf. Liverani 2007. I quote from the original Italian version of the book, Liverani 2003, 78. 385.

⁸ See Trigano 2011, 537. See also the title of the second chapter (book 2, part 2), “Les deux Jérusalem,” which alludes to both dimensions of the covenant.

that he could not conduct a normal war, because one of the main elements of military power in the ANE was the number of horses. And the king should not have too many wives, and, especially, he should not have too much “silver and gold” (v. 17). We can well imagine that with these laws not many in Israel wanted to be king. Actually, few of the kings in Israel seem to have followed this law.⁹

The same happens in the religious sphere. The priests are not the only ones who care for the people’s relationship with God; they have the prophets at their side.¹⁰ We observe again the separation of powers at work. What strikes us here is that Israel’s power system would give a place to the prophets at all, even though as “charismatic persons” they represent a kind of independent power, which was difficult to control (Lohfink 1977, 74–75). It is not hard to imagine the reason for this balance of power. In this way, God reserves for himself the possibility of intervening in leading his people in the continually new circumstances of history. Trigano, very appropriately, calls Israel’s power system: a “mobile power system,” which is so conceived that it leaves a place for the “transcendence” of ... the kingdom of heaven! We clearly see that the “constitution” of Israel, the covenant, had on purpose a “utopian” element in it: Israel had to learn, as a nation, to live simultaneously in two worlds, our world, and the world to come, the kingdom of heaven. We have before us, in a few words, the description of the challenge and the drama of ancient Israel, and of the Jewish people throughout its long history.¹¹

2. The Role of the Prophet in Israel's (Covenant) Society

We now come to the role of the prophet in Israel’s society. By way of introduction I would like to refer to the text about the prophets in Deut. 18:9–22. I will quote vv. 14–19:¹²

⁹ Which, of course, raises the (critical) question of the date of this law: Was the author the “Deuteronomist” in time of the exile? For our purposes here, the issue of the date does not diminish the strength of our argument, because even a late date leaves the reality of the conception of that “utopian” law intact.

¹⁰ That is why Trigano calls Israel’s power system a “trinaire” system (king, priest and prophet), Trigano 2011, 545–546.

¹¹ Trigano describes this drama very well in the different chapters of his book.

¹² I quote the NRSV. There are other biblical texts that speak of the role of the prophet, as e.g. Am. 3 and Jer. 23. However, there are not many texts that reflect the fundamental role of the

For¹³ these nations that you are about to dispossess do give heed to soothsayers and diviners, as for you, the Lord your God does not permit you to do so. A prophet¹⁴ like me will the Lord your God raise up for you from among your own people; such a prophet you shall heed. This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: “If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.” Then the Lord replied to me: “They are right in what they said. I will raise for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in his mouth,¹⁵ and he shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed to the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable.”

Just two or three observations about this famous text. It comes at the end of the list of offices in Deut. 17–18, as a kind of climax. The meaning of the order of the list seems to be that God reserves for himself the last word in the leadership of his people, and he puts that word in the mouth of the prophets (Wright 1996, 216). Secondly, even though the text speaks of “a prophet” in the singular, the reference is to the prophets in general, as we can see from the context, which mentions a list of offices for the leadership in Israel. Similarly, the description of the way of the nations, who consult “soothsayers and diviners” (v. 14), serves as a contrast for the introduction of the prophets (v. 15) – not just one prophet – as Israel’s way, or better, the way in which God leads Israel, his people, in history.¹⁶ Thirdly, the prophetic ministry in Israel begins at Sinai, with Moses (“a prophet like you,” v. 18), at the very moment that the covenant was inaugurated there. Actually, God makes Israel responsible, at least in part, for the gift of prophecy, because they were afraid to hear the voice of God directly and asked for the mediation of Moses (vv. 16–17). In the

prophet in Israel’s society in the context of the covenant. Deut. 18:9–22 is probably the only one, and for this reason we focus on this passage.

¹³ I changed the translation of the conjunction ׀: the NRSV translates “although.”

¹⁴ I changed the word order in the NRSV translation, following the syntax of the Hebrew. There we have two “inverted clauses” that underline the proposed elements: “a prophet” (נביא) and “such a prophet,” lit. “him” (כִּי־אֵלָיו).

¹⁵ I changed the NRSV translation to a more literal one. The NRSV translates: “I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet who ...”

¹⁶ This does not exclude the messianic interpretation, well known from the NT texts. This final interpretation is the full interpretation of the text, but not the primary one.

present context, God extends Moses' "prophetic mediation" to all the prophets who would come after him and will continue to bring God's word to Israel (Wright 1996, 217).

The prophets, therefore, constitute the "mobile part" in Israel's power system, as Trigano puts it. The prophet plays the role of the *terzo incomodo* (third unwelcome person) in that system – the other powers being mainly, according to Trigano, the king and the priest. The prophet represents in this power system a permanent correction: the ferment of the Kingdom of God on earth (2011, 577). It is necessary to underline that the prophet's power is a paradoxical one: It is a charismatic power. It is not transmitted to the prophet's children; it depends totally on God's will. We would not call this a power at all, and, above all, we would not include it in a power system. We observe here how the "utopian" part of the covenant re-emerges. On the other hand, the typical and continual opposition of the prophet against the priest, and especially against the king, all throughout Israel's history, appears here in a new light. It was not an innovation caused by the excesses of the monarchy: It was so prescribed by Israel's constitution, by the covenant laws. By the way, we notice that the prophets are not the founders of Israel's religion – the great hypothesis of the historical-critical reading of the OT. On the contrary, they presuppose the covenant: They cannot be understood completely apart from their relation to the mission of Israel, outside their relation to the covenant.¹⁷

In criticizing the priestly and especially the kingly powers, the prophet becomes "God's tribune" in the city: His voice is the voice of the kingdom of heaven on earth (Trigano 2011, 574). However, his is not the only one. Actually, what we observe in Israel's scene is a kind of prophetic duel: the false prophet at the service of the monarchy (characterized by self-interest and a search for power), and the true prophet at the service of the ideals of the covenant. It is in this sense that the prophet appears often as the opposition force (*contre-pouvoir*) of the king (Trigano 2011, 575). Clearly, the prophet has a political task (Trigano 2011, 574), besides the ethical one, simply because the covenant includes this aspect. But the prophet's politics is a "utopian" politics: It

¹⁷ This is one of the main theses of Neher 1983. This is also the conviction of N. Lohfink and W. Brueggemann. See Lohfink 1967, 34-37, and Brueggemann 2018, especially chapter 3 on pp. 39-57. It is not clear what form of written traditions precedes the prophets, except that the covenant of God with Israel precedes them.

is the politics of the kingdom of heaven, the politics of the covenant, ... the politics of justice! The prophetic call for justice is well known – see for instance Isa. 1 or Am. 5 – but this is not really an innovation. It echoes the covenant politics, as we find these in Ex. 23:1–12 or Lev. 19:9–18. This last text is found in the midst of ritual laws.

So, the real mission of Israel is to build the kingdom of justice on earth. The prophets are merely calling Israel to be what it should be. The real adversary of the prophet is human politics – injustice, oppression – outside and ... especially inside Israel (Trigano 2011, 577). Trigano calls “human politics” the “empire,” a symbol of unjust and oppressive power. In the remainder of this article, I adopt this term as a symbol for human politics.

Thus, the prophetic criticism of the priestly and kingly powers was not arbitrary: It was based on the covenantal ideals. On the other hand, the prophets did not just repeat the covenant laws. They underlined instead the principles of the covenant. Take for instance Hos. 4:1– 2. There we find a clear allusion to the Decalogue, but that is not the primary element of the message. Instead, Hosea underlines the lack of mercy and knowledge of God (v. 1). Actually, we observe that, in the hands of the prophets the old covenant tradition becomes new (Lohfink 1967, 93). In the light of the present, the prophets place new accents or discover new aspects of the covenant traditions. Evidently, their work is also a hermeneutical enterprise ... in the light of the present. They find a balance between the ideals of the covenant and the challenges of the present. Nevertheless, even when they become anti-nationalists – as, for instance, supposedly happened in Jeremiah's ministry – they never question the covenant itself, the mission of Israel (Trigano 2011, 577).

3. Some Elements of the Prophetic Ministry

We now come to a more concrete description of the prophetic work, and here we follow and develop some ideas of W. Brueggemann (cf. Brueggemann 2018).¹⁸

I want to point to some elements that are essential for a prophetic ministry today. First, they are related to the politics of the covenant. That means that the covenant does not propose just a new religion, but also a new society

¹⁸ I choose to follow Brueggemann's description of the prophet's ministry, because he focuses, as we do in this article, on the application of the prophetic ideals to the contemporary church.

(Brueggemann 2018, 6). We see in the covenant a combination of a religion of liberty and a politics of justice (*ibid.*, 7). See, for instance, the fourth commandment in the deuteronomic version of the Ten Words (Deut. 5:12–15). Secondly, the history of Israel is a sad account of the abandonment of the politics of the covenant. We observe that the monarchy followed not only the path of idolatry but also the politics of the Empire, i. e. of oppression and social irresponsibility. The prophets are a clear testimony to this reality of a culture and politics that are in direct contradiction to the covenant politics. But before we raise the accusing finger against the monarchy, we need to realize that the politics of the covenant is not an easy ideal to follow: It is a great challenge to put transcendent (“utopian”) laws into practice in the real world. In this sense, Israel's monarchy merely followed the pattern of every other monarchy in the world. The Empire is not just outside but also inside Israel.

In view of this state of affairs, the prophetic ministry has two tasks.¹⁹ The first is to criticize the Empire. Human politics has no future: it is an illusion, it must necessarily come to an end. God is coming to judge it. For us, as for Israel, all this is hard to believe, for the Empire seems to be doing well, it seems eternal. But the truth is that its end is near. We can describe the typical eschatological vision of the prophets as follows: God comes to judge the Empire inside and outside Israel. In view of the coming judgment we cannot be joyful, we need to mourn²⁰ and to be converted. All the power of the prophetic symbolism and rhetoric is used, as we well know, to impress upon us the seriousness and reality of God's judgment. See, for instance, Jer. 4 or Jer. 6.²¹

But the prophets don't just criticize the Empire, they also offer an alternative. They promise a new future, they invite Israel to take courage. This is a difficult task, many in Israel have lost all hope. The covenant ideal seems a far-off dream. That is why the prophets put into action a ministry of encouragement: A beautiful rhetoric and a powerful symbolism is used to raise the imagination and the will for God's future (e. g. Isa. 40, 41, 45).²² The center of

¹⁹ We also note, as Brueggemann does, the two well-known prophetic strategies: on the one hand, the reproach and the announcement of judgment, and, on the other hand, the promises and the announcement of the redemption of Israel and the world.

²⁰ This element is especially underlined by Brueggemann on pp. 44–46.

²¹ Brueggemann uses the example of the poetry of Jeremiah to illustrate this point (pp. 46–57).

²² Brueggemann uses the example of the poetry of the second part of Isaiah (chapters 40–55) to illustrate this point (pp. 67–79).

this hope is the coming of God with his kingdom. He comes “like a shepherd to gather his lambs” and “to take them home” (Isa. 40:9–11).

4. A Prophetic Ministry for Today

Finally, we come to the practical application of the prophetic ministry.²³ First, let me say that I do not think we can have prophets today in exactly the same way as Israel had them. We live in another dispensation²⁴, the gospel dispensation, which has its roots in Israel's dispensation, but with some differences. Within the confines of this article, I cannot even begin to touch on this difficult question.²⁵ However, I think the church as a whole, the individual believers and especially the pastors, can and should practice a prophetic ministry. As Seventh-day Adventists we call ourselves a prophetic community. What do we mean by that? Is that just an exterior designation of the remnant? Or do we really want to be a prophetic community in the full sense of the word, a community that follows in the steps of the prophets?

Let us single out some of the points we have touched upon in the description of the role of the prophets. First, there is a political dimension of the gospel. When we see the cry of the prophets for justice in society, we cannot look away and think that that is not our job. Has God changed? Was the politics of justice and compassion ministry limited to Israel? Those are rhetorical questions and we know the answers. Yes, the politics of justice is part of the gospel. How do we integrate it in our mission? I believe the best way to do this is to think in terms of an integral approach to evangelization. Evangelization is not just preaching and baptizing. These activities are good but not sufficient. Jesus and the prophets demand that we include in our evangelization the politics of the Kingdom: to heal, to console, to liberate, to mourn, and also to preach, as we learn from Jesus' programmatic sermon in Nazareth (Lk. 4:16–21), in which he actually quotes a prophet!

²³ I am aware of the fact that this application of the prophetic ministry to the contemporary church is very limited. This is just a beginning of the discussion, but it indicates the direction to follow and needs to be continued and completed.

²⁴ I use the term “dispensation” in a neutral sense: a religious or political system prevailing in a particular time period.

²⁵ With the New Testament witness (see, for instance, Acts 3:21–24) we should affirm that Christ is the fulfilment of the prophetic office, and actually the fulfilment of all the other offices in Israel.

Pastoral ministry, for instance, should take the form of a prophetic ministry. That means that it should include the politics of the Kingdom, and not just its religion. This includes caring for the poor and the needy. This is not an extra facet, but it is a central element in the NT conception of evangelization.²⁶

Secondly, I think we need to learn from the prophetic constitution of Israel, the law about the “authority offices.” We should take seriously the separation of powers in the constitution of our church. It does not do the church any good when the executive power is concentrated in few hands. There must be a real separation of powers. If God considered this necessary for Israel, why would we think that this is not necessary for us. We need to leave space for the prophets, for people without institutional power (including what we call lay people), whom God has called for the good of the church. We need to pray for them, we need them.

Thirdly, we need to revive the politics of the kingdom among us. What are the methods we are using in the governance of the church, and in our mission? Are these means and methods those of human politics, of power and worldly ambition? Are we caring for the weak? Are we truly all brothers, even our leaders (“our kings”)? We should remember the law of the king in Israel, which says that he should not consider himself superior to his brothers (Deut. 17:18–20). This sounds like the gospel, doesn't it? We often forget our calling and follow the politics of the Empire, and we need prophets who remember and call us to practice the politics of the kingdom.

Fourthly, the end of the Empire is near. God's kingdom is coming. We need to put away our resignation and depression and take new courage in our mission. For the prophets the end of the Empire and the coming of the kingdom is not just a wish: For them, it is an absolute certainty. The eschatological vision of the prophets is also fundamental for us, who are “Adventists.” But we cannot just focus on the coming judgment – and on all the negative signs of the apocalyptic: God is coming with his kingdom. That is a positive message, it is the centre of our hope. In any case, the prophetic ministry, the politics of

²⁶ Perhaps we can make the prophetic perspective of the pastoral ministry more concrete by suggesting a category of the pastor-evangelist, in line with the category of the pastor-theologian, as proposed by Rudy Van Moere in his article “The Dilemma of the Pastor in a Postmodern Society” (Van Moere 2020). However, with the category of evangelist we should think in terms of an “integral evangelization,” as I mentioned.

the kingdom in the present, receives courage and energy from its eschatological dimension.

Finally, we need to show an openness to the prophets. If we are satisfied with our beliefs and our religion, we will not have a place for the prophets. The prophets compel us to continuously rethink our old faith in the light of the present circumstances (Lohfink 1967, 94–95). We must resist the temptation to silence the prophets as Israel did in the past. Notice Amos' words: "I raised up prophets from among your children ... but you ... commanded the prophets not to prophesy" (Am. 2:11–12).

In any case, the prophets operate with a particular hermeneutic – a "covenant hermeneutic." This hermeneutic discovers new meaning in the old covenant tradition. Old aspects of that tradition often receive new meaning in the light of new circumstances. We need this "prophetic hermeneutic," which allows us to hear God's words today, in our present circumstances.²⁷ We must leave space for that "prophetic hermeneutic" in our church. If we close ourselves to anything new, we will not be able to hear it. To the contrary, we need to pray for it; and when it comes, we need to hear and obey it.

²⁷ Applying this element to the pastoral ministry implies that the pastor should be a theologian. He should be familiar with the biblical tradition if he is to promote its ideals. He should also know his own times very well, to be able to contextualize the gospel in creative ways. He certainly should be a pastor-theologian. I borrow the category of the pastor-theologian from Rudy Van Moere 2020.

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Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel untersucht die Rolle des Propheten in der Gesellschaft des antiken Israel, um ein Modell für die heutige Kirche zu entwickeln. Der erste Teil beschreibt kurz die Gesellschaft Israels auf der Grundlage des Bundes, insbesondere ihr „Machtsystem“. Das Machtsystem in Israel erscheint als ein „mobiles Machtsystem“ (Trigano), das die Realität mit einer „utopischen Vision“ der Welt verbindet. In diesem Machtsystem fungiert der Prophet als dessen „mobiler Teil“, als permanente Korrektur: „Gottes Stimme in der Stadt“ (Trigano). Ganz konkret rufen die Propheten zu einer „Politik der Gerechtigkeit“ im Namen des Bundes auf.

Im zweiten Teil wird der „prophetische Dienst“ auf das Leben der Kirche angewandt. Es wird beobachtet, dass durch das Evangelium die „Politik der Gerechtigkeit“, wie sie von den Propheten verkündet wird, in die Mission der Kirche integriert wird; vgl. Luk. 4,16–21. Dementsprechend wird versucht, die Mission der Kirche als eine „integrale Evangelisation“ zu beschreiben mit dieser „Politik der Gerechtigkeit“ als einem fundamentalen Teil ihrer Mission. Die Rolle des Pastors wird ebenfalls definiert in zwei Kategorien, die sich aus dem „prophetischen Dienst“ ergeben: „dem Pastor-Evangelisten“ und dem „Pastor-Theologen“.

Résumé

L'article étudie le rôle du prophète dans la société israélite, afin de fournir un modèle à l'Église d'aujourd'hui. La première partie offre une brève description de la société d'Israël selon l'alliance, en particulier de son «système de pouvoir». Ce système de pouvoir en Israël apparaît comme un «système de pouvoir mobile» (Trigano), qui combine la réalité avec une «vision utopique» du monde. De plus, dans ce système de pouvoir, le prophète apparaît comme sa «partie mobile», une correction permanente: «La voix de Dieu dans la ville» (Trigano). De manière plus concrète, les prophètes appellent à suivre une «politique de justice» au nom de l'alliance.

La deuxième partie essaie d'appliquer le «ministère prophétique» à la vie de l'église. Nous observons que l'Évangile intègre la «politique de justice» des prophètes dans la mission de l'Église – cf. Luc 4 : 16–21. En conséquence, nous essayons de décrire la mission de l'Église comme une «évangélisation intégrale», qui inclut cette «politique de justice» comme une partie fondamentale de sa mission. Nous essayons également de définir le rôle du pasteur dans deux catégories qui dérivent du «ministère prophétique»: le «pasteur-évangéliste» et le «pasteur-théologien».

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The Laws of Nature

Philosophical and Theological Perspectives of Evil in Nature

Radiša Antić

Abstract

In contrast to “natural suffering,” the phenomenon of moral evil in the world is easier to comprehend and explain because it is caused by conscious, free acting agents. On the other hand, the so-called “natural suffering” of human beings could be triggered by irrational natural forces such as solar radiation etc. It transcends human rational potentials and makes us often ponder in silence without being able to utter something meaningful. This complicated question of evil in nature is discussed here from the perspectives of David Hume, Gottfried Leibniz, and the biblical *Book of Job*.

According to Hume, the existence of evil in nature demonstrates that there is no God, that our ideas about Him are irrational and empty, and that nature is blind and unconcerned about human and animal suffering. Leibniz, on the other hand, claimed that at the time of creation of the world God had examined all the probabilities and realized only those which would result in the maximum of metaphysical excellence. For any substance in the world there is a reason why it exists and why it exists the way it exists. For Leibniz, it is self-evident that there is a close correlation between human sin and human suffering, between moral and natural evils. In the *Book of Job* human suffering is like *behe-moth*, incomprehensible at the moment but not fully irrational, because God gives plenty of evidence that he created and sustains the world and consequently invites Job to trust him that the liberation is coming.

Evil in nature strikes us “not as a problem, but as an outrage ...” (Farrer 1962, 7). It transcends human rational potentials and makes us often ponder in silence without being able to utter something meaningful. On December 26,

2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami hit Thailand, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka with a magnitude of 9.1, leaving over two hundred thousand individuals dead and two million people homeless. A few hundred years earlier, on November 1, 1755, an earthquake in Lisbon killed around fifty thousand people. This earthquake weighed profoundly on the minds of Europeans (Toit 2005, 71) because it succeeded in almost immediately banishing optimism for a better world, which had pervaded the mind-set of people in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, it reminded human beings that their only happiness on earth is nothing but hope without any solid foundation.

The so called “natural suffering” of human beings could be caused by forces such as solar radiation, meteorites, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, snow, hail, rain and droughts. How can people who believe in a God of love rationalize and justify something like this (Neiman 2002, 238–240)? It seems that the phenomenon of moral evil is easier to explain because “it is due primarily to consciously, freely acting agents – here on earth.” (Toit 2005, 2). On the other hand, evil in nature refers to natural processes, which cause death and suffering and are not instigated by conscious moral agents.

In order to make an attempt to try to understand better and shed more light on the whole issue of evil in nature, we will first describe and analyse the devastating critique of the very existence of God and His failure to deal with evil in nature developed by the Scottish sceptic David Hume. Then, we will assess the contribution of Gottfried Leibniz to the rationality of the existing order in nature and God’s involvement in it. Finally, with the purpose of understanding evil in nature from a biblical perspective we will go to the Book of Job since it contains hints on this issue unparalleled in any other book of the Bible.

1. Hume on Evil in Nature

Hume in his works formulated sceptical arguments with the aim of challenging faith and the arguments of believers in God, and not necessarily to disprove the existence of God. However, when he writes about the question of evil in nature, he uses this phenomenon in order to prove the impossibility of the existence of a necessary being who is the cause of all other causes and who is Himself without cause.

Hume's perception of evil in nature cannot be properly grasped without first considering his metaphysics and epistemology. He acknowledged Leibniz's separation between analytical and synthetic propositions or, as he put it, the disparity between the "relation of ideas" and "matters of facts" (Palmer 1998, 196–197). By recognising this distinction, Hume endangered the whole rationalist's platform, which claims that there are such properties as *a priori* necessary facts. However, he claimed that analytical statements or the propositions about the "relation of ideas" are tautological, meaning that they do not provide any reliable evidence about the world; they are only telling us something about the meaning of the words within a certain sentence. All genuine knowledge, consequently, must be established on the basis of observation since only the synthetic propositions or the 'matters of facts' statements accurately describe the world (Palmer 1998, 198). For instance, the sentence "this stone is heavy" can be traced back to the sense impression and accordingly, this is a synthetic statement. If an idea, however, cannot be traced back to a sense impression it should be considered as nonsense and void of meaning.

Consequently, if the sentence "God exists" is analytical then it is tautological and tells us nothing about the matters of fact, about the reality itself. It only describes the meaning of the words within that sentence. Moreover, this sentence cannot be synthetic, because our ideas cannot reach further than our experiences. Thus, our ideas of God are irrational, senseless and are void of any sense.

Not only are our ideas of God void of any value but our perceptions of reality as a whole cannot be trusted either. Most people, and Christians in particular, believe that reality is established on the basis of the laws of causality. However, according to Hume, whenever we say that object A is the cause of event B and the result of that causation is incident C, we are only expressing our expectation that it will occur in the upcoming time although it has nothing to do with the facts in the world (Stump 1979, 273–274). Although event A has caused event B countless times in the past, there is no certainty that it will happen in the future. Reality is composed of unconnected entities and there is no required correlation between any two events in the world (*ibid.*).

Not only is the idea of God nonsense, and reality only consists of unrelated entities but the concept of "self," according to Hume, does not make any sense since it is a collection of unrelated perceptions, such as love or hate, cold or heat, light or shade. These perceptions move through the human mind with

great speed and thus create constant change, instability and unpredictability. Consequently, human life and reality are irreconcilable with any kind of rationality and with the existence of any kind of meaning and purpose.

In harmony with his metaphysics and epistemology, Hume assesses the existence of evil in nature by speaking about an ancient argument that was formulated by the Greek philosopher Epicurus:

Is God willing to prevent evil but unable to do so? Then he is not omnipotent. Is God able to prevent evil but unwilling to do so? Then he is malevolent (or at least less than perfectly good). If God is both willing and able to prevent evil then why is there evil in the world? (Hume 1963a, 197)

Consequently, if one cannot justify God's moral characteristics because of the existence of evil in the world then the case of those who believe in a personal God will fail. Hume points out that in nature, the strong animals devour the weak ones (Hume 1963a, 198), human beings are ill, they are in a state of emotional anguish and confrontation (*ibid.*). Consistent with his understanding of God, reality, causality and self, Hume claims that we cannot deduce the concept of a perfect God on the basis of evidence emerging from this world:

It is impossible for us to argue from the cause, or infer any alteration in the effect, beyond what has immediately fallen under our observation. Greater good produced by this being must still prove a greater degree of goodness: a more impartial distribution of rewards and punishments must proceed from a greater regard to justice and equity. Every supposed addition to the works of nature makes an addition to the attributes of the Author of nature; and consequently, being entirely unsupported by any reason or argument, can never be admitted but as a mere conjecture and hypothesis. (Hume 1978, 145)

Correspondingly, we have no basis to hope that in the future injustice and evil in the world will disappear because the present facts and experiences deny such a possibility. The believer's understanding of reality cannot be acknowledged if they are not able to prove that any amount of unnecessary evil, however small, does not exist in the world because it would deny the reality of an infinitely mighty and completely blameless being. Hume writes:

I will allow, that pain or misery in man is compatible with infinite power and goodness in the Deity, even in your sense of these attrib-

utes: What you have advanced by all these concessions? A mere possible compatibility is not sufficient. You must prove these pure unmixed, and uncontrollable attributes from the present mixed and confused phenomena, and from these alone. (Hume 1963a, 201)

Even if the occurrences of nature were entirely unspoiled and good they still would not prove the attributes of an infinite being, good and perfect, because they belong to the world of limited realities. There are no grounds for a deduction of unconditional goodness on the basis of “so many ills in the universe, and while these ills might so easily have been remedied, as far as human understanding can be allowed to judge on such a subject” (ibid., 211). For example, Hume asks why animals are not infused totally by the principle of pleasure because it seems “plainly possible to carry on the business of life without pain” (ibid., 206). Why does nature run into such excesses like floods, cold, heat and even more? Why does God not prevent natural tragedies and calamities?

Therefore, Hume concludes that the most credible assumption is that nature is blind and indifferent towards animal and human happiness, and consequently the world was not created with human or animal gladness in mind (Hume 1978, 146). There is no basis for concluding the existence of an infinitely mighty and virtuous God in the face of such evil in the world. However, Gottfried Leibniz’s perception of reality is opposite to that of David Hume.

2. Leibniz on Evil in Nature

Leibniz dedicated his first book, *Philosopher’s Confession* (orig. 1673: *Confessio philosophi*; see Leibniz 1989), and his last book, *Theodicy* (orig. 1710: *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu*; see Leibniz 1985), to the question of evil, which demonstrates that it was the predominant concern of his life-long philosophical journey (Rutherford 1995, 7–8). He was in many ways a genius who devised, for instance, the calculating machine, alongside Isaac Newton, and he also made substantial innovations in symbolic logic. Leibniz’s philosophical system basically encompasses three principles: the principle of identity, the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of internal harmony. For a better understanding of Leibniz’s concept of evil in nature it is necessary to summarise these three principles first

According to Leibniz’s principle of identity all propositions should be divided into analytic and synthetic propositions. Analytic propositions are true

by definition of the words within the sentence; they are necessary because, if made into their opposites, they are meaningless, and *a priori* because there is no need to check their truthfulness in experience. The truthfulness or falsity of synthetic propositions does not depend on the meaning of the words within the sentence but on the evidence in experience. These experiences are not necessary but could be false if the facts coming from *empiria* were different, and they are *a posteriori* because their truthfulness or falsity can be known by observation alone.

Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason can be understood to mean that for any substance that exists in the world there must be some reason why it exists and why it exists the way it exists. There must be a reason why the world is and why it is the way it is and not otherwise (Leibniz 1985, 248). It is the main law of rationality and from this platform we must conclude that there is a necessary being, which is all-perfect, uncaused by any other cause and is the cause of this world.

The principle of internal harmony suggests that if there is a necessary being, God. He, by definition, has to be both good and rational. Such a being necessarily desires and is capable of creating the maximum amount of existence possible (metaphysical perfection). Consequently, at the time of the creation of the world, God had the choice of limitless possibilities but He realised only those possibilities that would result in the maximum amount of metaphysical and ethical excellence. Consequently, the world may appear to be chaotic but if one knew what the alternatives were, one would conclude that this is the best possible world (*ibid.*, 21–27). If anyone thinks that God could have made a better world and He had chosen not to do so, he would in reality affirm that God is not as good as He could be. God could not have done otherwise because He was restricted by the options available to Him. Hence, any other world would have been inferior to this one (*ibid.*, 63–64).

In his attempt to explain the goodness of God and his integrity, Leibniz suggests that there are three levels of evil in the world: metaphysical, natural and moral. The metaphysical evil arises from the fact that all the substances from which the world is made possess an intrinsic principle of degeneration, which invades their essence. Natural evil consists of agony and misery that human beings are undergoing while living in this world, and finally moral evil is the transgression of some universal principles, which are embedded in

the reality as a whole. For Leibniz, it is self-evident that there is a close correlation between sin and suffering, that is, between moral and natural evils.

There was a time, claims Leibniz, before humankind fell into sin when they did not know fear, anxiety, death, pain and agony but only happiness, because all reality was blameless. Is this not exactly the planet anybody would have created? Accordingly, the fall can be taken as the reason for the fact that human life is not what it is supposed to be (Leibniz 1985, 22–23). The real cause for the suffering and pain in the world must be found not in what our ancestors had done in particular, in the rightness of what they did and what they suffered, but in the fact that something erroneous was done. Evil things occurred because evil things had been committed. Although this attempt to explain evil in the world may not look satisfactory, it is however better, according to Leibniz, to try to come up with some relevant explanation than to remain in the hopelessness of total ignorance.

Leibniz believed that future discoveries in the field of science would make his explanation of the relationship between sin and suffering more comprehensible. During the times when human beings thought that planet earth was the only populated planet in the universe, it was extremely difficult to understand the seeming dominance of evil over good. Nonetheless, at the present time, claims Leibniz, when human beings know that the cosmos is massive and consists of countless number of galaxies, we can understand that God's creation is not limited to human creatures only, but He has to take care of other created beings in the universe too. Leibniz believed that as he had invented calculus, one day in the future, humanity would develop the universal calculus, that is, a method that will solve all human troubles (Leibniz 1985, 248). Science is not an opponent to religious faith but a help because any new advance in the field of scientific knowledge will strengthen faith in God.

In Leibniz's attempt to create a meaningful understanding of God the Creator, he crafted God in a human image. George Friedrich Hegel compared him to a merchant standing in the marketplace and selling only what is available. Leibniz is selling the best he possesses and although it is not perfect, we should be content knowing that it is the finest that he has (Hegel 1975, 341). His claims that with the advancement of science human pain and agony will be shown to be the source of some larger good and his assertion that natural evils in the world are the result of some secret sins committed are highly questionable because the Bible introduced the concept of innocent suffering long

before Leibniz. However, in spite of these weak points in Leibniz's philosophy, his contribution to philosophy and theology is lasting and immense. All the attacks against his understanding of reality, including that of Voltaire, could not and did not demolish his perceptive analysis of reality. We will now turn to the Book of Job, which may well be the greatest book ever written by a human being and it could offer some clues regarding how to better understand evil in nature.

3. The Book of Job on Evil in Nature

Already from the first chapter of the *Book of Job* we are faced with the question of evil in nature. Namely, "one day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting" (Job 1:13) four different evils destroyed Job's goods, animals, servants and his children. Two of these evils might be considered moral evils (the attack by Sabeans and Chaldeans; Job 1:14–19), because moral human agents were involved. However, "the fire of God" and the "mighty wind" are obviously natural evils. Moreover, natural laws are used as the foundation and a form of explanation for the moral sphere of reality not only in chapter one but throughout the *Book of Job*. Job's friends, Job himself, and God used natural laws in order to make their theological or philosophical conclusions. In the *Book of Job* the manner of how the natural order was formed and how it is being managed is parallel to the creation and functioning of the moral order. Both of these orders contain elements which are inexplicable and even apparently menacing to human life, but they serve God's impenetrable purposes (Clines 1989, xlvi). The 'final theological solution,' if there is one, in the *Book of Job* is grounded on the world of animals, that is, the natural order phenomenon. The 'secretive' theology of wild animals in the *Book of Job* helped suffering Job to begin to understand the hardly explicable world of the natural order and it serves as an example of how human beings can begin to understand God with their mind and not only faith.

3.1 *Job's Friends on Evil in Nature*

Eliphaz, the Temanite, explains his perception of the moral order of the universe by using the world of nature (Job 4:6–8). For him, it is possible for good and innocent people to suffer, but they will not perish prematurely, before the due time: "Consider now: Who being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?" Job, being among the innocent, is alive and

can have hope for the future. "The breath of God" only destroys evildoers prematurely; He is personally involved in the process of retribution, according to Eliphaz's theology (Job 4:9).

Eliphaz uses the laws of nature in order to prove his theology of the moral structure of the universe. He writes: "As I have observed, those who plough evil and those who sow trouble reap it." (Job 4:8) Some biblical writers have taken up this understanding of an almost causal interrelationship between the natural and moral spheres of reality. The natural order (laws) could even contain eschatological lessons:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Gal. 6:7)

Hosea writes: "They saw the wind and reap whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). In the same line of thought Solomon reminds us: "He who sows wickedness reaps trouble" (Prov. 22:8).

If we take the entirety of biblical teachings into consideration, this deterministic relationship between an act and its consequence ("sow/reap"), although not entirely invalid, has its weaknesses and inconsistencies because, if it was the case, human freedom and divine freedom simply could not exist. The universe would be totally determined. However, what seems clear is that Eliphaz considers natural phenomena as a certain and firm guide in understanding evil in the world and that God is not only the engineer of the laws of nature but He is personally involved in their functioning. Thus, the laws of nature are not evil but display immutable harmony and consistency, given that they have their source in the mind of the Creator himself.

Another friend of Job, Bildad, the Shuhite, claims that the law of retribution is the moral foundation of the universe, because if it were not the case the world would be immoral and opposed to what God essentially is: "Does the Almighty pervert what is right?" (Job 8:3) The committing of sin by a morally free agent, according to Bildad, must precede any early death. The fact that Job's children have died prematurely means that they were sinners: "When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin" (Job 8:4). However, Bildad's position seems to lack any support within the story itself, because there is no suggestion at all that Job's children's destiny was the result of their conduct.

To prove the truthfulness of his theology about the moral order of the world, Bildad, like Eliphaz before him, refers to the laws of nature. He depicts before the eyes of the reader three images from nature: papyrus (Job 8:11), a spider's web (Job 8:14–15), and a well-watered plant (Job 8:16–19). In the first image there are two rhetorical questions, "Can papyrus grow tall where there is no marsh? Can reeds thrive without water?" The answer is logical and suggests that the papyrus plant cannot reach its height of ten to fifteen feet without water. In the same way, an illness or tragedy would not have happened had there not been some sin committed previously. God does not pervert justice and "when your children sinned against him he gave them over to the penalty of their sin" (Job 8:4). The laws of nature provide the key to understanding the ethical dimension of the world.

The second image is about the weakest of all houses: the spider's web. It is so fragile that "he leans on his web, but it gives way; he clings to it but it does not hold" (Job 8:15). This image from the natural world is the metaphor of a godless man, who distances himself from the source of all stability and relies on his own foundations, which are constructed according to his own fragile plans.

Following this is the image of "a well-watered plant in the sunshine" (Job 8:16). "It entwines its roots around a pile of rocks" and flourishes. A well-watered plant simply winds its roots around the rocks and they give it the appearance of stability. However, it can be easily uprooted and destroyed. On the basis of these natural phenomena, Bildad builds his moral theology of retribution, according to which sometimes the effect (punishment) does not need to follow its cause (sin) immediately but can take a certain amount of time. In some cases it may seem to us that evil people enjoy the happiness of human existence but if we are patient, we will see their "uprooting," "your enemies will be clothed in shame, and the tents of the wicked will be no more" (Job 8:22).

Accordingly, Bildad's view of the laws of nature coincides with that of Eliphaz. If we want to know the moral structure of the universe all we need to do is to look at the laws of nature, papyrus, a spider's web, and a well-watered plant, because they reflect the mind of the designer.

Zophar, the Naamathite, in his attempt to explain the calamity that befell Job, uses the language of creation: heavens, earth and sea (Job 11:7–9). For him, Job is a secret sinner because he claims to be pure and flawless but if

“God would speak” and “open his lips” He would “disclose the secrets of wisdom.” Such divine wisdom would reveal: “God has even forgotten some of (Job’s) sins” (Job 11:4–6). This is the first time in the Bible that the notion of God’s grace has been introduced. Speaking about that mysterious knowledge of God (“Can you fathom the mysteries of God?”) and about “the limits of the Almighty,” Zophar enters into the world of nature and mentions the heavens, the earth and the sea. God’s knowledge is “higher than the heavens,” “longer than the earth,” and “wider than the sea.” If human beings cannot fully understand their own natural world, how much more is the very being of God incomprehensible to them. This analogy of the correlation between the natural world and the being of God suggests that nature in many ways reflects the divine mind and is not intrinsically evil.

Job 28 seems to be the best example in the Book of Job and probably in the whole Bible, like Hegel’s concept of *Geist*, which permeates the whole reality and makes it rational, which describes reality as infused with divine wisdom. This chapter is a poem or a hymn to wisdom that God communicates to human beings. Twice in this chapter the same question is asked: “But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?” (Job 28:12,20.) This is also the only text in the Bible which speaks about mining and about precious metals and stones such as silver, gold, iron, copper, sapphires, onyx, crystal, coral, jasper, and topaz. The author will tell us emphatically that wisdom is more precious than any of these stones or metals. But “where can wisdom be found?”

Only God “knows where it dwells” and only He “understands the way to it” (Job 28:23). Why only God? Because only He knows the cosmic totality, “for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens” (Job 28:24). When He created the universe “he established the force of the wind,” He “measured out the waters,” He “made a decree for the rain and the path for the thunderstorm” (Job 28:25, 26). Therefore, God “looked,” “appraised,” “confirmed,” and “tested” the wisdom that is embedded in the composition of the world when he fixed the laws of nature. Wisdom is obtainable and accessible for human beings and can be found in the acts of creation. Hence, natural laws, according to Job 28, reveal the ultimate dwelling place of wisdom and that is God himself.

Elihu proposed an original understanding of the world of nature, stating that the power of God in nature is related to the God’s justice and love. “He

brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth and show his love" (Job 37:13). He is amazed by the mysterious process of the transformation of the salt seawater into rainwater. This process was not only extraordinarily astonishing for the people of ancient times but also for us today: "He draws up the drops of water, which distils as rain to be streams, the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind" (Job 36:27–28). As in many other cases in the book of Job, here we have a parallel between the laws of nature and the moral structure of the universe.

3.2 *Job's Friends on Evil in Nature*

An innocent suffering man from the land of Uz makes eleven speeches and in those addresses, there is neither theological consistency nor uniformity because Job frequently changes his position. He is dying and he has no time just to confirm the theological dogma on the suffering of that time, which was the law of retribution, but he wants to know the truth about his misery. He also used to trust in the law of retribution, but now that dogma does not seem valid because Job is an innocent sufferer. God himself has stated unquestionably, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). Job has lost the very foundation on which he stood all his life. His first reaction was: "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). And the story of the *Book of Job* could end here. However, from chapter 3, we see a different Job; he is cursing the day of his birth and he prays one of the strangest prayers in the whole Bible: "Oh ... that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me" (Job 6: 8.9). He wants God to answer him, to explain to him the great calamity which has fallen on him. He even wants to meet with God in a kind of heavenly, cosmic court process (see Job 9:32–33). In his speeches, Job uses, like his friends before him, nature, that is, natural laws, in order to prove his view on the moral order of the universe. In doing this, he introduces a theological revolution.

Bildad, the Shuhite, claimed, on the basis of his firm adherence to the law of retribution, that "the tents of the wicked will be no more" (Job 8:22). Contrary to this, Job shouts: "The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure; those who carry their God in their hands" (Job 12:6). It is probable that Job had in mind marauders who had caused calamity

to his own family (the Sabeans and Chaldeans). Thus, murderers and idolaters, godless people, sleep soundly in their beds while innocent people like Job are sleepless and afflicted. The law of retribution has failed the test of experience.

To prove his point about the moral order of the universe, Job goes to the world of nature, to the animal world, “but ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you” (Job 12:7–8). When the lion kills the little deer or when the big fish swallows the small ones, where is justice and how can the human mind process such a reality? If human beings do not know or do not understand, Job claims, they should consult the subordinate orders of creation and they will make it clear. The natural laws are the soul mate of the moral structure of the world. However, it seems that there is something badly wrong with the world and with the natural order. The natural order of the world can teach us lessons which are contrary to the worldview which includes the law of retribution.

In Psalm 107 the great Lord of history is praised, “He turned the desert into pools of water...” and “there he brought the hungry to live and they founded the city where they could settle” (Psalm 107:35–37). Contrary to this, Job claims: “If he hold back waters, there is drought; if he let them loose, they devastate the land” (Job 12:15). Hence, according to Job, it is God who holds back the water and causes droughts and it is also He who sends destructive floods.

Since God does not respond to Job by refusing to enter into dialogue with him and because Job is dying, there is only one thing which remains. Job will say in front of the whole universe that he is innocent; the words are something and not nothing and they should be “written on a scroll,” “with an iron tool on lead, engraved in rock forever” (Job 19:23–24). What will God say to Job?

3.3 *God on Evil in Nature*

Although God’s speeches (chapters 38–41) could seem cynical and at times intimidating, in reality it is not the case, because the tone is just unembellished and candid. Amongst Job’s friends and within Job’s discourses, many erroneous and inaccurate things have been said about God, because there was a deficiency of true knowledge about God and His way of governing the universe. In order to correct these misconceptions, God presents the structure of the

world, that is, the structure of the physical universe, and the ways in which He upholds it.

Contrary to the claims of David Hume and Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the world in a state of chaos and consisting of unrelated substances, God claims that all that exists displays proofs of wisdom, preparation and thought. When He created the universe, Job did not participate in this event: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?" (Job 38:4) The creation of the world is not just a past event because God daily sustains the universe: "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place?" (Job 38:12); the extent of the earth is made according to his plans: "Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth?" (Job 38:18); the secrets of light and darkness are known to God: "What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?" (Job 38:19); God knows how the stars function: "Do you know the laws of the heavens?" (Job 38:33); and he inserted the seasonal instinct of migration into birds: "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south?" (Job 39:26). The physical structure of the universe has manifold purposes and there is necessary interconnectedness between the sea, the clouds, light, darkness, the stars, rain, the eagle, the wild horse and the goat. Therefore, in order to comprehend the functioning of the world, one needs to understand how the world was created, who is the designer or the engineer, and who sustains it. As was the case in the perception of reality by Job's friends and by Job himself, God also states that physical and moral structures of reality are interdependent because his council, his plans (the moral level) have been darkened: "Who is that that darkens my council with words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2)

And now we come to some intriguing and creative peculiarities of the *Book of Job*. In chapter 39 we have a great number of animals mentioned: a mountain goat (v. 1), bears (v. 1), a wild donkey (v. 5), an ostrich (v. 13), a stork (v. 13), a horse (v. 19), a locust (v. 20), a hawk (v. 26), an eagle (v. 27), *behemoth* (40:15–19) and a leviathan (41:1). In this description, we find no mention of domestic animals such as camels, sheep or asses, animals that Job was well acquainted with and of which he had good knowledge. Most of the animals mentioned are wild animals that Job knew very little about. There is an element of incomprehensibility here.

Certainly, the most intriguing of these wild animals is *behemoth*. What is the meaning of the statement that it was "made along with you," (Job 38:15)

meaning alongside human beings? The creation of *behemoth* is equated with the creation of humanity. Moreover, it is not man but *behemoth*, which “ranks first among the works of God” and “nothing on earth is his equal” (Job 41:33). “He is the king over all that are proud” (Job 41:34) and “his Maker can approach him with his sword” (Job 40:19).

There is a long history of interpretation of who or what *behemoth* represents in the last chapters of the *Book of Job* (Clines 1989, 18b:1183–1187). Most of these interpretations are based on Egyptian and Mesopotamian mythologies (*The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 4, 2003, 618–619). *Behemoth’s* affection for water could suggest that it was designed after the hippopotamus, although verse 20 states, “the hills bring him their produce.” According to Egyptian mythology the hippopotamus is a threatening beast and an enemy of order. The statement that *behemoth* “feeds on grass like an ox” has some similarities with Mesopotamian and Ugaritic mythologies about a terrifying “bull of heaven” (ibid.).

However, the biblical description of *behemoth* is original and unparalleled in other traditions. If the meaning of this beast is examined within the context of the Bible, the assertion that *behemoth* “ranks first among the works of God” (Job 40:19) is identical to the statement made in Proverbs 8:22, which speaks about primal wisdom, “The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works.” Moreover, it also has its thematic parallel with Ezekiel 28:12: “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” In addition to this, the phrase “his Maker can approach him with his sword” indicates, “God does, or at least could do, battle with *behemoth*” (*The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 4, 2003, 619).

A translation of v. 19b implies a confrontation between God and *Behemoth*, which is not impossible in the larger context of the chapter, especially in the light of the reference to “bringing low the proud” as a godlike act (40:9; *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 4, 2003, 619).

The Book of Revelation also speaks about war and confrontation: “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.” (Rev. 12:7). The claim – “He looks down on all that are haughty, he is king over all that are proud” – finds its thematic parallel with Isaiah 14:13: “You said in your heart: ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.’”

If Job's mysterious animal, *behemoth*, symbolizes Lucifer, as above evidences suggests, then what are the implications of this discovery for the understanding of Job's suffering and for evil in nature and the universe? It seems that a theology of wild animals could help us to understand these complex issues. As was mentioned above, throughout the *Book of Job*, all the main protagonists point out that there are two inter-dependent levels of reality: physical and moral. The physical laws, as imprinted into the fabric of reality, come from God and can teach us about the moral level, that is, about God's mind. In the *Book of Job* animals are used as an object lesson in order to help Job understand the problem of evil and to grasp why God treats him the way He does. The first level of reality is the physical level and it consists of the domesticated animals (mentioned mainly at the beginning of the book) that Job was well acquainted with, rather than wild animals that Job knew very little about. Finally, there is *behemoth*, that Job knew nothing about and yet it is part of God's creation. On the basis of this physical level of reality, God is trying to teach Job a lesson about the moral structure of reality. Job knows many things about God (as he knows about domesticated animals), such as, that God is the mind-blowing creator of the universe, that He put the planets into their orbits, that His laws permeate all the substances in the universe, that He created the universe and also sustains it on a daily basis. However, there are properties of God that Job knows very little about or almost nothing (the wild animals). For example, in addition to the understanding that there has to be an intelligent cause of everything existing, it was almost impossible for Job to comprehend the biological and chemical processes of creation: "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know" (Job 42:3). Finally, God will always remain a mystery for human beings (like *behemoth*) because He belongs to a different intelligence, He has no beginning, and He lives in the state of an eternal present.

Job's suffering belongs to the *behemoth* sphere of reality and God cannot rationally explain it to Job. However, God invites Job to trust Him in spite of the lack of full understanding because He, God, is the creator and He sustains everything. Although Job's faith is not supposed to be blind faith, since God gives him a multitude of evidence, there is also space for faith because human beings are creatures of space and time and are not able to understand some

aspects of cosmic reality. God will always remain the main object of the human mind's enquiry and man will never fully comprehend Him because humans are created beings.

The principle of causality, contrary to the position of David Hume, is underscored in the *Book of Job* and it is one of the defining principles of planet earth's reality. However, evil is reality *suis generis*, because it has no cause of its existence, since God created planet earth: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). When God created human beings, he empowered them with the freedom of choice. But they refused the status of created beings and decided to reject their Creator and be a law unto themselves. As a consequence of that choice, man descended to another level of existence, resulting in the imperfect and unreliable laws of nature. Nature and its laws, although they can still be a witness to the creative power of God (Rom. 1:19–20), are under the curse and cannot be a normative standard because of their fallen status: "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of one who subjected it" (Rom. 8:20). However, there is hope that "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

4. Summary and Conclusions

The complicated question of evil in nature has been discussed in this paper from the perspective of David Hume, Gottfried Leibniz, and the biblical *Book of Job*. Droughts, famines, earthquakes, storms, hail, lightning, tsunamis and floods remain a constant challenge for those who believe that nature is not intrinsically evil and that it still, at least incompletely, speaks to human beings about the creator God. According to Hume, the existence of evil in nature unquestionably demonstrates that there is no God; nature is blind and unconcerned about human and animal suffering. Our ideas about God are irrational and empty of any meaning. On the other hand, Leibniz claimed that, at the time of the creation of the world, God had examined all the probabilities and realised only those which would result in the maximum amount of metaphysical and ethical excellence. He could not have done otherwise. For any substance in the world there is a reason why it exists and why it exists the way it exists. He believed that there is a close connection between morality and evil in nature and that evil in nature is the consequence of the fall of human beings in sin sometime after the creation of the world.

In the *Book of Job*, the theological solution seems to be in the world of wild animals and especially *behemoth*. Job's suffering is like *behemoth*, incomprehensible at the moment, but not irrational because God gives plenty of evidence that He created the world and that He sustains it and consequently invites Job to trust in Him. Presently the laws of nature are "subjected to frustration" because of the misuse of free will by human beings, but the liberation is coming.

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Zusammenfassung

Im Verhältnis zum „natürlichen Leiden“ ist das Phänomen des moralischen Bösen in der Welt leichter zu verstehen und zu erklären, weil es von bewusst agierenden, freien Handelnden verursacht wird. Andererseits könnte das so genannte „natürliche Leid“ der Menschen von irrationalen Naturgewalten, wie Solarstrahlung etc., ausgelöst werden. Es übersteigt das menschliche rationale Potential und lässt uns oft still nachdenken, ohne dass wir in der Lage wären, etwas Bedeutsames zu äußern. Die komplizierte Frage nach dem Bösen in der Natur wird hier diskutiert anhand der Perspektiven von David Hume, Gottfried Leibniz und dem biblischen Buch *Hiob*.

Nach Hume zeigt die Existenz des Bösen in der Natur, dass es keinen Gott gibt, dass unsere Ideen über ihn irrational und leer sind und dass die Natur blind ist, frei von Sorgen über menschliches und tierisches Leid. Leibniz hingegen behauptete, Gott habe bei der Erschaffung der Welt alle Wahrscheinlichkeiten geprüft und nur diejenigen angewandt, die zu einem Maximum an metaphysischer Exzellenz führten. Für jede Substanz in der Welt kann ein Grund angegeben werden, warum sie so und nicht anders existiert. Für Leibniz ist es selbstverständlich, dass es einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen menschlicher Sünde und menschlichem Leid gibt, zwischen den moralischen und den natürlichen Übeln. Im Buch *Hiob* ist das menschliche Leiden wie ein Ungeheuer (*behemoth*), das im Moment unverständlich, aber nicht völlig irrational ist, weil Gott reichlich Beweise dafür liefert, dass er die Welt erschaffen hat und sie erhält, und *Hiob* deshalb einlädt, ihm zu vertrauen, dass die Befreiung kommt.

Résumé

Contrairement à la «souffrance naturelle», le phénomène du mal moral dans le monde est plus facile à comprendre et à expliquer parce qu'il est causé par des acteurs conscients et agissant librement. D'un autre côté, la soi-disant «souffrance naturelle» des êtres humains pourrait être déclenchée par des forces naturelles irrationnelles telles que le rayonnement solaire, etc. Elle transcende les potentiels rationnels humains et nous fait souvent réfléchir en silence sans pouvoir prononcer quelque chose de sensé. Cette question compliquée du mal dans la nature est discutée ici du point de vue de David Hume, Gottfried Leibniz et du livre biblique de Job.

Selon Hume, l'existence du mal dans la nature démontre qu'il n'y a pas de Dieu, que nos idées à son sujet sont irrationnelles et vides, et que la nature est aveugle et indifférente à la souffrance humaine et animale. Leibniz, d'autre part, a affirmé qu'au moment de la création du monde, Dieu avait examiné toutes les probabilités et a réalisé seulement celles qui aboutiraient au maximum d'excellence métaphysique. Pour toute substance dans le monde, il y a une raison pour laquelle elle existe et pourquoi elle existe telle qu'elle existe. Pour Leibniz, il va de soi qu'il existe une corrélation étroite entre le péché humain et la souffrance humaine, entre les maux moraux et naturels. Dans le Livre de Job, la souffrance humaine est comme béhémoth, incompréhensible pour le moment mais pas totalement irrationnelle, car Dieu donne beaucoup de preuves qu'il a créé et soutient le monde et invite par conséquent Job à lui faire confiance que la libération arrive.

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Book Review

Peter Scazzero. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. It's Impossible to be Spiritually Mature, while Remaining Emotionally Immature*. Updated edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 240 pp.

The author is a Baptist pastor with Italian roots and a well-known writer on both sides of the Atlantic in the realm of Christian spirituality. The book cover itself announces his success with the large heading “more than 500,000 sold,” raising both curiosity as well as concerned German eye brows wondering about the modesty of the author and/or the need of the publishing house to push the book. However, to be honest, American culture is very different in many ways. And that is well demonstrated throughout the whole book.

In 240 pages, the author delineates his views on what constitutes emotionally healthy spirituality, and how to achieve it. The basic premise is that most Christians have emotionally imbalanced spiritual lives, leading to distress, even mental illness and certainly a poor Christian witness. The author is quick to present examples for his thesis – including himself – which gives the book a ring of authenticity and “down to earth” qualities. In that sense it is easy and pleasant to read, yet from a social science perspective remains in the realm of “anecdotal evidence.” These “anecdotes” tend to come from an American evangelical background, and thus are more descriptive of American culture than anything else. Reading from a mental health perspective, the pseudo-scale included on p. 59 appears to be indicative of the nature of the book: “Considering that Jesus was 100 percent true to himself, or ‘self-differentiated,’ where might you place yourself on this scale?” This is followed by a detailed interpretation of the result. Lacking all quality of a psychological scale it is a subjective evaluation at best – more likely to be dangerous than helpful.

In fact, the reader wonders, is the book meant to be about theology or rather about mental health? The valiant attempt to integrate the fields of *theology* and *social sciences* would require conceptualizing the two. American pragmatism simply mixes them and applies “whatever it takes” to make a point. Thus,

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Adventist readers will stumble across some Sabbath theology in the book (a topic amazingly frequent in current evangelical literature). Sabbath, as well as the Daily Office, are to provide rest and rhythm – and are described as “revolutionary disciplines for Christians today” (p. 141). However, when he later describes the Daily Office the author is not referring to the Old Testament sacrificial system, but to a monastic tradition, mentioning Trappist monks in Massachusetts. There is nothing wrong with such an example, of course. However, there is a basic difference between an old monastic tradition (daily prayers, incidentally going back much further than his example would suggest) and Sabbath theology – which the author actually unfolds in a very fascinating manner – worthwhile reading.

Perhaps this may be the point to stop going into further details. Despite all criticism, this is not a bad book. There are pearls of insight – hidden amidst stories, anecdotes and rather obvious exhortations. If the reader expects a book on mental health – they will be disappointed, despite a lot of interesting bits and pieces (and much far too obvious material). If the reader expects a solid theology of spirituality, he or she will find plenty of worthwhile suggestions (many of which again are fairly obvious from a European perspective), but not a solid, systematic work. If the reader expects a devotional book ... no, not really – despite all its healthy exhortations. It is rather a typical “How-to Book” in good American tradition, offering worthwhile assistance for those who are looking for it. The irony of it remains that this encompasses an implicit emphasis on “doing” / “getting it right” (even though different from traditional works) counteracting the original intention of the author.

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Book Review

A.J. Swoboda. *Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Non-stop World.* Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2018. 256 pp.

The *Subversive Sabbath*, as the subtitle indicates, is mostly a semi-popular and pastorally written book which aims to suggest to readers the surprising power Sabbath observance can bring to busy 21st century Christians. “How is the Sabbath *subversive?*,” asks the author, and answers by effectively giving the gist of the book: “Sabbath is an alternative lifestyle that goes against everything our world knows” (p. xi). Thus, the pragmatic orientation of the book is established from the beginning.

This is actually not surprising, since A.J. Swoboda is a physician and at the time of writing the book was a church pastor. Currently Swoboda holds a position as assistant professor of Bible, Theology and World Christianity at Bushnell University in Eugene, Oregon. He is an established writer and editor of ten books and holds a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from the University of Birmingham for a work on green Pentecostal pneumatology.

The book is organised into four main parts: “Sabbath for Us,” “Sabbath for Others,” “Sabbath for Creation” and “Sabbath for Worship.” Each of these parts contain three chapters. The titles of individual chapters reveal that the discussion in them will be oriented to real issues that individuals, families or society as a whole face and struggle with in the contemporary world. For instance, Part 1 contains material about time, work and health, Part 2 offers discussion on issues like relationships, economy and technology (one chapter) and the marginalized, Part 3 on creation, land and animals, while the last (Part 4) is concerned with witness, worship and discipleship. Already from this brief overview of how the book is organised and the topics structured, it is evident that the book really wants to “sell” the Sabbath idea of rest to the reader. The book does not start with a biblical-theological part which would lay down foundations, but rather theology and biblical material is dispersed across the book. The strength of such an approach is evident – it is a book for a reader and her or his concerns.

The approach of the author is sympathetic, personal and pedagogical. He writes well and the material is easy to follow. The argumentation in individual chapters is solid, containing a mixture of biblical material, theological discussion and illustrative narratives. On the other hand, the book does not really break any new ground in Sabbath studies. Probably the strongest contribution of the book is its holistic emphasis on the Sabbath, respectively the holistic impact Sabbath keeping has on one's physical and mental health, to economic, ecological and faith benefits. Another positive element in the approach of the book is that it brings together a range of well-known theological voices on the Sabbath and incorporates them into the discussion. Thus, names like Bruggemann, Moltmann, Heschel, Barth and Bonhoeffer appear frequently on the pages of the book.

Yet, there is an interesting silence of Seventh-day Adventist voices in the book. Apart from Bacchiocchi (in chapters 1 and 12) and Kendra Haloviak (in chapter 10), other voices are not heard. This may come as a surprise, since Seventh-day Adventists have not been silent about the Sabbath ever since their inception. Certainly, a mention of Sigve Tonstad's *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* would merit a discussion, especially since the objectives of both books overlap. What also adds to the research perplexity in the book is that the author openly confesses that he is "writing about something far outside" the scope of his scholarship (pp. xii–xiii) and hence heavily relies on several lesser known authors such as N. Wirtzba, T. Edwards, J. Schulevitz, M.J. Dawn and S.H. Dresner.

While Seventh-day Adventism is mentioned in the book on pages 56 and 57, it is in the context of them being "[t]he world's healthiest religious group" who live "ten years longer than North American life expectancy," because they "actually take a Sabbath." However, the comment about Seventh-day Adventists' Sabbath keeping on page 56, which is characterised as one of leaning "towards rigidity (Sabbath can *only* be Saturday)" becomes crucial for understanding the concept of "Sabbath" the author has in mind throughout the book. Swoboda does not work with the concept of a seventh-day Sabbath being Saturday. He works with the concept of Sabbath as such, regardless of whether it is Saturday or Sunday. What matters from the point of view of the book's thesis is that one accepts the Sabbath as God's gift and begins to practice it. If we do it, then it will have a host of positive benefits on our individual, family and societal life. "Sabbath is a gift we do not know how to receive" nor

“how to enjoy” it (p. x). The book is a pastoral (more than theological) invitation to taste the Sabbath and put it to the test by trying it out. This becomes the bottom line in the book’s argumentation. Thus, the book for sharp Adventist ears will not add much scholarly novelty in the Sabbath studies field. This is a semi-popular book without broader academic discussion and importantly without substantive biblical-theological sections. The book was published by Brazos, a popular division of the Baker Publishing Group, and hence it was not meant to be used as a top academic resource about the Sabbath. Still however, the book will prove to be a useful reference on the Sabbath topic for interested Bible students and pastors.

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Book Review

Christian Feichtinger. *Das geheiligte Leben: Körper und Identität bei den Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten. Kirche – Konfession – Religion 72.* Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2020. 241 Seiten.

Die Lektüre dieses Werkes¹ hinterlässt im Rezensenten eine gewisse Ambivalenz. Auf der einen Seite liegt hier ein Beitrag zum Adventismus vor, an dem in künftigen Studien zur Thematik nicht vorbeigegangen werden wird: Zum ersten Mal wird hier aus einer Außenperspektive, aber mit dem tendenziell sympathischen Blick eines ethnographisch geschulten Beobachters eine Monographie vorgelegt, die den menschlichen Körper als Aspekt adventistischen Glaubens und Lebens zum Mittelpunkt hat. Es ist also das Verdienst des Autors, vieles zu Papier gebracht zu haben, was wissenschaftlich bislang noch wenig aufgearbeitet war.

Andererseits: Warum die ganze Mühe? Der Ertrag ist (in Kürze): Bei Adventisten ist Identität respektive „Grenzziehung“ und „Zugehörigkeit“ (so zentrale Begriffe der Überschriften von Kap. 3 bzw. 4) ein Geschehen, das häufig irgendwie mit dem Körper zu tun hat: Sabbat(ruhe), Alkoholabstinenz, Verzicht auf vorehelichen Sex, Gesundheitspraxis, Endogamie, Vegetarismus – und wenige weitere Dinge (Tabelle S. 214). All dies war indes schon vor dieser Arbeit bekannt, und zwar nicht nur Spezialisten im Bereich Adventist Studies, sondern eigentlich jedem, der sich etwas mit Adventisten beschäftigt. Darüber hinaus bietet das Buch als Theoriebeitrag: eigentlich keinen.

Das heißt nicht, dass Feichtinger etwas grundlegend missverstanden hätte. Im Gegenteil, in mancher Hinsicht glänzt er geradezu durch Detailwissen; was er über adventistische Geschichte und Theologie referiert (S. 45–65), ist teilweise beeindruckend kenntnisreich und so gut wie alles korrekt.² Genauso

¹ Das Buch ist eine gekürzte und etwas überarbeitete Version einer Dissertation an der Universität Graz, 2015. In der Originalfassung war auch eine baptistische Gemeinde analysiert worden.

² Die wenigen Ungenauigkeiten tun nichts weiter zur Hauptsache und würden nur von Profis entdeckt: „aus anderen Denominationen“ (S. 46) – praktisch alle Milleriten stammten aus anderen

wie das Kapitel 3 (Selbstverständnis und Grenzziehungen der befragten Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten) stellen diese Abschnitte zumindest für Nicht-STA einen hilfreichen Abriss über Grunddaten adventistischer Spezifika aus der Feder eines Religionswissenschaftlers dar.

In der zweiten Buchhälfte (Kap. 4) lenkt der Verfasser dann den Fokus auf sein eigentliches Thema – den „Körper als Ressource von Zugehörigkeits- und Grenzziehungsprozessen“ bei den STA. Diese ca. 100 Seiten baut er im Wesentlichen aus dem Ertrag seiner empirischen Forschung auf: zwölf ausführliche Interviews, gepaart mit teilnehmender Beobachtung in einer österreichischen Ortsgemeinde mit knapp 200 Mitgliedern. (Während dies für einen vorwiegend historisch Forschenden zunächst wenig erscheinen mag, ist die dabei produzierte Textmenge für qualitativ-empirisch Arbeitende ähnlich wie für Exegeten angemessen.) Feichtinger möchte dabei so wenig voreingenommen wie möglich vorgehen, was grundsätzlich hilfreich ist – legt also trotz einiger Grundsatzgedanken zu Identität, Grenzziehung und Zugehörigkeit (Abschnitt 1.3) kein bereits existierendes Modell zugrunde. Andererseits: Dass er nach den Prinzipien der Grounded Theory vorgeht (Erklärungen S. 13 oben; ohne sie explizit zu nennen) ist zwar sinnvoll, führt aber schlussendlich hier zu einer Abwesenheit von Theorie-Einsichten, die wesentlich über das Beobachtete und Berichtete hinausgehen.

Verständlich ist die Themenwahl ja durchaus: Adventisten haben eine besondere Beziehung zum leiblichen Aspekt des Menschen (der Autor erwähnt die „herausragende Position“ des Körpers und des Umgangs mit ihm unter STA, der „innerhalb des christlichen Spektrums ... einzigartig“ sei; S. 11). Nahezu alle wesentlichen Themen werden dann angesprochen: Gesundheit, Krankheit, Heilung, die von adventistischer Seite gern zitierte Metapher vom Leib als dem „Tempel des Heiligen Geistes“, Sexualität, Alkohol, Tabak, Ernährung, Kleidung und „charismatische Körperpraktiken“ (die bei Adventisten überwiegend skeptisch betrachtet werden). Auch das Fasten, das bei Adventisten keine nennenswerte Rolle spielt, erhält ein eigenes Unterkapitel

Denominationen; Trinitätslehre (S. 49): Annahme nicht 1888, sondern ein Prozess erst ab ca. 1900; Desmond Ford (S. 52) wurde nicht ausgeschlossen, sondern ihm wurde die Beglaubigung als Pastor entzogen; nicht Ellen White definierte die „acht Ärzte“ (S. 114), sondern diese Formulierung ist spätere Wirkungsgeschichte ihres Schrifttums; „Sanctuary“ statt „Century“ in einem Buchtitel (S. 130 u. ö.).

(4.3.7), und eigenartigerweise hat sich das Thema Ehe gleich nach der Besprechung von Homosexualität zu einem weiteren Abschnitt entwickelt (4.3.3); hier wird stark auf Endogamie abgehoben, wobei der Bezug zum Oberthema Körperlichkeit eher schwach ist. (Verweise auf zwei Klassiker in den für dieses Kapitel relevanten Bereichen³ fehlen übrigens.)

Was folgt nun aus dieser langen Wanderung durch lokale adventistische Leib-Theologie und -Praxis? Die Feststellung, dass all diese Elemente als „Ressource“ an „Grenzziehungsprozessen“ beteiligt sind. Dies mag für theologisch und historisch weniger bewanderte Beobachter als Erkenntnis gelten; für Insider und solche, die den Adventismus schon kennen, enthält eine solche Feststellung zum einen wenig Neuigkeitswert, und zum zweiten drängt sich die Frage auf, ob das Ganze wirklich *ein* Thema ist – oder verschiedene. Denn dass Grenzziehungen zwischen Menschen, Gruppen, Kirchen, Völkern nicht nur möglich, sondern normal sind, wird man kaum bezweifeln können. Dass nun gerade an Praktiken und Vorstellungen, die sich auf den Körper beziehen, solche Grenzziehungen zum Vorschein kommen, ist zumindest im interkulturellen Vergleich wenig erstaunlich. Überdies funktioniert die Grenzziehung ja auch im adventistischen Kontext durchaus unterschiedlich: Teils werden Praktiken oder physische Dinge abgelehnt (Homosexualität, Alkohol, Tabak), teils reguliert (Sex *in* der Ehe, vegetarische Kost als *Empfehlung*, *schlichte* Kleidung); dahinter steht eine Vorstellung von Geschöpflichkeit und Gottesnähe, die durch theologische Überhöhung und spezifische Traditionen der Körperlichkeit zwar eine wichtige, aber keine zentrale Rolle zuweist (vgl. daher auch die untergeordnete Rolle des Fastens und die Skepsis gegenüber charismatischen Körperpraktiken). All diese Logiken über einen Kamm zu scheren funktioniert kaum, außer man versucht sie theologisch zu durchdringen und zu einer irgendwie gearteten Gesamtkonzeption zu synthetisieren – was der Autor jedoch weder tut noch plant.

Was dem Verfasser gelingt, ist die Darstellung einer Ethnographie österreichischer Adventisten, jedenfalls der Gemeinde, die er besucht und untersucht hat. Da „Adventisten in Österreich bisher kaum Beachtung gefunden haben“

³ Zur Sexualethik: Pearson, Michael. *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; zu Gesundheitsfragen: Reid, George W. *A Sound of Trumpets: Americans, Adventists, and Health Reform*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982.

(S. 12), kann dies als sein wesentlicher Beitrag gewertet werden. Dabei wird einerseits manch Allgemeines über diese Glaubensgemeinschaft – vermittelt durch die Stimmen der Interviewten – notiert (z.B. im Hinblick auf Bibelverständnis, Gottesbeziehung, Sabbat, Endzeit, Blick auf andere Kirchen und Christen – Kap. 3), was weniger überrascht, da fast alles im Grunde den internationalen adventistischen Standarddiskurs widerspiegelt. Andererseits kommt auch etwas Lokalkolorit österreichischer Gläubiger zur Geltung, was der Arbeit einen Wert verleiht, der über reine Aufarbeitung von Sekundärliteratur hinausgeht.⁴

Gleichzeitig ist das zaghafte bis fehlende Interpretieren für Leser eine echte Herausforderung. Ja, Ethnographen sollen Gruppen nicht bewerten (im Sinne einer urteilenden oder gar moralischen Einordnung). Im Vergleich mit Holger Jebens' Studie über Adventisten in Papua-Neuguinea,⁵ die mit einer befremdenden Kritik seiner Studiensubjekte endet, wahrt Feichtinger in geradezu vornehmer Weise professionelle Distanz. Eine Interpretation wäre jedoch aufgrund der Fülle des schon vor der Studie vorhandenen Materials gerade hier wünschenswert gewesen – etwa wie bei Eva Kellers Ethnographie über Adventisten in Madagaskar,⁶ die herausarbeitet, dass die von ihr studierten Gläubigen eine Art Gruppe lokaler Intellektueller darstellen, deren hauptsächlichste Attraktivität darin besteht, dass sie sich als ständig Forschende verstehen.

⁴ Drei Beispiele aus Glaubenspraxis, Theologie und Individualethik: Feichtinger erwähnt den sehr rationalen Zugang zur Bibel und zur eigenen Zugehörigkeit zu den STA (S. 71); eine Art „unsichtbare Ökumene des persönliche Glaubens“ (S. 76), bei der nichtadventistische Gläubige dann als echte Christen angesehen werden, wenn sie im Gegensatz zu „Traditionschristen“ eine persönliche Gottesbeziehung pflegen; und eine Beobachtung an Gottesdienstbesucherinnen – dass das Tragen von Röcken mehrheitlicher Standard sei (S. 192), was in der westlichen Welt sonst nicht so geäußert werden kann; dieser Sachverhalt wird dann sehr differenziert diskutiert: Bedeutungsebenen eines solchen Handelns können sich über die Generationen signifikant verschieben und somit ähnlich wie beim muslimischen Kopftuch unterschiedlich gemeint und interpretiert werden.

⁵ Jebens, Holger. *Wege zum Himmel. Katholiken, Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten und der Einfluß der traditionellen Religion in Pairundu (Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea)*. Mundus Reihe Ethnologie 86. Bonn: Holos, 1995.

⁶ Keller, Eva. *The Road to Clarity: Seventh-day Adventism in Madagascar*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Rezension

So bleibt abschließend zu konstatieren, dass das Buch durch seine Faktenpräsentation einen Themenbereich abdeckt, der bisher eine Forschungslücke darstellte, dabei indessen weiterhin beträchtlichen Raum lässt für interpretative Ergänzungen.

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Book Review

Tihomir Lazić. *Towards an Adventist Version of Communitio Ecclesiology: Remnant in Koinonia. Pathway for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue.* Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 314 pp. (e-book version)

Professor Mark Thomas of Oxford University, who is one of the editors of the series in which Tihomir Lazić's book *Towards an Adventist Version of Communitio Ecclesiology: Remnant in Koinonia* is published, has high praise for it: "The book is a groundbreaking and highly original piece of work that seeks to bring the distinctive ideas of Seventh-day Adventist theology into dialogue with one of the dominant theological themes of modern ecclesiology: *koinonia* or *communion*" (p. vii). Having read Lazić's book, I concur with this appraisal. In 2016 the author, a Seventh-day Adventist theologian of Serbian origin, who now teaches Systematic Theology at Newbold College of Higher Education (Binfield, Berks., UK), earned his doctoral degree with the dissertation on which this book is based.

The main thesis of the book is that Adventist ecclesiology would greatly benefit from integrating its remnant-concept with the koinonia-concept that is an important aspect of many present-day non-Adventist ecclesiologies. The book has a clear three-part structure. The first part deals with the remnant concept as it originated, developed and functions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The second part introduces the koinonia concept, which is a key element in many contemporary ecclesiologies, while the third part of the book argues that an integration of these two concepts would greatly enhance the ecclesiology of Seventh-day Adventists.

Part 1

In the first part the author explains how the remnant concept developed in conjunction with the key Adventist doctrines, in particular the Sabbath, the three angels' messages and the conviction of the imminence of Christ's Second Coming, with the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary as its "main her-

meneutical horizon" (p. 15). He argues that Adventists need a strong ecclesiological engagement beyond their focus on the remnant-concept, if they want their church to retain unity, maintain relevancy and have a more clearly defined relationship with other religious bodies (p. 23). Although the concept of the remnant is accompanied by other apocalyptic motifs (e.g. Elijah, Enoch, 3 angels), it remains the most important ecclesiological motif. It is mostly seen from a functional perspective: the remnant must proclaim its specific message and, thus, is mostly task-driven. Lazić states that an ecclesiology that is primarily task-driven is not adequate, and he points to the importance of the ontological perspective: the church must emerge from its essence, not just from what it *does*, but from what it *is* (p. 76). Adventism's predominant remnant ecclesiology suffers from four major deficiencies. Firstly, 'a lack of systematic reasoning': the remnant concept fails to articulate some other important ecclesiological ideas (p. 106). Secondly, its definition of "church" neglects the ontological perspective (p. 107). Thirdly, the SDA church operates with a reductionist (logocentric, propositional) concept of truth (pp. 109–112). Truth, however, is also experiential and the Spirit leads in further discovery of truth (pp. 116–117). However, the most important problem in Adventism ecclesiology is the pneumatological deficit. In SDA theology, the emphasis is mostly on the Father and the Son, with insufficient acknowledgment of the work of the Holy Spirit (p. 120).

This pneumatological deficiency has a number of causes, as e.g. the false dichotomy between mind and emotions and the failure to recognize the difference between the transrational and the irrational (pp. 122–123). The pneumatological deficiency has some serious consequences; among them is over-institutionalization, the tendency to see unity in terms of uniformity, the tendency towards centralization and the creation of a hierarchy, and a lack of a sense of God's presence in our everyday-life (p. 124).

Perhaps Lazić over-emphasizes the predominance of the remnant concept somewhat and does not give full due to other aspects of Adventism's (admittedly, meagre) ecclesiology. He could also have indicated that in current Adventism, several definitions of the remnant compete with each other.¹

¹ See Hasel, Frank M. "The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Theology." Angel Manuel Rodriguez, ed. *Towards a Theology of the Remnant*. Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 2009, 159–180.

However, this first part of the book serves as a solid basis for what follows. Lazić's analysis of the implications of giving such strong priority to the church as a remnant, which has as its main task to "herald" a special message, is quite convincing.

Part 2

The second part of the book focuses on *koinonia* ecclesiology and builds on the central premise that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would do well to supplement its current ecclesiological approach by developing its own version of a *koinonia* or *communio* ecclesiology. This type of ecclesiology has arisen in the ecumenical climate of the late 20th and early 21st century and has become the predominant ecclesiological paradigm (p. 146). This ecclesiological approach gives due attention to the communion between the three Persons of the Trinity, the vertical communion between God and man, the horizontal communion between the believers, and the communion between the global and the local church. Lazić argues that merging the *koinonia* aspect with the remnant aspect has great potential. It is a biblical and enriched concept of church, as it touches on the *esse* of the church (pp. 153 ff.).

Of particular importance is the discussion of the relationship between the church and the Trinity. The idea that the church is an *imitatio* of the Trinity must be rejected. This is a path that leads to mere speculation, since human beings do not know enough about the inner workings of the Trinity (p. 183). However, a participatory vision, in which the believer becomes an active participant in the triune life of God, offers much promise. Adventism's traditional Christ-centeredness must be enriched pneumatologically (p. 186). Lazić admits that Adventists are generally hesitant to take experience as a starting point for doctrine (p. 188), but believes that some elements of divine mystery are only known through the Spirit (p. 190). He points to the work of the Spirit *within* us (the fruits of the Spirit), and *through* us (the gifts of the Spirit), which form the basis for the ministries in the church, and *around* us (the impact of the Spirit outside of the church, on society and on the earth) (pp. 193–200).

Part 3

In the third part of the book the author faces the awesome task of bringing the remnant and *koinonia* concepts together. Perhaps not all readers will feel that he fully succeeds in accomplishing this, and/or that his discourse remains too

vague and does not provide enough avenues to produce the desired integration. It seems to me that this evaluation might be understandable but would be unfair. To deal with the many topics that relate to this integration, in any kind of exhaustive way, would be far beyond the scope of one monograph. There remains a lot of work for others to pursue various aspects of this undertaking, but in this book Lazić is giving a valuable overview of where the integration might become visible.

In this connection the structure of the church is an important facet. Neither democracy nor hierarchy can serve as the ideal. This book suggests a middle position that focuses on communion – as proposed by Yves Congar as the better approach (p. 239). No secular organizational model can serve as blueprint, since it does not recognize the underlying spiritual reality of the church. The church is “Spirit-mediated koinonia with God” (p. 242).

Lazić endorses the view of Raoul Dederen (d. 2016), a prominent Adventist systematic theologian, about the relationship between the global church and the local church: “The local visible ekklesia is the whole church expressed locally in a particular time and space” (p. 244). In theory the Adventist Church confesses the priority of the local church, but in reality the global church requires obedience and uniformity. The manner in which the issue of the ordination of female pastors was handled in 2015 during the church’s world congress in Dallas (USA) illustrates this. Lazić comments optimistically: The “divide between Adventist theological ideals and administrative reality can be reduced by acquiring and implementing a more Spirit-sensitive theological outlook” (p. 245). In the context of the ministries of the church, a more “dynamic guidance of the Spirit” will overcome the deficiencies in this area.

The section about challenges the church faces with regard to the interpretation of divine truth is in my view somewhat disappointing. Lazić enumerates four channels the Adventist Church has as its disposal: (1) a number of hermeneutical principles that the church has adopted; (2) the gradual emergence of a creed-like summary of the church’s Fundamental Beliefs; (3) The global Sabbath School system which assists in maintaining unity in the interpretation of Scripture; (4) decisions by the world church during a General Conference session. This, Lazić states, does not provide a satisfactory theological basis and does not give an adequate role to the community. But how can this communal, Spirit-led role be actualized? Lazić suggests that there should perhaps be some kind of “teaching office”, with experts who are more gifted

in the area of interpretation than others. Is this perhaps the role of a Biblical Research Institute-type institution? This section raises more questions than providing satisfactory answers.

In this final chapter there is also a discussion about the impact of a Spirit-driven approach to the church's mission, which should be God-centered rather than church-centered, with more communal and relational modes of outreach (p. 261). There are also a few paragraphs on the need for a greater sensibility for what the Spirit does outside the Adventist Church, and a greater willingness to learn from others (p. 262), while sharing the Adventist viewpoints with them (p. 263). Attention is further given to the need for a willingness to reform the church, with a balance between a *reversionist* and a *revisionist* attitude, in recognition of the fact that the church – and that includes the SDA Church – always is *semper reformanda* (p. 268).

General Remarks and Evaluation

Each chapter of this book is followed by a large number of endnotes and a separate bibliography. I would have found it much easier to consult the notes if they had been presented as footnotes. I also wonder whether one integrated bibliography would not have sufficed. The notes and the bibliography attest to the wide reading of the author in all the different areas that are discussed in his book. I noted an unfortunate mistake in the reference to Dr Barry D. Oliver, who is correctly listed in the index, but in a number of bibliographical references his last name and first name are reversed (e.g. p. 291). Of course, I appreciated the fact that there are numerous references to some of my own publications. I missed any reference to Dr Richard Rice's important book *Believing, Behaving, Belonging* (Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), which in many ways affirms the thesis of Lazić that the remnant concept of the church needs to be supplemented by the koinonia ideal.

Towards an Adventist Version of Communio Ecclesiology: Remnant in Koinonia is a book that deserves a wide reading among Adventist opinion makers. Not all will, however, embrace it enthusiastically. Lazić has, in particular, been inspired by a number of prominent Roman Catholic theologians (e.g. Yves Congar, Joseph Ratzinger) and the *Lumen Gentium* documents that issued from the Second Vatican Council. The strong anti-Catholic sentiment, that still characterizes the more conservative streams in Adventism, will prejudice many Adventist readers against the book.

Book Review

Unfortunately, there are some (or even many?) among the church's administrators, and other people with influence, who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinitarian emphasis of the book will not go down well with them. A very practical hindrance in reaching a wide readership is the exceptionally high price (even as an e-book). Nonetheless, I hope that Denis Fortin, professor of historical theology at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, MI, USA), is right when he predicts: "This is a valuable study that will make a lasting contribution to Adventist theology and will help situate Seventh-day Adventism within the wider Christian world" (p. xv).

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Book Review

Jirí Moskala and John C. Peckham, eds. *God's Character and the Last Generation*. Nampa: Pacific Press, 2018. 286 pp.

The editors of the volume at hand – a professor of Old Testament exegesis and theology and a professor of theology and Christian philosophy both at Andrews University – undertook the job of editing fourteen papers written by twelve educators of the Theological Seminary of Andrews University into one volume as an answer to the challenge of Last Generation Theology. The book, however, is not a polemic against Last Generation Theology but a constructive analysis of the issues raised by this theological perspective.

According to the followers of Last Generation Theology, the last generation of Christians are justifying God by overcoming all sins and thus reproducing the character of Christ. Ever since M.L. Andreasen developed a framework for this theology, many Seventh-day Adventists have attempted to make this dream a reality. To be honest, the desired goal has not yet been achieved clearly. Anyone who has taken it seriously, has usually become frustrated, anxious, or fled into hypocrisy. Many of the authors of this volume have experienced this trauma or have experienced the negative effects of Last Generation Theology among their loved ones. This is what motivated them to investigate the Bible and consider the writings of Ellen G. White within the framework of the Adventist view of the great controversy, in order to see what these documents reveal about the settling of sin. Along with that they also investigate the correlations between eschatology and ethics.

The differences between the authors of the essays in this volume and the followers of Last Generation Theology are obvious from their premises. While Last Generation Theology emphasizes how God uses the last generation of Christians to justify Himself before the created world, the authors of this book, on the other hand, emphasize what God does for those who devote themselves to their Redeemer in order to reach the desired goal (Phil. 1:6). The former puts the individual into an impossible situation, and the latter strengthens the spirit of a sober mind and love (1 Jn. 4:17–18).

The authors of this well-structured and well edited volume outline the conceptual framework: What is the great controversy? (John C. Peckham) What is Last Generation Theology and its historical roots? (Woodrow Whidden) What is sin: the corruption of the tree, or the immaturity of the fruit? (Martin Hanna) With the exception of Christ, we are all sinners, and that means three things: humanity is under God's condemnation; human will leans against evil; and humanity is enslaved in depravity against God's will. Humans can emerge from this state as a result of a process that comes to fulfilment at the time of the glorification of Christ at His second coming.

From the following chapters, we learn that God begins the work of restoration by settling His own relationship with man. This is what justification by faith is about, which the author of the chapter (Richard M. Davidson) has thoroughly explored both historically and biblically. This is followed by chapters such as justification and sanctification, which is a gift and a task for life at the same time (Denis Fortin) or how and when will we be suitable to be citizens of the kingdom of God? What kind of lifestyle should be pursued by those who will be members of the last generation (Ante Jerončić)? There are several components of apocalyptic identity but each one of these focuses on the person of Jesus Christ. He is the measure, the example, therefore by following him, obeying him, we can experience our apocalyptic identity. It is safer to place ourselves in the arms of the Almighty God than to worry about whether one can achieve the desired goal, whether one is able to meet the requirements of perfection.

Subsequent chapters concentrate on the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. Jesus's role is twofold in our life. He is our saviour first and then our role model (Darius W. Jankiewicz). Consequently, He became similar to us in everything, yet there was a fundamental difference between His human nature and our human nature: and that is we needed a saviour but he did not need to be saved because, unlike us, there was no sin in Him. What did Jesus accomplish on the cross (Felix H. Cortez)? Some Christians and believers of non-Christian religions, as well as non-believers see the cross as weakness, therefore they reject it. And yet! The cross is the highest revelation of God's wisdom and power. The essay of Jirí Moskala concerns the role and meaning of Christ's atoning ministry. According to Last Generation Theology, God was not sufficiently justified in the atoning ministry of Jesus Christ. God obtains

full justification by calling a remnant of the fallen and deepest-sunk generation in sin out, by whom the beauty of His character is most perfectly reflected. By doing so, however, Last Generation Theology devalues the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ to emphasise unduly the importance of the last generation's role in the great controversy. On the contrary, the perfection of Christians is realised "in Christ", not apart from Him. Christians deny worldly desires to live soberly, justly, and graciously in this world as the outcome of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11–15). If we have a reconciled relationship with God in Christ, we are ready for His second coming.

The last group of essays discuss Last Generation Theology in the context of final events. Ranko Stefanović argues from the perspective of Revelation's teaching on the 144,000, and concludes that perfection does not mean that one lives sinlessly in a sinful body. Ellen G. White did not teach that we can stand without a mediator in the final test, having developed a sinless character. If we live in close fellowship with God through Jesus Christ daily, there is no reason to doubt what will happen to us in the last days. In his second essay, Jiri Moskala investigates five myths that occupy the views of some Adventists. Regarding this, he speaks of sealing God's people and he points out that the seal is a sign of protection. In fact, the New Testament speaks about not one but two seals: (1) when we accepted Jesus Christ, God placed the seal of the Holy Spirit on our hearts (Eph. 1:13–14), (2) at the time of the final trial, when the Spirit of God withdraws from the earth, all who have taken the pledge of the Holy Spirit will continue to enjoy the protection of God.

Is the second coming of Jesus Christ delayed? (Jo Ann Davidson) Does it make sense to talk about this, if God has not revealed the time of the Second Coming? Can we say that the time of Jesus' coming depends on the last generation reaching the desired degree of perfection? Instead of speculative reflections on times and occasions, should we not shout with the apostle, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)? The volume concludes with a second paper by John C. Peckham that introduces the reader to the victory of God's love. God is love. These are Ellen G. White's first and last three words in the book series on the great controversy. God Himself declares His love through the redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ, He does not expect us, fallen people, to justify Him.

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The volume provides a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing Seventh-day Adventism as it encounters Last Generation Theology. The extraordinary value of the volume is that the individual contributors address these issues eirenicly, as they interact with theological positions and presuppositions which differ from their own.

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Book Review

Barry Beitzel. *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels.* Bellingham: Lexham, 2017. 583 pp.

Barry J. Beitzel is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Semitic languages at Trinity Evangelical School in Deerfield, Illinois. He has a special interest in Near Eastern geography. He also has authored *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible* (Moody Press, 2009). The present work with its interest in geography falls into a similar category. This volume deals with the locations mentioned in the four canonical gospels and partially feels almost like a travel guide to Israel. It makes the life of Jesus visual and enables the reader to experience the footsteps of Jesus.

Fourteen experienced scholars have been asked to contribute 48 chapters to the book. In the introduction, the editor himself describes the main philosophy of the volume as: “The conceptual premise of this commentary holds that geography (space) is a legitimate, if commonly overlooked, hermeneutical category” (p. xiii). Since geography is often not considered of primary importance in commentaries, Beitzel hopes to make a lasting contribution that will deepen the understanding of the Gospel message. He observes Jesus making a connection between his message and the surrounding space, so the question “Where?” needs to be examined. Additionally, this volume makes note of the clear difference in Jesus’ words and teaching in Galilee, as opposed to Jerusalem and Judea. Thus, a “sensitivity to how Jesus tailored his message to particular geographical regions” (p. xv) is one of the expected contributions of the book.

This volume follows Jesus chronologically in the gospels from his birth to his crucifixion and resurrection. At least one textual reference from the gospels is connected to each chapter, and parallel texts by the Synoptics are provided. Introductory chapters deal with Bethlehem and birth narratives. Besides the geography of Bethlehem, authors deal with guest houses in the 1st century AD, shepherds, magi, the census of Augustus, king Herod and

other textual details related to the gospel locations. Thus, it becomes obvious, that social, cultural, archeological and historical data inform and enrich this book. Chapters follow on Nazareth, wilderness, Cana, Capernaum, Sychar, Bethesda, hill of Moreh, Sea of Galilee, harbors, gentile territories, Bethsaida, Caesarea Philippi, Jerusalem, pool of Siloam, Temple mount, Gethsemane and Golgotha.

Besides chapters dealing with locations, the following subjects are covered in separate chapters: crowds, fishing, storms, pig husbandry, feedings of multitudes, forgiveness, weather, feast of Tabernacles, Passover, metaphors, oil, wine and grain. All these subjects help to visualize locations in the context of the gospels and to deepen the knowledge of the various gospel scenes. It is clear that by including these issues, this book goes beyond a pure geographical interest, and combines it with the real life of the 1st century AD. Chapter 15 situates Jesus' teaching in the context of Galilee, while chapter 34 deals with the different situation in Judea. Interested readers will benefit from the richness of issues covered in the volume. A subject index and a thorough Scripture index enhance the book. Every chapter ends with its own bibliography for further reading.

Even though the book mentions space in the context of geography, today's literary theory deals with space on a level that goes far beyond geography, culture or history. Literary criticism has taught us to imagine space like a stage in a theater, which gives us access to the specific living space of acting figures with all its contrasts and boundaries. Currently, probably the most complete exegetical methodology for the exploration of space is provided by Sönke Finern and Jan Rügge-meier in their book *Methoden der neutestamentlichen Exegese* (Tübingen: Francke, 2016, see esp. pp. 228–235). For the purpose of analyzing space in biblical narratives they suggest exploring its intensity, order of presentation, connections to other spaces, changes in space, actions in space, overstepping of space boundaries, relations of time and space, as well as compatibility with the world of the original readers.

Such deeper literary exploration of a given space opens a new dimension to the gospel locations in their specific context. On the other hand, in Beitzel's book nuances and distinctions of the separate gospel accounts are blurred and lost. His final product is a kind of harmonization in which different writings are brought together. Thus, locations and their spaces are not utilized for the purpose of providing the distinctive theological profile of each gospel and

their specific messages to their contemporaries, which is a pity in a commentary on the gospels.

Overall, it is a recommended book for pastors and preachers who need some geographical and cultural information. Interested travelers to the Holy Land, as well as lay people wishing to collect some foundational knowledge of the places mentioned in the gospels will benefit from reading Beitzel's new volume. This book could also be useful for beginning theology students entering into the field of gospel explorations.

For deeper studies on space issues in the gospels, the book would need to be supplemented with additional sources based on literary criticism, as well with theological works presenting the distinctiveness of the messages of the each gospel author. More maps and photos from the localities could have enriched the book, but it is actually not intended to replace an atlas. Finally, this volume should not be judged according to what it is not bringing, but what it actually achieves. It wishes to be a supplement to the geographical information often missing in the major commentaries, and that purpose is achieved.

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Book Review

Matthew J. Korpman. *Saying No to God: A Radical Approach to Reading the Bible Faithfully.* Quoir, 2019. 356 pp.

Matthew J. Korpman “holds four bachelor degrees in Theology, Archaeology, Philosophy, and Screenwriting” and “is currently pursuing his Master of Arts in Religion at Yale Divinity School” (back cover of the book). He is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; his four B.A. degrees were all received from La Sierra University.¹ He has “recently graduated with a Master of Arts in Religion in Second Temple Judaism.”

The (self)estimation of being “a rising biblical scholar, itinerant preacher and a theological arsonist,” found as the first statement both on the back cover of the book as well as on the author’s homepage, is underlined by data and facts.²

A religious stumbling block on the back cover, a newly-formulated beatitude printed in capital letters, reads BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO DEFY GOD. What is meant by this phrase, of course, is explained in the author’s book, which according to the last sentence in its foreword by Jory Micah “will both challenge and revolutionize your faith” (p. 17). In which way?

Besides a sequence of eleven recommendations for the book by theologians and writers (pp. 1–5), we find a list of citations, chapter by chapter (pp. 347–354)³, and personal acknowledgements (pp. 355–356).

¹ Seventh-day Adventist University in California. Audio-Interviews with Korpman give 2018 as the date of graduation.

² Cf. his list of publications; see also Korpman’s article in the present issue: “Forgotten Scriptures: Allusions and Quotations by Ellen White to the Apocrypha.” Unfortunately, no CV and no timeline of his academic studies are found on his homepage.

³ We find a wide range of authors and works. Two authors might appear to be over-represented: Peter Rollins and Peter Enns, but not to the detriment of the book. And there seems to be a tendency towards traditional Jewish biblical interpretation and modern Jewish understanding – both perhaps unknown to Christian readers, sometimes provocative but mostly helpful.

The content is presented in two main parts: "Confrontation" (pp. 25–146) and "Incarnation" (pp. 157–341) linked by the intermission "Realization" (pp. 149–154). The two main parts are divided into 17 chapters, subdivided into sections, both with informative and provocative headings and written in an accessible style.

A three-fold introduction (pp. 25–33) informs the reader of the "journey ahead" (p. 31) – dipping the reader right from the beginning into ice-cold, or if you prefer, boiling-hot water: "When was the last time that you said *no* to God?"⁴ The author admits: "That's a strange question, I'm sure" (p. 25), just to put the same question again, in a radicalized form: "When was the last time that you were *glad* that you disagreed with God?", because you have "felt that it was the morally right thing to do? It's probably a radically new idea for you. God wants you to fight with him? The answer is yes." (p. 26)

'Doing the morally right thing', is the basic pattern and key-idea of the book although not the leading word or key phrase. The fundamental question is radicalized: "Was it ever acceptable to reject something God said? Or to be more audacious: is it ever *the morally right thing* to tell the Almighty no?" (p. 30)

The book's underlying concept is that of a basic and complete difference or opposition between two widely held positions, defined as (1) "Traditional Religion": "God must always be obeyed. ... God's word is an unquestioning law" – and (2) "the Bible": "Always be ready to say no to God. ... God's word is an instructive guide. If we disobey it for the right reasons, we are faithful saints." (p. 19)

The attempt of Korpman's book is "that it seeks to recover, polish and remind us of a very specific and overlooked root of our faith that lays at the very foundation" of many biblical stories, a root of faith which is so radically different "that it can seem as if it is the root to an entirely different faith. What is that paradoxical root? *God's personal invitation, in Scripture, for us to fight and ultimately, to say 'No!' ... to God*"⁵(p. 33) This indeed is a confronting approach, a provocative idea and thesis; is the attempt convincing?

⁴ Within quotations italics are always in the original.

⁵ Ellipsis in the original.

Part One

Each chapter is concerned with a person, often called “character” taken from biblical history or narrations – and/or with specific key-texts for the issue under scrutiny.

The chapters, each divided into numerous unnumbered sections, describe and deal with such topics as:

“Doubt everything” (pp. 35–48). The religious experience of doubting is understood and presented here as Christian normality (pp. 35–42), a biblical necessity (pp. 36–38), a religious positivity teaching us humility.

God’s spoken word vs. his true will (pp. 63–76). Section 1 contains Old Testament commandments against murder (pp. 64–66); section 2 portrays the resistance of the Canaanite woman towards Jesus’ unwillingness to help her, as being victorious in the end and resulting in her being praised for having true faith (pp. 68–72); section 3 describes Mary’s similar reaction towards her son Jesus (pp. 72–74) in that she “doesn’t obey his wishes” (p. 73).

“Saying NO to God” (pp. 77–91). Three situations with three ‘heroes of faith’ are depicted as biblical examples and evidence for this radical attitude towards God: Abraham in a salvation-‘deal’ with God in favour of the righteous inhabitants of Sodom, Jacob in his struggle with “men and God”, being renamed “Israel/God-Fighter”, and Moses who ‘forces’ God not to destroy His people and not to withdraw His presence from Israel’s future.

The basic theological conflict in the Bible: Jesus vs. Moses = God vs. God (pp. 109–125). The author’s reference to Jesus commenting on the commandments, given by God through Moses, opens the religious discussion and theological debate about God’s word and His true will (pp. 109–114); this leads to the fundamental question about the Bible (pp. 114–125), Scripture’s inspiration and authority: “The issue at stake is of authority” (p. 124).

“Becoming like God” (pp. 127–146). The previous stories and insights are summarized in this chapter and brought to the pastoral focus of their assumed religious sense, which ultimately is understood as a “test of faith” (p. 129): God “is attempting to provoke his servants in each case” (p. 133); God confronts them with the final aim that in those persons’ ‘strange’ personal experience with God “not only were they tasked with *knowing God*, but with *becoming like him*.” – “... the biblical heroes prove that they are *friends of God*” (p. 134). In a similar manner, Christian believers experience the Holy

Spirit: "Its purpose has always been to grow us closer in our relationship to God, to inch us closer to the image of love." (p. 144)

"Pyrotheology", literally meaning a "fiery talk about God"; the term is taken from Peter Rollins, an Irish theologian. Korpman adopts Rollins' analogy of theological controversy in the church of today with the conflict about circumcision in the early Christian community (p. 151). In this perspective the following chapters "will look at various issues that are (or *were*) controversial and divisive in the church." (p. 154) – The author urges his readers to definitely say NO to all of the described negative attitudes and actions in terms of morality and sociality. What are these issues?

Part Two

"Orthodoxy" (pp. 157–175). Korpman takes the Letters of John as biblical examples of and evidence for how devastating the conviction of absolute certainty in theological matters can work out (pp. 160–167). He calls the biblical texts on divorce (pp. 172–174) "an even better biblical example" (p. 172) against orthodoxy. So "orthodoxy doesn't work" (p. 175).

Other chapters deal *inter alia* with the case of slavery ("Prejudice": pp. 177–194), patriarchy and sexism ("Patriarchy": pp. 195–213) and "Homophobia" (pp. 215–231). Depicting common prejudices and defending equality among mankind, both force us to stop discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community.

In the chapter about "Violence" (pp. 232–252), Korpman provides us with numerable texts demonstrating the violence of God's ancient Israel while invading the promised land or defending it with military means. Here, Korpman compares Israel to ISIS (pp. 235–237); he then describes the non-violent side of God and the Bible with many texts (pp. 239–243) speaking of peace and reconciliation as God's ultimate goal. This leads with necessity to the methodological question of "establishing a criteria (sic!)" (pp. 247–248) and the religious search for "finding God" (pp. 248–252) in terms of theology and ethics/morality.

In an important argumentative chapter ("We aren't always right": pp. 309–331), the author treats biblical persons as paradigms for saying NO to God – and yet not being right in doing so (Jonah, Miriam and Aaron, Peter, Jesus's mother Mary, Israel, Nehemiah and "the adversary"). From these non-positive experiences of saying NO to God a negative list (pp. 327–329)

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of immorality is drawn. We are confronted with a list of moral and positive “motivations of those who fought God and won” (p. 329) with the necessary need “to have our thoughts be molded by God’s and our ways to imitate his own. ... by remembering his character” (p. 331) i.e. love shown and offered to us in Jesus Christ.

Debate and Evaluation

Although published with a challenging title and subtitle, filled with clear judgments and sharp verdicts regarding the Bible and the Church, the book tries to bridge a gap in several respects: first, between ancient biblical texts and our modern times; second, between conservative and progressive Christians, trying to bring both out of the religious trench they have dug; third, very obviously, bringing different positions within the Bible together.

The book is primarily intended and written for religious people, mostly ‘typical-traditional’ Christians in the USA, especially evangelicals, arguing mainly against Fundamentalists. But it is addressed also to the liberal branch of Christianity and to un-churched and non-religious people in the secular world as well, and can be helpful for these groups too. With its complexity reflecting the complexity of the Bible it reaches out to those willing to read and understand, and to people of good-will open to saying YES to the book’s aim – and to act in the suggested direction.

Approach and Outcome

What Korpman does and suggests is nowadays called “relecture” in the fields of literature and theology. He comes up with a wide range of texts concerning mainly ‘unknown’ or unnoticed⁶ biblical texts, and he practices an ‘alternative reading’ which is his version of a “radical and faithful” ‘plain reading’ of the Bible. It is indeed necessary and helpful to have a theological key to open the understanding of contemporary readers to what the original author of the biblical text meant – as far as this is possible. And moreover, social awareness and theological care are deeply needed especially when the application of biblical positions to modern moral issues is at stake, inasmuch as lives matter, people matter – humanity matters.

⁶ Mainly related to in the practical way of church-life: “Never heard in sermons;” “seldom taught in Bible-classes” etc.

The author clearly and correctly sees and identifies ‘differences of time’ within the biblical canon, details which according to his judgment sometimes lead to apparent transformation and alteration of former thoughts and ideas. But instead of dealing with questions, assumedly reflected in the text itself, Korpman prefers to go to the scene ‘behind’ or ‘above’ the text: to God Himself. The explanatory outcome varies: God in accommodation to the time or God in disguise, even God wearing the devil’s mask; God lying to men with an ultimate positive goal: God provoking the faithful believer by testing their faith. This approach is unique. I would rather stay with the biblical text itself and the hints therein to understand the aim of the writer addressing the recipients, the faith-congregation.

To Korpman’s definition of “faith” as ultimately a matter of “relationship”, namely “friendship” with God I fully and wholeheartedly agree. But: The question of a better or worse relationship with God is not the underlying foundation on which the biblical texts describe the various events and diverse experiences adduced by Korpman; Korpman’s approach is at odds with the way this religious literature itself deals with the observed problem of apparent difference yet nevertheless unity over time.⁷ He seeks to give answers on a ‘religious-experience level’ with a kind of psychological logic in the form of a ‘dogmatic Theo-Logy’, where as far as I can see, the texts he explains that way do not even raise specific questions along these lines.

Clarity of Categories and Criteria

There is no lack of clarity concerning the author’s theological explanation of controversial moral issues on the basis of ‘controversial’ biblical texts. In addition, Korpman looks for Bible-based criteria to sustain his results. He comes up with a list of seven negative moral and religious attitudes drawn from the described experiences, understood as “motivations” of the various persons (pp. 327–328), together with a positive counterpart-list (p. 329). But: Hermeneutically speaking, it is not sufficient to have a list of morally correct behaviours allied with religiously correct explanations of “the character of God” (pp. 330–331). This does not yet make a decisive criterion out of a mixed biblical result, at its best it is helpful pastoral advice.

⁷ I.e. theological and other differences within the Bible, yet unity of the canon, becoming *The Book of Christianity*.

In my view the clarity of a consistent exegetical approach is somewhat missing in some instances. It seems to me that more often than not the method used is what I would designate as morally and theologically 'modern-dogmatic'. Far from him being a 'Fundamentalist' or 'Biblicist' I find Korpman in his book, with all respect, tending to be a 'Biblical Facticist' – not naïve of course, but on a higher level – inasmuch as he looks for religiously interpreted 'facts above the texts' instead of dealing hermeneutically with the biblical texts as such.

Pointing the reader to God, to God's true character, to love, as Korpman continuously does, is biblical and Christian at the same time; this is a correct explanation and application of the Bible, both in terms of theology and morality. But compared to biblical Christian theology, especially Christology (Paul; Mark; John and others), this is not deep enough and thus not good enough.

As to the clarity of theological hermeneutics, Korpman explains a lot, with a broad and deep knowledge of contemporary and ancient theology; quite often he adopts specific views from Jewish tradition or modern Jewish theologians. But if you look at the details I am sorry to say that his first and ultimate interest does not seem to lie in an in-depth understanding of the specific time and special situation of a biblical text; nor is he interested in the text as literature, taking into consideration the specific form in which a message was delivered or taking into account the assumed genuine input of the biblical author to his audience. As a consequence, Korpman does not ask such questions as: To what end, for what reasons, with what specific concern is the present message given to the assumed original recipients?

In other words, I would have appreciated a more 'radical' hermeneutical approach, implementing hermeneutics as the science of understanding, especially the understanding of ancient words, texts, literature, works of art etc. In my understanding, a methodological-historical approach is needed, not only a 'historic' religious explanation of a single event or a singular existential experience.

"Saying No to God", in precise 'limited' understanding: saying NO to specific biblical texts as a basis for correct Christian morality, is no new or modern concept; but it is urgently needed. This is described convincingly by Korpman in his book. In a consistent use of the historical approach one comes to a similar conclusion: Where a biblical author or text cannot pass the

test from the biblical core-message there is no necessity – not even a religious need – to agree and say YES to it. Some theologians call this access “Sachkritik” stating by this expression that the “fact” from which we execute the “critique” derives from inside the Bible, not from outside: the criterion is taken from the theological core and centre of Biblical-Christian theology. Where a biblical author or text does not rise to his own theological standards or to the biblical core-standard respectively we will and must not ‘obey’.

Regarding *a closer textual-exegetical look*, I see for instance Mal. 1:10f. more open to various possibilities of translating the Hebrew original than just negatively stating the dogmatic presuppositions of the different Bible versions by Korpman (pp. 289–292). And I cannot see from a close reading of the Bible itself that Nehemiah acted against God’s expressed will and word (pp. 323–325) when he built the wall – demonstrating the need of re-establishing Israel’s religious-national identity after the exile. And perhaps: Abraham’s ‘deal’ with God about Sodom is more a YES to himself as being a “blessing to all” (Gen. 12:3) than a NO to God. And Korpman never comments on the context of his beloved formula “test/doubt everything” (1Thess. 5:21; pp. 36–37). The context speaks of actual prophetic utterances (1Thess. 5:19–20). So perhaps, this biblical appeal and ‘program’ of “testing” a ‘heavenly’ message is more limited than Korpman suggests.

Despite these examples of my objections to his exegetical and ‘dogmatic’ treatment of texts and my request concerning the hermeneutical approach of Korpman, I fully agree with his results concerning Bible-based morality and Christian attitude towards the debated moral and social issues and challenges described in part two of his book. I say YES to “saying NO” to the list of items and issues as titles of the chapters of part two of his book.

Finale: Faithfulness or Failure?

Finally now, cutting the exegetical and theological story ‘radically’ short:

Korpman’s book is announced as radical. The content proves this to be fully correct. Not only is the author ‘radical’ in his style, judgments, explanation and evaluation of diverse biblical texts and events – but he is also “radical” inasmuch as he goes to the roots of biblical religion and Christian faith grounded in the Bible. He provides us with a lot of biblical and theological material, and in doing so, he provokes the reader to a deeper understanding and a better way of evaluating the authority of God’s ultimate word and His

eternally valid will. Thus, Matthew Korpman is not just provocative but he provokes his readers to Bible-study and religious self-reflection.

In this aim the author is faithful; he is aware of traps and tragedies deriving from a 'traditional-religious' understanding of the Bible being used as a judge and a sword in moral and social issues. He convincingly promotes the moral measure and 'standard' of biblical Christian attitudes and action: LOVE, i.e. full and basic respect of humans and humanity.

In this perspective, the book is NOT a failure at all – but a full necessity with the desired result of hopefully becoming 'normality' – especially concerning the debated practical issues still confusing and dividing parts of society and church.

In terms of the underlying theological impetus and input, Korpman's book is highly appreciated and recommended. The lecture of his book is able to bring the reader to a theological 'relecture' and '(re)-evaluation' of *The Book*.

I close with a beatitude.⁸ Blessed are those who understand: those who know what they are doing and how to do 'the right thing' – and just do it.

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⁸ In its content a modern allusion to good biblical and Christian thoughts in general – and a friendly "hello" to Matthew J. Korpman.

Book Review

Brian Bull and Fritz Guy.

***God, Sky, and Land: Genesis 1 as the Ancient Hebrews Heard It.* Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2011. 190 pp.**

***God, Land, and the Great Flood: Hearing the Story with 21st-Century Christian Ears.* Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2017. 211 pp.**

***God, Genesis, and Good News: God, the Misreading of Genesis, and the Surprisingly Good News.* Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2019. 201 pp.**

These three volumes, published by the Adventist Forum over eight years, tackle one of the core issues in Adventism: creation, and beyond that, how the Genesis 1–11 origin narratives could, and should, be read in the context of our current “Gutenbergian” and post-Hubble worldview, now relying heavily on our literacy and understanding of science. That such books are needed is no news at all: many other evangelical and “Bible-believing” Christians – if not necessarily their denominations – have been addressing the science versus literal 6-day creation interface for decades, with names of international fame, such as the scientist-theologian John Polkinghorne, and Keith Ward, the former Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford, entering the fray. The debate has come to the consciousness of the general, particularly English-speaking, public more forcefully of late, due to the very public face of the neo-atheism debate, spearheaded by Richard Dawkins *et al.* While a number of publications have recently come out in support of the official Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief number 6 (“a recent 6-day creation...”) the arguments mooted have only skirted around, or dealt pre-emptive apologetical deathblows at, the questions raised in this “Genesis trilogy”. Consequently, what is so different, rare – and yes, also controversial – here is that the elephant in the room is now addressed full on. Thus, how can the Genesis accounts of creation, the world-wide flood, and other “origins” of our world be read within our today’s “scientific” understanding of the universe?

The authors Fritz Guy and Brian Bull represent some of the best and most learned minds in Adventism: the former as a leading Adventist scholar in various fields of theology and philosophy, the latter as an eminent Loma Linda scientist. And the beauty of this book is that it arises from a commitment to the Church and its responsibility to biblical truth and has nothing to do with the denouncing “memoirs of bitterness” genre occasioned by some who have decided to part company with the denomination. Central to the method they use in all three books is the recognition that while divinely inspired, the language, imagery, and worldview that the biblical authors employed, in this case mainly in the Genesis origin stories, and particularly the Creation and Flood accounts, were those of the narratives’ first, ancient Hebrew audience and thus need to be “retro-translated” for our 21st-century reader. This is crucial, the authors emphasise, as the Bible has abiding relevance and authority for all humanity in all ages and needs to remain accessible to all.

This concept, and the accompanying application, of the method of retro-translation is perhaps the most novel and valuable contribution of the trilogy. It aims to help today’s Bible reader to appreciate, as well as to bridge, the many conceptual and linguistic chasms that the intervening millennia and our removal from the ancient Near-Eastern context have generated between us and the biblical world and the first hearers (rather than readers) of these stories. According to Fritz Guy and Brian Bull many of these conceptual gaps arise not simply from our stances on the biblical language as either “literal” or “figurative”, but from the different explanatory concepts, which we, and humans in all times and cultures, have used to assign causality or agency to events around us. For this purpose, the authors have minted the term “explanaccept” (explanatory concepts). Accordingly, the ancient Hebrews had two such “explanaccepts”: Agency was always either human or divine. We, post the scientific revolution, have added two more, the first of which is “nature”. This includes everything where our scientific world view influences the way we explain things, be it in conformity with the laws of nature, or simply our understanding of human biology. Thus, for instance, while the ancient Hebrews (and many other people) understood pregnancy, or the absence of it, in terms of God either “opening” or “closing” the womb, we resort to our understanding of human fertility. Or where in the Bible natural disasters, such as earthquakes, are seen as direct acts of God who is “shaking the mountains”, we scrutinise seismographs. Secondly, we have added the “explanaccept” of

“chance” for the things we really cannot explain, at least not yet, such as the roll of the dice. This, again the ancient Hebrews, seeing God in charge of even what to us seem like the most random of events, were able to use to divine God’s will, as in casting of lots.

This method of retro-reading and the accompanying tool of “explanacepts” is abundantly illustrated through all the three volumes, as the reader is provided with an insightful and illuminating journey to tease out the meaning of key words and concepts in aid of showing how the original audience would have heard the narratives in question (as the orality of the origin of the compositions is affirmed) and what they would translate to today. This exploration brings many and surprising insights into things we have probably always taken for granted. Particularly innovative here is the suggestion that the concept of “miracle” could only exist once the “explanacept” of “nature” had been conceived: Thus the ancient Hebrew knew no miracles – just divine agency!

More specifically, the first volume in the series, *God, Land, and the Great Flood*, scrutinises key Hebrew words, such as *’eretz*, argued to mean “land” rather than “earth”, *raqia’*, translated as “vault”, and *shamayim*, “sky”, rather than “heaven(s)”. In support, the “globe-less” ancient view of the world is imagined at some depth and the wording of many English translations explained in terms of how they reflect the expanding view of the universe post the scientific revolution, when the translations were made and the concept of “planet earth” had come to be. And no topic is out of bounds, be it billions of years versus only 6,000.

The second volume *God, Land, and the Great Flood*, further elucidates this “globe-less” view of the world, but also addresses the apparent inconsistencies and duplications in the Flood narrative of Genesis 6–9, such as the numbers of animals admitted to the ark and the number of the days of rain, as well as the use of the two names for God, YHWH and Elohim. This volume also expands to include material from other ancient Near-Eastern flood narratives for comparison. The intriguing and much debated “sons of God” and Nephilim of Genesis 6:1–4 also get a look-in.

While the two first volumes consistently ask what these narratives meant for their first audience, an important part of the exercise of retro-translation is also asking what they could “not possibly have meant” to them, as this tends

to make the best point of comparison for our, as opposed to their, understanding of the events. Thus, the third and final volume, *God, Genesis, and Good News*, dwells longer on exemplifying the close reading of Genesis 1–11, and on the scientific side the development of our heliocentric cosmology. Besides, issues such as the growth of the biblical tradition from its first tellings to the written canons we now have in the Old and the New Testaments is also outlined.

One of the main strengths of this trilogy is its immense readability, meant to be accessible – and enjoyable – to a general Bible-espousing readership, but particularly to our own Adventist membership, well-versed and deeply invested in the Genesis 1–11 origin stories and their momentous theological significance. Hence much discussion is also dedicated to the theological and spiritual implications of this new kind of reading of the narratives: That they were originally composed for others does not mean that they were not meant for us or that they do not speak to us! Quite the opposite, and one of the salient lessons of these volumes is the fact that we should look beyond the controversies over the lengths of days or depths of water to the God in charge of not only these events but of our salvation.

While the trilogy is not intended for specialists in biblical studies or sciences, it is clear that the volumes are well researched, both from biblical and scientific points of view. Neither do Fritz Guy and Brian Bull have an overly optimistic, naïve view of what science can provide, but its limits also come under scrutiny. They also include some, but not excessive, footnoting and bibliography, as well as indices, for those wanting to pursue the matters further. From a purely biblical scholarship's point of view there are of course some inevitable generalizations, perhaps most obviously in the discussion of the duplications and inconsistencies of the Flood narratives and the outline of the canonization of the Bible in *God, Land, and the Great Flood*. But this is an acceptable, and inevitable, norm in the fairly recent genre of "popular science", here pursued with an emphasis on biblical scholarship. Some cosmetic blemishes also occur, mainly with the transliteration of Hebrew, where two systems are used (e.g., with the vocal Shewa) and the Tetragrammaton, i.e., YHWH, God's "personal" name. But none of these undermine the value of the books.

Many significant theological questions inevitably arise from this innovative reading of texts we thought we knew so well. First and foremost of these questions is inspiration. This is thoughtfully and extensively addressed by the authors in harmony with the quintessentially Adventist concept of thought inspiration, eminently articulated by Ellen White herself. Although inevitably most readers of this trilogy will have their interpretational comfort zone impinged in one way or another, Fritz Guy and Brian Bull approach their subject matter reverently, fully aware of the significance of the issues raised. Neither do they attempt to be the “final word” on any subject or provide off-the-shelf easy answers to matters that have vexed scholars for centuries. Rather, the reader is invited on a journey of discovery into the riches of the Bible, for which this is only the start. While the three volumes are self-standing, for the best reading experience they should all be read, and in order. And this, I feel, I can recommend.

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