

Table of Contents / Table des matières / Inhalt

<i>Editorial</i>	3
<i>Mathilde Frey</i> The Art of Remembering: It Matters how We Tell the Sabbath Story	7
<i>Gunnar Pedersen and Ján Barna</i> A Search for the Biblical Epistemic Horizon: Towards Meta-Hermeneutics.....	23
<i>Laszlo Gallusz</i> Reading Creation and Judgment Motifs in the Three Angels' Message (Rev. 14:6–12): In Quest for a Theological Link.....	45
<i>Jan A. Sigvartsen</i> Two Separate Eschatological Resurrection Events: One for the Righteous and Another for the Wicked	71
<i>Stefan Höschele</i> Adventist Orthodoxy Codified: The Fundamental Beliefs of 1931	107
<i>Book Reviews</i>	
Stefan Höschele and Chigemezi N. Wogu, eds. <i>Contours of European Adventism: Issues in the History of the Denomination on the Old Continent</i> (Wim Altink)	135
Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett, eds. <i>Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation</i> (Sigve Tonstad)	141

Philip Turner. *Christian Socialism: The Promise of an Almost Forgotten Tradition* (David R. Larson) 145

David J.B. Trim. *A Passion for Mission* (Igor Mitrović) 151

Frank M. Hasel, ed. *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach* (Marko Lukić) 157

John C. Peckham. *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture* (Jan Bárna) 163

Editorial

Spes Christiana is the journal of the *European Adventist Society of Theology and Religious Studies* – abbreviated as EASTRS. The two key words in the name are “European” and “Adventist”. This does not mean that the journal only accepts contributions from Seventh-day Adventist authors, and only welcomes contributors who hold a European passport. Yet these two words are intentional, and to a large extent describe the character of our journal. One of its main objectives is to offer an opportunity to European scholars to publish articles and book reviews that are related to issues in Adventism in the widest possible sense – in the domain of theology and in related disciplines.

The content of this issue of *Spes Christiana* (autumn 2021) certainly corresponds with this characterization of our journal. Four of the main articles have been written by professors in Adventist institutions of higher education in Europe and one by a theologian who is teaching at an American university but has her roots in Europe. The authors deal with themes that can very definitely be labelled “Adventist”: They concern eschatology, the Sabbath and the Fundamental Beliefs of the Adventist Church. One article deals with hermeneutics, but from an Adventist perspective.

Dr Jan A. Sigvartsen, who is an Associate Professor of Old Testament at Friedensau Adventist University in Friedensau-Möckern (near the German city of Magdeburg) addresses an aspect of the doctrine of the resurrection. He argues that there will be two separate eschatological resurrection events, and, based on Revelation 20–22, he differentiates between a resurrection of the “righteous” and one for the “wicked”, with a thousand-year intermezzo. He acknowledges that this is a minority standpoint among Christian denominations and theologians, but points out that an interesting parallel may be found between the pseudepigraphical text of the *Martyrdom and the Ascension of Isaiah* and the Apocalypse.

One of Sigvartsen’s colleagues also contributed an article for this issue of our journal. Prof. Stefan Höschele is the vice-dean of the School of Theology of Friedensau Adventist University, while also serving as Professor for Systematic Theology. In addition, Professor Höschele has a strong interest in the history of Seventh-day Adventism. A year ago, he contributed an article about the earliest summary of the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church,

which dates from 1872, and analysed its contextual-theological significance. He has now followed this up with a study entitled “Adventist Orthodoxy Codified,” which analyses the more complete statement of the corpus of Adventist doctrines that dates from 1931.

Members of the theology department of Newbold College of Higher Education, located in Binfield (Berkshire), some 30 miles from London in the UK – recently renamed The Centre for Ministry and Mission) – have contributed two significant articles. Dr Gunnar Pedersen, Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology, and his colleague in Systematic Theology, Dr Jan Barna, are the co-authors of a study that focuses on “a search for the biblical epistemic horizon.” They suggest that “a seven-stage theistic narrative method” will allow the reader of the Scriptures to arrive at a “meta-hermeneutic”. Since “hermeneutics” is a hot topic in current Seventh-day Adventist discussions, *Spes Christiana* has a special interest in this subject and welcomes future submissions of articles that deal with aspects of hermeneutics that are especially meaningful in the ongoing Adventist debate.

In Adventist preaching and popular Adventist publications the verses with the “three angels’ message” form perhaps the most referred-to passage in John’s Apocalypse. It is considered by many as crucial for Adventism’s self-identity, and is seen as closely linked to other eschatological elements. Dr Laszlo Gallusz, a Senior Lecturer in New Testament at Newbold, emphasizes a further theological link and shows how the notion of “covenant” is an important underlying concept, and how creation and judgment motifs can be clearly found in these three angelic messages of Revelation 14:6–12. They constitute elements, Laszlo contends, that clearly belong together in the theological horizon of the Revelation.

Most popular publications about the Sabbath by Seventh-day Adventist authors deal with the question which day of the week qualifies as the Biblical Sabbath, whereas academic publications on this Sabbath topic tend to focus more on the meaning of the divinely instituted day of rest. Dr Mathilde Frey contributes a superb article about the Sabbath to this issue of *Spes Christiana*. She served for a number of years as an Adventist pastor in Germany, before moving to the USA in preparation for her doctorate in Old Testament. After teaching for six years in the Philippines, Dr Frey came to Walla Walla University in the town of that same name in Washington State (USA), as Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament. Her article about the Sabbath has the fascinating

title “The Art of Remembering: It Matters how We Tell the Sabbath Story.” We are delighted that we could include this insightful and inspiring piece in the current issue of our journal.

Dr Tom de Bruin, a specialist in New Testament and Second Temple Judaism, who is the web-editor for the EASTRS and also sees to it that our journal is properly uploaded on the website, informed me recently that the section with the book reviews scores the highest number of “hits.” I was delighted to hear this, and I am grateful to our book review editor and managing editor, Dr Kerstin Maiwald, for once again including a number of well-written book reviews in this issue. Her duties at Friedensau Adventist University have recently been augmented, and we are therefore delighted that she will now be assisted in her role for *Spes Christiana* by Mr John Okpechi, a pastor, MTS student and now student-assistant at Friedensau Adventist University, who will have a major role in preparing the manuscripts for publication.

I wish our readers much academic satisfaction as they read the articles in this volume. I appreciate the expertise and hard work of the authors that went into the writing of their contributions. But let me conclude with a fervent appeal that many of the members of EASTRS (and others who feel affinity to it) will submit articles (perhaps by converting or adapting papers they have read at some convention) and will serve as peer-reviewer or indicate their interest in writing a book review. Authors from Newbold College and Friedensau Adventist University will continue to be more than welcome, but it would be great to also see more contributions from scholars at other (European and other) institutions in the next issue.

Reinder Bruinsma, General Editor

The Art of Remembering

It Matters how We Tell the Sabbath Story¹

Mathilde Frey

Abstract

Sabbath is a story without peer. She is ancient, but a constant challenge to the contemporary. She ceases all things but remains unceasing. Her exquisite prestige, her dignified memory, are not indifferent to the sorrow of creation. Cries and tears and wounded bodies find space and embrace in the sacredness of Sabbath. Sabbath cannot be pressed into a doctrinal argument, confined into a rule book, or quarantined within church walls. Sabbath is of spirit matter “never to pass away,” “eternity in disguise,” as Abraham Joshua Heschel so eloquently put it. Freedom is her essence. In this article, I attempt to retell Sabbath’s story with reverberations from the world and language of biblical eras. The commitment is to not ignore the Sabbath’s inner life, to not distort her audacious vision, and not fault her for her vulnerability. Two texts from the book of Exodus will serve as paradigms. The first is from the narrative of Exodus 5, announcing the Sabbath’s subtle but intense destabilizing power of oppressive systems, inasmuch as we will hear her voice coming from an unlikely place, from a tyrant’s mouth. The second text is part of the Covenant Code in Exodus 23:12. Here, God’s compassionate listening to the cries of the oppressed urges us to receive the other, the stranger, the immigrant, the refugee, as one of us. Sabbath disrupts the dehumanizing power structures of this world and demands of us to make room for the defenseless, the weak, and the marginalized.

I remember the girl, 8 years old, trembling beneath a towering, gray-haired madman teacher. To the left of her outstretched arms twenty-four students held their breath. “1, 2, 3,” the voice thundered into her ears, “8, 9, 10.” His

¹ This article is a revised version of the author’s presidential address delivered at the 2020 Annual Conference for the Adventist Society for Religious Studies (ASRS).

thin stick struck into her palms. It happened only on Monday mornings at eight. She swallowed her tears and walked to her seat in third row. With fingers sore and throbbing she picked up the pencil. Each letter had to be neat and on the line; the numbers had to fit perfectly inside the small, square boxes. Sabbath! It was because of Sabbath. He was furious. She was in a different world. At home, her mother's eyes filled with tears. Father took her hands and held them. From that day on, he would hold her hands, always and everywhere. And so, Monday mornings happened again.

Sabbath is a remarkable thing. It comes from a place which no human commands nor conquers. My angry teacher of the 1970s in Romania never got a hold of her. But neither have I. Whenever I write and speak about Sabbath, I fear I may bring insult on what God has made holy, for I have no command over her, and I have surely not conquered her. Nevertheless, I desire to know her.² When I prepared for this essay, I was compelled to open my German Bible. I have a Luther Bible, the 1984 edition. It is the classic German translation. The language is still somewhat archaic. The year of publication coincides with my family's emigration from Romania to Western Germany. I acquired this Bible when I was a student in the Seminary in Bogenhofen, Austria. I received the news that my father needed surgery for a malignant brain tumour, and I wrote on the first blank page of my Bible, "Broken, to be made beautiful." He passed away too soon, and Sabbath slipped away too. It is easy to go about life even life as a minister without missing her, because Sabbath does not come to us like an intruder, forcing her way in. Nor does she occupy space like a frozen stone in a landscape, or like a sculpture celebrating hero-like triumphs of the past.

Sabbath's memory is of a different kind. She objects to our long-held claim that "history is written by the victors."³ Sabbath has built its own memorial of a self-effacing aesthetic, open and complex, merging the past with the future in a committed all-embracing pledge to the present world, urging us toward a grander narrative than anyone has ever envisioned. Listening to her story in the ancient language of biblical eras is then not an act about acquiring accurate

² The feminine pronoun is in reference to the Talmud, speaking of the Sabbath as queen and bride, Shabbath 119a, "Rabbi Hanina would wrap himself in his garment and stand at nightfall on Shabbat eve, and say: Come and we will go out to greet Shabbat the queen. Rabbi Yannai put on his garment on Shabbat eve and said: Enter, O bride. Enter, O bride."

³ While this quote is often attributed to Winston Churchill, its origin is unknown.

information, but a demanding visualization that transforms our fears into joy and our apprehensions into resilience. Is such a Sabbath voice present when we read our Bibles? How would we hear her in a world more alienated than ever, headed with giant leaps toward an unsustainable life?

“The reason that God refrains from further activity on the seventh day is that he has found the object of his love and has no need of any further works.” (Barth 1961, 215). These are Karl Barth’s words about the Sabbath in his treatise on the Doctrine of Creation. By “resting on the seventh day, He (God) does not separate Himself from the world but binds Himself the more closely to it” (ibid 223). Barth defined the relationship between God and humans as the covenant of grace: “It was with man and his true humanity, as His direct and proper counterpart, that God now associated Himself in His true deity. Hence the history of the covenant was really established in the event of the seventh day,” (ibid 217) “a covenant of grace and redemption to be fulfilled in Christ” (ibid 222; LaRondelle 1982, 280). Barth concluded that the Sabbath commandment is the fundamental command of all of God’s commandments. It combines law and gospel; it is inclusive of all human beings (Barth 1961, 53–55); and it reminds the Sabbath observer of God as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Barth also recognized an eschatological aspect in the Sabbath, a hidden relationship between the Sabbath and the day of the Lord (ibid, 56–58).

Such correlations between Sabbath and virtually every other theological doctrine may cause a theologian’s mind to soar. But what about the postmodern who places truth in quotation marks, who considers “incredulity toward meta-narratives” (Lyotard 1984, 8) the answer to everything that sounds religious? What about Generation Z digital natives who care about the environment, racial injustice, gender and sexual identity, and mental health, and tick on “nones”?⁴ How are we to tell the Sabbath story in an age of biblical illiteracy? The doctrinal enterprise surely does not have a promising future.

⁴ See recent data about the least religious countries (accessed 8/9/2021); religiously unaffiliated: <https://www.pewforum.org/2020/09/10/religious-affiliation-among-american-adolescents> (accessed 8/9/2021).

Which Sabbath Story Do We Tell?

A few years ago, I greatly enjoyed an award-winning film titled, *Life of Pi*. The movie is a marvelous achievement of storytelling combined with scenes of stunning visual mastery. The protagonist is Pi Patel, an Indian Tamil boy who explores issues of spirituality and metaphysics from an early age. After a cataclysmic shipwreck he finds himself stranded with a ferocious Bengal tiger in a lifeboat. Together they face nature's majestic grandeur and fury in the Pacific Ocean on an epic survival journey of 227 days. The intense preoccupation with practical matters, and the problems Pi must solve form the dramatic heart of the film. How will he secure food and clean water for himself and for Richard Parker, the tiger? How will he stay sane and hopeful? How will he be able to train the tiger so not to be devoured by him? Pi has realized that caring for the tiger is also keeping himself alive. After his eventual rescue, the insurance investigators who listen to his fantastic story are reluctant to write it up for their report. It cannot possibly be true. "Fine," Pi says, "let me tell you a different version of what happened." This other story also tells of the storm and everyone perishing in the ocean except for Pi, but it contains the brutal details of cannibalism committed by humans fighting for their self-preservation, and, so becomes the more "believable" story. As Pi Patel, years later, relates all this to a writer, an intriguing dialogue sets the end of the film:

Patel: "So which story do you prefer?"

Writer: "The one with the tiger. That's the better story."

Patel: "Thank you. And, so it goes with God."

Writer: "It's an amazing story."

Sabbath has no other record of origin than the Hebrew Bible. Biblical scholars and experts in the literature and history of the ancient Near East have long recognized its prestigious place in the biblical text and have produced comprehensive research in the areas of literary and comparative studies. Despite their efforts, the "believable" story of Sabbath has remained a mystery. The Sabbath is considered an unresolved item, rather ineffective for the serious scholar. Alternative explorations have opened up for a more beneficial treatment of Sabbath texts and allowed for the voice of age-old Jewish scholarship to be heard about its very own tradition. The result is a wealth of literature admiring the Sabbath's treasures.

Among Adventists, I contend, Sabbath suffers. Among a few outstanding contributions, one is Sigve Tonstad's *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*,

(2009). Sabbath has become a safeguarded fundamental belief. I say this with great sorrow because of the requests I have received to defend the correctness of the day, or to state what one is not allowed to do on Sabbath. I believe Sabbath in a confined space, inside a creedal document, within church walls, is not doing well. Sabbath is of spirit matter “never to pass away,” (Heschel 2005, 98) “eternity in disguise,” (ibid, 101) as Heschel so insightfully writes. Freedom is its essence.

To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day ... of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshiping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow [humans] and the forces of nature — is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for [humanity's] progress than the Sabbath? [edited for gender neutral language] (ibid, 28)

Sabbath’s avenue in the wilderness of oblivion begins at a signpost, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exod. 20:8). The marker signals us to stop and reminisce, to recall the story, for in the words often credited to the great Baal Shem Tov, “forgetfulness leads to exile; remembering is the key to redemption.” What is to be remembered? How does one remember? “In the realm of spirit, there is no difference between a second and a century, between an hour and an age” (ibid, 98). And so, the skilful telling of the Sabbath story in that ancient book of Exodus is only an hour away. Yet, the challenge we face is to let its images come alive and its voices be heard in a world in much need of Spirit.

Sabbath as Memory in the Narrative of Exodus 5

Only those who have not ceased to be human in spite of dehumanizing conditions carry forth the vision of freedom into an enslaved world. The Hebrew Bible tells of Moses as such an individual. Right there in the midst of slavery he sets the ground marker for Israel’s freedom trail: “Moses, why are you freeing the people? ... You even made them rest (*shabat*) from their labours!” (Exod. 5:4–5), is the Egyptian monarch’s bewildered question. Slaves who are free? For Pharaoh this is an incomprehensible thought. Moses knows of no limits. For him, Sabbath is the divine *insigne* for freedom founded in creation and reinforced in the redemptive event of the exodus (Exod. 20:8–12; 31:12–

17; Deut. 5:12–15). To cease from work on the seventh day means to choose freedom over slavery, to master work time for the sake of divine time.

Pharaoh, on the other hand, in realizing that he had lost control over his enslaved subjects, ordered an additional workload to their labor. According to Exodus 5:5, the despot is credited with using Sabbath language when he charged Moses for having authorized the Israelite slaves to “cease/stop/rest” (*shabbat*) from work (cf. Gen. 2:2–3; Exod. 16:20; 23:12). In addition, highly dramatized dialogue scenes combine with theological overtones of human dignity and freedom within the realm of oppressive powers.⁵ Could it be that *shabbat* in the tyrant’s mouth is most intent in the text of Exodus 5 with the intention to carry a concept that goes far beyond mere cessation from weekly labour?

Exodus 5:1–23 portrays Yahweh and Pharaoh in sharp confrontation with each other, with the latter as a resolute opponent, an anti-God who rejects acknowledging Yahweh and his command to send off the Hebrew slaves (vv. 1–3; cf. Rendtorff 2005, 45). Pharaoh’s explosion of speeches in vv. 4–5 establishes rest from labor under the control of Moses and Aaron as the root of the problem. What then follows shows the cruelty of his highly organized slave system: a sophisticated chain of command that singles out a group of slaves, the Hebrew foremen, and places them under the control of Egyptian supervisors; but then the seemingly privileged are held accountable for inevitable failure (vv. 4–19; cf. Hoffmeier 1996, 114–116); even worse, they become traitors and turn against their own leaders, Moses and Aaron, with vicious resentment (vv. 20–21). History tells us that the biblical story has had its parallels. The atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps operating with similar efficiency will forever remain a heart-breaking demonstration of such a system.

When it comes to the historical value of Exodus 5, scholars have recognized that the text tells of the Israelites as doing the same work as the labourers who are portrayed in Egyptian inscriptions and relief scenes (see esp. Hoffmeier 1996, 112–116; Nims 1950). This involves labour relations that existed between masters and workers in terms of treatment of the workers by their taskmasters and foremen, rest days granted to the slaves, corporal punishment, etc.⁶ Thus,

⁵ Ryken has shown how biblical narrative combines what he calls “the historical, the theological, and the literary.” See Ryken 1990a and 1990b.

⁶ See <http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/timelines/topics/workrelations.htm> (accessed October 1, 2012).

the use of the word “cease/rest from labour” and the concept of rest for labour gangs in a biblical text reflects genuine life in ancient Egypt.

A narrative reading of Exodus 5 shows its highly dramatized style in the emotionally laden discourses of the main characters: Pharaoh, Yahweh, Moses and Aaron, the taskmasters, and the foremen. The people, however, who are the focus of the actual events, are without words and voice. The conflict is about Egypt’s methodically organized slavery system. The method, however, that is taken to tell the drama is intricate and complex in its use of rhetoric, structure, subversive language, and unexpected words that attract attention and create meaningful ideas.⁷

Propp comments on the rare harmonious situation between Israel, Moses, and Yahweh in Exodus 4:31: “The narrative rests there but for a moment” (Propp 1999, 258). Yet it is this moment that provides the setting for Moses’ audience with Pharaoh (Exod. 5:1–5). Backed by a congregation willing to bow in faith and devotion to God, the leader voices Yahweh’s explicit order to send Israel off into the wilderness.⁸ Pharaoh’s reaction to the divine imperative is not a response; it is not an inquiry, but a provocative attack: “Who is Yahweh ...? I do not know Yahweh” (v. 2).⁹ Moses and Aaron offer more detailed information: “The God of the Hebrews has called on us. Please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God” (v. 3).¹⁰ Pharaoh’s open affront continues: “And the king of Egypt said to them: ‘Why, Moses and Aaron, are you freeing (*tafri’u*) the people from its work?’” (v. 4). Note here, the expression “king of Egypt” and not the title “Pharaoh” (*par’oh*). But when the king speaks, he utters the word *parah* (“let free, let go out of control” / “lead, act as a leader”) in the middle of his interrogative outburst: “Why, Moses and Aaron, do you act as pharaoh in letting

⁷ Benno Jacob’s masterful commentary on Exod. 5 calls attention to the stirring opening scenes between Israel’s leaders and the king of Egypt and the dramatic force that this chapter conveys. See Jacob 1992, 112.

⁸ Brueggemann comments that “[t]he conventional reading, ‘Let my people go,’ sounds like a request or a plea. In fact, it is an imperative on the lips of Yahweh, as though Yahweh addresses a political subordinate (Pharaoh) who is expected to obey” (Brueggemann 1996, 726).

⁹ Ibid. The word “to know” Yahweh is a powerful Leitmotif in the exodus narration (Exod. 6.3, 7; 7.5, 17; 8.6, 18; 9.14, 29; 10.2; 14.4, 18).

¹⁰ Later in the narrative, this clause will become a standard mocking by Pharaoh and the reason for calling the people “shirkers” or “weaklings” (vv. 8 and 17).

the people go free from work?" The pun is obvious (Propp 1999, 253),¹¹ and the brusque command, "Go to your labours!" appears as if for a split second the king had recognized the ambiguity in his own words and must now demonstrate his dictatorial power.

Pharaoh then comes to the crux of the matter, "Look, many already were the people of the land! And you made them rest (*hishbattem*, hif 'il form of the verb *shabat*) from their labours!" (v. 5). Does Pharaoh believe that a break from work is the cause for the slaves' increase in numbers? Does he refer to a previous record in Egyptian annals (Exod. 1:9) where this matter was discussed and a draconian law issued?¹² Does he recognize Moses as the survivor of the cruel pogrom of Hebrew male babies, the dissident who is now in control of the slaves calling for the ultimate stop of labour gangs?¹³ For Pharaoh, Moses has become a revolutionary leader calling on slaves to take a *shabat* rest from their labours.

In Pharaoh's world, the call for *shabat* rest not only undermined his authority, but it also hindered the economy of Egypt.¹⁴ Sabbath rest within a suppressive system surely is of a subversive and obstructing nature. "You made them *shabat* from their labours" coming from Pharaoh's mouth, not from Moses, stands as a powerful realization that slaves have turned into masters; not masters over others, neither over their workloads, but masters of time.

In the ears of a Hebrew audience listening to the story from Egypt, the day called *shabbat* resounds in Pharaoh's words.¹⁵ Its powerful message has a follow-up in a particular Sabbath incident when a freed slave decided to turn

¹¹ Martin Luther also recognized Sabbath rest in the expression and rendered it by the word "feiern" (celebrate) in the German translation of the Bible (Revised Version of 1984).

¹² This is often understood as explaining the economic reasons for refusing to let the people go (Sarna 1991, 28). "The sons of Israel" (Exod. 1:9) are replaced with "the people of the land" (Exod. 5:5), which possibly draws on a change in perspective regarding the status of the Israelites in Egypt over the course of their time of slavery. It could imply that "the sons of Israel" had been integrated as slaves and had become in Pharaoh's eyes "the people of the land" (Exod. 5:5) who are now regarded as Egyptians. See Propp 1999, 254.

¹³ Houtman interprets Pharaoh's words in the sense that "Moses and Aaron are troublemakers who incite the people to shirk their duty and stop working" (Houtman 1993, 456).

¹⁴ Benno Jacob understands Pharaoh's *hishbattem* as referring to a holiday from hard work either in the sense of the Sabbath (Exod. 16) or the Passover feast (Exod. 12:14), the only holidays before Israel arrived at Mount Sinai (Jacob 1992, 131).

¹⁵ See footnote 1; cf. Janzen 1989, 398; Propp 1999, 254.

back to slavery. The Hebrew text creates a direct connection between Exodus 5 and the story of the man who gathered wood on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32–36). The link exists because of the verb “gather” (*qashash*), which occurs only four times in the Pentateuch, twice when describing the toil and oppression of the Israelites in Egypt (Exod. 5:7 and 12) and twice when narrating the offensive behavior of the wood-gatherer (Num. 15:32–33).¹⁶ The telling link draws a comparison between the slaves who were forced to “gather” (*qashash*) straw with no rest (*shabat*), and the man who defiantly went out and “gathered” (*qashash*) wood on the day of Sabbath rest (*shabbat*), and so placed himself back into the position of a slave (Frey 2011, 118–131).

Furthermore, Pharaoh’s building program is all about that which is transient, fleeting, and without any stable and enduring substance. Brick making is the main work in Egypt (Exod. 5:7.8.14.16.18.19; cf. 1:14) to build cities (Exod. 1:11), just as it was in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11:2) when the people began to build the city and tower of Babel (Gen. 11:3.4.5.8). While the tower builders were eager to produce bricks of high quality by burning them thoroughly (v. 3), Pharaoh’s bricks are made with straw, which, yes, is to provide strength and consistency (Nims 1950; Propp 1999, 255), but in the biblical narrative has the metaphorical connotation of frailness and transitoriness (Job 21:18; 41:27–29; Jer. 23:28); stubble is blown away by the wind (Isa. 40:24; 41:2; Jer. 13:24) or burned down by fire (Isa. 47:14; Joel 2:5; Obad. 18; Mal. 4:1).

Exodus 5 and the Babel story in Genesis 11 use the verb “scatter, disperse” (*putz*). The Hebrew slaves “scattered over all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw” (Exod. 5:12). The result was failed productivity quota, punishment, distress, and resentment against their own leaders (vv. 13–19). In the case of the tower builders, they were concerned with being “scattered over the surface of the whole land” (Gen. 11:4) and, for that reason, they began to build a city and tower with its top in the heavens. But then Yahweh “scattered them over the surface of the whole land” (vv. 8–9), which brought to a halt the entire building project.

I do not hold that *shabat* rest in Exodus 5 corroborates an established weekly Sabbath institution of the Israelites in Egypt. For, when the liberated slaves gather manna for six days in the wilderness and do not find any on the seventh day, they still have to become familiar with the Sabbath’s rhythmic and

¹⁶ Outside the Pentateuch the verb occurs in 1 Kgs. 17:10.12 and Zeph. 2:1.

weekly recurrence (Exod. 16). On the other hand, Exodus 16 does not depict Sabbath as something completely new (Buber 1958, 80; Childs 1974, 290).

Sabbath rest in Exodus 5 is about the essential, the destabilizing of an autocratic power system. Its story is one told by voiceless slaves building cities that are destined for ruin. While overflowing the land under the scorching Egyptian sun to fetch stubble that is blown away by the wind, the old story stirs up visions of a transient empire. The oppressor's word about *shabat* rest portrays him as a defeated tyrant even within his own powerful and still functioning regime. This is the moment when Sabbath rest begins to disclose its transcendent and permanent quality: to master time is to be truly free.

Sabbath as Memory in the Narrative of Exodus

To do what God asks for is "an act of communion with Him" as he becomes "a partner to our deeds" (Heschel 1955, 287). In the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 23:12, God's involvement in human affairs is a matter of "depth theology," (Heschel 1960, 317–325) of laying bare the true situation of the human being in order to act on belief, and not to enhance the body of doctrines and parochial institutions.

Exodus 23:12, reads: "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease [*shabat*] for the sake of your ox and your donkey that they may rest, and the son of your slave woman be refreshed, as well as the stranger" (my own translation).

The rarely used verb "breathe, refresh" (*nafash*) in the Hebrew Bible sets this Sabbath commandment apart from the Decalogue versions in Exod. 20:8–11 and Deut. 5:12–15. When this verb occurs again in the Hebrew Bible (Exod. 31:17; 2 Sam. 16:14) it designates the catching of one's breath during a time of pause (Fredericks 1997).¹⁷ In 2 Samuel 16:14, the verb speaks of King David and his people recovering from fatigue during their flight from Absalom. In Exodus 31:17, God is said to be refreshed after the work of creation. Scholars suggest that the anthropomorphic language employed for God's refreshment on the seventh day is used as an example for human Sabbath rest and refreshment (Cassuto 1967, 245 and 404; Sailhammer 1992, 309).

¹⁷ The Akkadian *napāsu* has a similar meaning, i. e., "to blow, breathe (freely), to become wide." Cf. HALOT 1:711.

The context of Exodus 23:12 provides a particular aspect to understanding the verb “breathe, refresh” in relation to the Sabbath. Only three verses above we read, “You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings [*nefesh*] of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 23:9, NASB). The verb *nafash* relates to the cognate noun *nefesh*, which, often translated as “soul,” regards the whole life of a person. The resonance between the verb and the noun highlights the experience of the Israelite Sabbath keeper who has been a stranger in Egypt and knows of weariness and depletion, and therefore, s/he will give opportunity for the slave and the stranger to breathe.

Furthermore, Exodus 23:12 defines who is to catch a breath when the Israelite Sabbath keeper rests, namely “the son of your slave woman.” The two prominent versions of the Decalogue mention only the slave woman (*'amah*; Exod. 20:10; Deut. 5:14), but not her son (*ben 'amah*).¹⁸ A close intertextual study on the divergence between the Sabbath commandments recognizes Exodus 23:12 as a unique law with a narrative in its background that gives voice to a slave woman who was cast-off because of her son. According to Genesis 21, Hagar, the *'amah* in Abraham and Sarah’s household, has become useless and pushed out together with her son, for Isaac, the rightful heir has come.¹⁹

The “son of the slave woman” (Gen. 21:10.13) on the other hand, is not mentioned by name.²⁰ Out in the wilderness “God heard the voice of the boy”

¹⁸ The Samaritan Pentateuch replaced the anomalous reading of Exod. 23:12 with the standard “your male servant and your female servant” as indicated in the apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Carmichael points out that in ancient Near Eastern slave laws the children issued from unions between a male slave and the wife given to him by the master belonged to the master (Exod. 21:4) and were identified as children of the male servant. See Carmichael 1974, 87.

¹⁹ Hagar’s story as slave woman is recorded in Gen. 16; 21; and parts of 25. However, it is only in Gen. 21 where she is called *amah*. Gen. 16 and 25 refer to her as a *shifcha*. For a discussion of the semantics of the two Hebrew terms אִמָּה and שִׁפְחָה see Jepsen 1958.

²⁰ The Hebrew Bible uses the phrase “son of the female servant” again in the book of Judges regarding Abimelech, the son of a slave woman (Judg. 9:18), but more significantly in the book of Psalms (Ps. 86:16; 116:16). The Psalmist seems to allude to both Gen. 21 and Exod. 23, calling himself “son of your female servant” (Ps. 116:16) who cries out in distress and danger of life (116:8) and the Lord inclined his ear (116:2) and “loosed my bonds” (116:16). The Psalm culminates in the words, “Return to your rest, O my soul [*nefesh*], for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you” (116:7). All significant characteristics of the Sabbath commandment in Exod. 23:12 and its context are included in this Psalm: the theological motif of God’s compassionate listening to

(Gen. 21:17). Whereas we have become acquainted with Hagar's cry from a previous story (Gen. 16:11) and may think that God approves of the treatment she received from her owners, God of Sabbath does not (Exod. 22:21–24). For the attentive Hebrew speaker, the punch word comes at the very end of Exodus 23:12, "the stranger." Whereas Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:14 speak of "your stranger" (*ger-cha*) as one who should not work on Sabbath, Exodus 23:12 has "the stranger" (*ha-ger*). By eliminating the pronoun "your" and placing the definite article *ha* before the noun *ger*, Hagar's story with her dying son instantly burns itself into the Sabbath's consciousness. Hagar (*ha-ger*, the stranger), Sabbath contends, is not a name to be identified with. The tragedy in Abraham and Sarah's house was that the Egyptian slave woman never heard herself called by name, she was and remained "the stranger" (*ha-ger*).

The context of Exodus 23:12 has done diligent preparation work to sensitize the Hebrew audience in recognizing the pun: "You shall not wrong a stranger [*ger*] or oppress him, for you were strangers [*gerim*] in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 22:20 [20:21]); also, "You shall not oppress a stranger [*ger*], since you yourselves know the feelings of the stranger [*ha-ger*], for you also were strangers [*gerim*] in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9 NASB). A few verses further into the context of Exodus 23:12, the law code calls for compassionate concern toward the oppressed, whose social and legal status made them potential victims of injustice: the poor, the widow, the orphan, the resident alien, and the slave. The law provides an analogue to God's empathetic listening to the people's cries during their sufferings in Egypt (Exod. 22:21–27; 23:6–11; Hanson 1977, 110–131; Nielsen 1967, 113–114; Mathys 1972, 246). The cry and compassion motif is fundamental to the entire book of Exodus, functioning similar to a trigger device, "The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry" (Exod. 3:7). Sabbath disrupts the patriarchal, dehumanizing power structures in this world. Sabbath urges the redeemed to receive the stranger, the immigrant, the refugee, the discarded as their own. In so doing, the Sabbath keeper will bring

the cry of the one who is about to die, as well as the terminology of the Sabbath commandment – "rest," "soul," and "son of your maid servant."

release to the captives and good news and regeneration to the afflicted mother and her child (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18).²¹

Tonstad introduced his monograph on the Sabbath with the words, “The seventh day is like a jar buried deep in the sands of time, preserving a treasure long lost and forgotten” (Tonstad 2009, 2). That jar holds some of the most amazing mysteries in need to be re-discovered. Hagar, the stranger, has grown into many, coming to our borders, depleted, and weeping, and calling for help; her child’s silent cries – who will hear them? Sabbath thrives among people in desperate need of a vision, a dream of a different world; people who feel the strikes and the beatings and whose souls are frightened. Sabbath invites all to enter and sit at the table together. Elie Wiesel, the holocaust survivor, spoke of such a world in a classroom of college students at Boston University, “I believe in wounded faith. Only a wounded faith can exist after those events” (Burger 2018, 82).

I still remember the eight-year-old. She has accompanied me across the continents, from Europe to North America to Asia and back to North America. She waited as I researched the books for Sabbath. She is still nearby, reminding me of Sabbath’s story when faith began inside wounded palms in that classroom in a small town in Romania.

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²¹ See Wolf 1974, 139. “These are people who are particularly without redress against any orders given to them. Though a master might not dare to exact work on the sabbath from his adult woman slave, he was much more easily able to exert pressure on her son, or on the foreign worker, who was all too easily viewed as being outside the sphere of liberty set by Yahweh’s commandment. This version of the sabbath commandment therefore picks up the borderline case: the sabbath has been instituted for the sake of all those who are especially hard-driven and especially dependent.”

Mathilde Frey

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Zusammenfassung

Sabbat ist eine unvergleichliche Geschichte. Uralt und doch ständig eine Herausforderung für das Zeitgenössische. Sie lässt alles aufhören, bleibt aber selbst unaufhörlich. Ihr erlesenes Ansehen, ihr würdevolles Gedenken sind dem Leid der Schöpfung gegenüber nicht gleichgültig. Schreie, Tränen und verwundete Körper finden Raum und Umarmung in der Heiligkeit des Sabbats. Der Sabbat lässt sich nicht in ein Lehrgebäude pressen, in ein Regelbuch zwängen oder innerhalb der Kirchenmauern unter Quarantäne stellen. Von geistiger Materie, die „niemals vergeht“, eine „verkleidete Ewigkeit“, wie Abraham Joshua Heschel es so treffend formulierte – Freiheit ist *ihr* Wesen.

Ich erzähle hier die Geschichte des Sabbats mit Bezügen zur Welt und zur Sprache der biblischen Epochen neu. Dabei soll das Innenleben des Sabbats nicht ignoriert werden, *ihre* kühne Vision nicht verzerrt und sie nicht für *ihre* Verletzlichkeit getadelt werden. Zwei Exodus-

Texte dienen als Paradigmen. Exodus 5 verkündet die subtile, aber intensive destabilisierende Kraft des Sabbats gegenüber unterdrückerten Systemen, da wir *ihre* Stimme an einem ungewöhnlichen Ort, aus dem Mund eines Tyrannen, hören. Der zweite Text ist Teil des Bundesgesetzes in Exodus 23,12. Gottes mitfühlendes Hören auf die Schreie der Unterdrückten drängt uns dazu, den anderen, den Fremden, den Einwanderer, den Flüchtling, als einen von uns anzunehmen. Der Sabbat unterbricht die entmenschlichenden Machtstrukturen dieser Welt und fordert uns auf, Raum für die Wehrlosen, die Schwachen und die Ausgegrenzten zu schaffen.

Résumé

Le sabbat est une histoire sans égal. Elle est ancienne, mais un défi constant pour le contemporain. Elle cesse toutes choses mais reste incessante. Son prestige exquis, sa mémoire digne ne sont pas indifférents à la douleur de la création. Les cris, les larmes et les corps blessés trouvent de l'espace et s'embrassent dans le caractère sacré du sabbat. Le sabbat ne peut pas être pressé dans un argument doctrinal, confiné dans un livre de règles ou mis en quarantaine dans les murs de l'église. Le sabbat est une matière spirituelle «qui ne passera jamais», «l'éternité déguisée», comme l'a si éloquemment dit Abraham Joshua Heschel. La liberté est son essence. Dans cet article, j'essaie de raconter l'histoire du sabbat avec des réverbérations du monde et du langage des époques bibliques. L'engagement est de ne pas ignorer la vie intérieure du sabbat, de ne pas déformer sa vision audacieuse, et de ne pas lui reprocher sa vulnérabilité. Deux textes du livre de l'Exode serviront de paradigmes. Le premier est tiré du récit d'Exode 5, annonçant le pouvoir déstabilisateur subtil mais intense du sabbat des systèmes oppressifs, dans la mesure où nous entendrons sa voix venir d'un endroit improbable, de la bouche d'un tyran. Le deuxième texte fait partie du Code de l'Alliance dans Exode 23:12. Ici, l'écoute compatissante de Dieu aux cris des opprimés nous enjoint à recevoir l'autre, l'étranger, l'immigré, le réfugié, comme l'un de nous. Le sabbat perturbe les structures de pouvoir déshumanisantes de ce monde et nous demande de faire de la place aux personnes sans défense, aux faibles et aux marginalisés.

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A Search for the Biblical Epistemic Horizon Towards Meta-Hermeneutics

Gunnar Pedersen and Ján Barna

Abstract

This article will propose a meta-hermeneutical approach that could help to uncover the deeper assumptions and epistemic horizon of a given biblical author. Firstly, the logic of the biblical beginning story will be examined and assessed in terms of its worldview horizon, a horizon that might constitute the larger perspective within which the subsequent authors might be thinking. Secondly, the article will engage in a broad analysis of the subsequent covenant narratives, tracing their plot-lines in terms of anticipating the future, a future that the apostolic stories perceive as the fulfillments. Finally, there will be a brief sketch of some hermeneutical principles that may serve as guidelines for the reading and applications of the biblical materials in terms of doctrine and religious practice.

It is generally recognized that the biblical Canon is composed of micro and macro stories but not agreed that such stories form a coherent theological narrative. While there was, in the mid-twentieth century, a renewed interest in searching for the levels of unity in the Canon, the dominant trend in biblical scholarship was the search for diversity; a search that has largely been driven by the modernist deistic and naturalistic assumptions of source, form and historical literary criticism (Kaiser Jr. 2009, 11–24).¹

N. T. Wright argues that when it comes to recovering the meaning of the biblical texts the “pre-critical and modern ways of articulating this have not met with success” (Wright 1992, 122). The apparent weakness of both the historical

¹ For an overview of the issues and challenges implied in the contemporary hermeneutical debates see: Thiselton 2009; Thiselton 2006; Thiselton 2007. See also Silva 1996.

critical and historical grammatical methods of biblical studies is that they both fall short of detecting the interpretative significance of the meta-narrative perspective in the biblical texts.² Thus the idea of a metanarrative level of unity in the Scriptural stories has generally been challenged or abandoned by the majority of scholars within the disciplines of biblical studies.

However, more recently the proponents of the biblical theology movements called “New Perspectives” have called for a reassessment of the hermeneutical impasse by advocating a more narrative approach. More recently N.T. Wright, Craig Bartholomew, Michael Goheen and others have insisted that the biblical texts actually form a coherent metanarrative by insisting that the biblical stories must be understood from within their own worldview logic for their meaning to be unlocked. They insist that although the biblical Canon is the product of a long complicated process, “the end product needs to be examined in its own right” (Bartholomew et al. 2004, 146–147).³

What is gradually dawning on the post-modern contemporary consciousness is that all humans inhabit a certain worldview perspective whether they recognize it or not, a worldview that ideologically controls their interpretation of observed and experienced reality.⁴ Craig Bartholomew and Goheen actually state that worldviews “offer a lens through which to view everything else”. However, such a concern for reading the Bible as a grand unified narrative mostly comes from the disciplines such as “systematic, practical, ethics and missiology – but sadly not from within biblical studies,” except for N.T. Wright a “rare example of a major biblical scholar in whose work, story, in the grand sense, is central” (Bartholomew et al. 2004, 146–147).

Their thesis is that all humans inhabit a worldview paradigm that serves as the mental lens through which they observe and interpret the experienced empirical world and which informs their values and actions. Thus unless the biblical world of thought is an exception to this general cultural phenomenon, the biblical authors likewise inhabit an epistemic worldview horizon informing the meaning of their theology.

² For a more comprehensive discussion see: Pedersen 2016.

³ The issue is that they fall short of detecting the interpretative significance of the epistemic world horizon in the biblical texts. For a more comprehensive discussion of this problem see: Pedersen 2016.

⁴ For a more comprehensive discussion of the role of worldviews and their importance for retrieving the meaning of the biblical story/stories see Pedersen 2009.

In a recent series of articles the Adventist theologian Fernando Canale has called attention to the importance of the biblical metanarrative as the epistemological key to understanding how the Scriptures can yield a unified belief system. He argues that textual exegesis (Canale 2004; idem. 2005; idem. 2006) as currently practiced does not uncover the biblical worldview perspective; it is uncovered through the discipline of systematics (Canale 2006, 126–138).

Canale refers to the Adventist systematic theologian Norman Gulley who insists that a canonically based systematic theology needs the “hermeneutical guide of the biblical metanarrative,” and “worldview” for constructing a coherent belief system. Gulley thus argues that “the biblical metanarrative operates as a guiding light orienting our interpretation of Scripture and biblical doctrine. Furthermore, it also identifies and “corrects any interpretation that does not fit in with the biblical worldview.” Finally, “it guides us in understanding the inner logic of biblical thinking” (Canale 2006, 135–136). Whether one agrees with Canale or not, concerning the discipline by which to retrieve the biblical epistemic worldview horizon, his core observation resonates with the emerging awareness that without discovering the biblical worldview paradigm the text will be taken captive to the worldview of the interpreter.

So, for theology to be biblical it must reflect the realities of the biblical texts including its inherent worldview. If the dominant feature of the biblical Canon is diversity and discontinuity representing multiple theologies and worldviews, any attempt at detecting a unified theology is pointless. If, on the other hand, there is an ideological and thematic level of unity in the biblical material then a unified biblical theology appears to be possible.⁵ Accordingly, the methodological challenge is to formulate a search that would allow the Biblical authors to tell their own story/stories on their own premises; a method that is not controlled by the worldview lenses of the interpreter.

Biblical theology could thus be defined as a search for the epistemic horizon or worldview paradigms of the biblical authors and thus to discover what kind of “meta-story” they inhabit and which governs their thinking, logic and interpretation of cosmos. If their worldview story is ultimately theistic then

⁵ The last decades have seen the emergence of a meta-narrative approach to Biblical theology pioneered by scholars like Walter C. Kaiser Jr., N. T. Wright and others. Cf. Kaiser Jr. 2009 and 2008; Bartholomew and Goheen 2006, ix–xii; Wright 2005, 89–94; Wright 1992, 121–144; Alexander 2002 and 2008; Scobie 2003; Roberts 2002 and Goldsworthy 2012.

the lens through which they see everything will be theological. Thus to discover the “epistemic horizon” in which the biblical authors think, live, move and have their being is to discover their theology. Biblical theology is thus concerned with thematic analysis of the Scriptural stories as it attempts to identify the epistemic horizon of the biblical authors, explore their logic, and to assess its narrative implications. Such a methodology could accordingly be entitled: *A Theistic Narrative Method of Biblical Theology*.

Methodological Steps

While there clearly is a growing awareness among some scholars regarding the need to recover the worldview horizon of the biblical authors and thus an increasing attention to its meta-hermeneutical significance, there is nevertheless a limited scholarly attention to the methodological process by which the epistemic worldview horizon of the various biblical authors might be retrieved, identified and assessed without imposing an alien perspective on the biblical texts. The aim of this study is thus tentatively to suggest some basic methodological steps by which to retrieve the epistemic horizon of the biblical authors and to outline its structural meta-historical implications and briefly sketch some of its potential hermeneutical implications. We propose that the first step in the search for a unifying common epistemic horizon in the Scriptural material could start with the Genesis literature by mapping out its major and minor themes.

1. A Threefold Foundational Perspective

In reading the first eleven chapters of Genesis it strikes the reader that it contains a unique story concerning the world and its origin. Canonical criticism does not change the fact that over time the Genesis literature became the preamble to the Hebrew Canon. Our working hypothesis is that the canonical authors could generally be thinking in terms of the triple thematic worldview perspective introduced in the Genesis literature, a worldview paradigm constituted by the following major themes, that is, a theistic creation-theme, a theistic crisis-theme and a divine remedial-promise-theme. If such a triple perspective is traceable in the plotline from Genesis to the Apocalypse then the biblical authors share a triple epistemic horizon and thus inhabit a common unifying world-view paradigm despite any diversity.

1.1 Creation-Perspective

The *Creation-Perspective* is foundational in the Genesis story and is located as the preamble to the entire biblical Canon and apparently introduces a foundational world-view horizon within which the author understands all of divine and physical time-space reality. Thus the most general, comprehensive, all-embracing, all-inclusive statement about everything encountered in the biblical preamble is: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). So if a world-view paradigm is defined as the most general and most inclusive assertion about everything then Genesis 1:1 states its world-view paradigm up front.

The first part of the sentence thus constitutes the radical first-principle in a unique theistic world-view, providing an all-embracing view about everything. The logic of this statement is that before everything else God is. God is seen prior to everything as God is presented as the cause and originator of everything else. So the logic is that God is the uncreated ultimate dimension as everything else is seen as derived from and contingent on Him. Furthermore, the next most important principle about everything is stated in the next sentence namely that "the heavens and the earth" are created and thus depend on the creator for their origin, order, form and structure. Thus the first statement in the Genesis account defines a unique two-dimensional universe in which there is God and creation and beyond this dual horizon there is nothing. Accordingly, the Genesis preamble defines all of reality in a single sentence.

Furthermore, this creator/creation logic implies God can be without creation as He exists prior to created reality and constitutes its pre-condition as creation itself is seen as contingent on Him for its very being. The principle accordingly implies that there is an ontological and dimensional difference between God and creation. The logic of the creation statement clearly implies that nature is not self-originating or self-generating nor eternal but contingent on a theistic dimension for its origin, form, structure, function and being. Accordingly, there is an all-inclusive dependency principle implied in the Genesis formula with regard to created reality including humans (Gen. 2). The tree of life (Gen. 2-3) logic implies that such a dependency is a continual existential condition.

Accordingly, the most general, comprehensive, all-embracing and all-inclusive theory about everything is stated up front in the opening sentence of the Genesis account (Gen. 1:1). This theistic creator/creation formula thus provides

the first principle or ultimate epistemic horizon or worldview paradigm encountered in the Canon. However, the Genesis account immediately modifies this horizon by introducing a disruptive crisis principle.

1.2 Crisis-Perspective

A second general comprehensive thematic principle embracing all of human existence is likewise stated up front in the Genesis preamble (Gen. 3:8–24). A *Crisis-Perspective* appears that concerns the intrusion of a mysterious evil that radically disrupts the divinely intended Paradise order and thus God's plan for the world. While the creation story did warn against evil as a potential option it did not present it as an inherent necessity. God is seen as giving humans a radical choice between the established Paradise order and a potential evil alternative, a choice that He upholds at all costs. The tree of knowledge motif regarding good and evil was attached with a divine health warning (Gen. 2:16–17). Accordingly, the crisis story concerns the fatal choice of the acclaimed progenitors of humanity.

The serpent power is depicted as a mysterious antagonistic force challenging the ontological first principles regarding God's character; a challenge that when accepted by humans will lead to fatal existential consequences. According to the Genesis account the serpent power plants an evil idea in the minds of the human progenitors, subverting their worldview, their response to God and thus their actions (Gen. 3:1–7). The subsequent Genesis story describes how the human consciousness is altered from being in a state of mental orbit around God to an orbit around the human "self" leading to an accelerating state of selfishness and violence (Gen. 4–11). Human evil will thus appear as the functional result of a disrupted interactive relationship with God.

Thus, the social and physical suffering, cruelty, violence, decay and death are seen as originating in the "fall" event and not in the created order itself. The resultant struggle between the values of good and evil is not seen as the result of an ontological but an ideological dualism in God's universe. Although physical and social evil now appear natural and normal to any human empirical observer it is not presented in the Genesis account as something inherent to God's original Paradise order. The natural world in its current state is thus no longer depicted as only life supporting but also as life disruptive and even life destructive. The state of Shalom in Paradise is replaced by deception, war, struggle, violence, suffering and death. The Genesis crisis-principle thus

signals that things are no longer as God intended them to be from the beginning.

Furthermore, while the Genesis account does not explicitly explain why the deceptive event, leading to an act of defiance against God, causes physical death, later biblical authors will apparently ground this fatal effect in the human separation and exclusion from God's life supportive presence. The Genesis account itself only depicts the radical development of human depravity through the seed-line of Cain, a story that accelerates to the point where God is seen as taking further action in terms of the challenge of evil (Gen. 6–9). So while the theistic creator/creation formula constitutes the first principle of a foundational epistemic worldview horizon, the crisis formula constitutes the central theme around which the continuing story revolves, traceable through the accelerating violence of Cain's descendants corrupting the Genesis antediluvian world. The crisis theme thus sets the stage for the third Genesis principle, namely God's dual remedial response to the crisis of evil and death.

1.3 Remedial Perspective

The third general thematic principle embedded in the Genesis worldview horizon concerns the dual *Remedial Perspective* embodied in the divine promise that God will exercise damage control by taking actions to restrain, contain and undo the evil force that now disrupts the Paradise order and thus take redemptive actions to restore humans to the Paradise life now seen as lost. The key word is "curses" in contrast to the preceding Paradise Blessings (Gen. 3:14–19).

1.3.1 Curses

Thus the Genesis account indicates that God immediately takes actions in response to human defection by subjecting the world to a string of natural, social, spiritual and cosmic "curses." Firstly, the Serpent power as the agent of human evil is unconditionally condemned to eternal destruction (Gen. 3:14); secondly as a result of the evil disruption, the male-female social relationship is radically altered (Gen. 3:16); thirdly, the "curse" is seen as resulting in radically changed environmental conditions, as humans are seen as losing their divinely given supremacy over the natural order which now turns hostile (Gen. 3:17–19), leaving the created order in a state of self-regulating struggle,

decay, suffering, distress and death, and finally the human interactive relationship with God is disrupted resulting in exclusion and death (Gen. 3:22–24). The Genesis story depicts God as twice taking further actions extending the physical and social curses in response to a continued growth in human violence (Gen. 3:5–21; 11:1–9) and the rise of systemic organized evil. Thus, the curses appear as God’s temporary damage control actions by which He seeks to restrain the human empire of evil.

1.3.2 Blessings

However, this is not God’s only response to the rise of evil. Actually, He is seen as taking positive actions aiming at restoring the lost blessings. Thus, God is seen as simultaneously issuing a string of redemptive promises in response to the human predicament, promised divine actions that would ultimately undo the effects of evil and terminate its instigator and that this will happen through a human agency, that is, the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15). God is thus seen as issuing a double promise to humanity to undo the serpent and all he brought to the human experience – his lies and death; a promise to empower humanity to resist the serpent power and ensure that through the “seed” or descendants the serpent power would be destroyed. The genealogies in Genesis chapters 5, 10 and 11 are thus parading descendants who are all seen as being part of the same family line, a family story that will eventually narrow down into further subsections with Noah and Abraham. The first 12 chapters of Genesis thus logically set the stage for the Israel-centred story that follows, which in turn sets the stage for the Christ story, which in turn sets the stage for the apostolic story, which in turn sets the stage for the future restoration of all things.

Now while the overarching promise theme in the Genesis account is a victory motif, this cryptic promise does not specify how, when and by whom this will happen; it only provides a general promise that it will happen. Thus is introduced a general direction and goal towards which God will lead the human story. However, the logic of this promise is that all the evil that has been caused by the serpent-power will eventually be undone and the curses removed and the Paradise life form restored. While the latter implications are not stated directly, the victory motif makes no logical sense if this is not the anticipated outcome.

Thus, the Genesis promise regarding God's double response logically implies that one could anticipate a God-directed story; a plot-line advancing to a divinely set goal of termination and restoration. The narrative nature of the emerging covenant story thus appears to be anticipated in the Genesis epistemic horizon itself. The subsequent plotline of the entire book of Genesis clearly follows this kind of rationale, advancing the story in stages through divine actions. The first 12 chapters of Genesis thus logically set the epistemic horizon for an Israel-centred story that will follow the Abraham covenant, which in turn will set the stage for the Christ story, which in turn will set the stage for the apostolic story, which in turn will set the stage for the future restoration of all things.

So while the theistic creator/creation formula provides the first principle or foundational epistemic worldview horizon, the crisis formula immediately modifies this horizon by adding a second principle of human evil as a disrupting and distorting force in the world, while the remedial formula provides the third principle promising the subsequent divine resolution to the problem of evil. Accordingly, the interaction between the central crisis theme and the divine redemption theme forms the grand narrative plot-line around which the subsequent story could be expected to revolve, a plot-line advancing the drama to a divinely promised goal of the termination of evil and thus the restoration of God's intended goodness for creation embodied in the Paradise order. The Genesis triple thematic perspective has all the hallmarks of a unique theistic world-view paradigm, or epistemic horizon, and as such it appear to provide the controlling worldview boundary within which the subsequent narratives are logically to be understood.

1.4 Tentative Methodological Considerations

The critical question concerns whether this triple Genesis perspective constitutes the worldview horizon inhabited by the subsequent Canonical authors. If this worldview perspective can be traced in the plotline from the Genesis account to the Apocalypse then it would mean that not only do the Canonical authors inhabit a common unifying worldview paradigm despite any diversity, they also inhabit the particular worldview of the Genesis account. In particular the dual theme of human evil and God's remedial response would serve as the centre around which the subsequent divine-human drama might be understood. Actually, the Genesis account itself introduces the reader to

the first three successive historical stages in the human drama: the creation-stage, the crisis-stage, the promise-stage, a promise stage that logically anticipates an ultimate fulfilment-stage. So the story would include at least four major stages, stages that would be crucial for meta-hermeneutics.

As the first methodological step we propose the following questions as helpful in searching for the epistemic horizon within which the various Canonical authors are thinking. Firstly, (a) there is the need to trace to what degree and in what manner the triple thematic principle is assumed, maintained, deepened, applied and expanded by the various authors of the Bible. If we find that the biblical authors think in terms of the triple Genesis first principles then we have discovered what N.T. Wright, Craig Bartholomew, Norman Gully and others call the biblical “meta-narrative” or “worldview” and thus their epistemic horizon. Secondly, (b) there is a need to explore and identify the redemptive covenant promise introduced in the Genesis account, and to trace to what degree and in what manner this redemptive covenant promise is assumed, maintained, deepened, applied and expanded by the various authors of the Bible, and thirdly (c) there is a need to evaluate the manner in which this redemptive covenant promise directs the advancing redemptive plotline through the various stages in the projected Israelite covenant history. Those critical analytical questions might help to establish not only the stages and sub-stages in the advancing story but also its worldview horizon and thus guard against imposing alien dogmatic or naturalistic assumptions on the Canonical literature. Thus the narrative Genesis logic will progressively be revealed in the advancing stages in the emerging story. Given that the Genesis account itself provides the first three successive historical stages in the divine/human drama in anticipation of an ultimate fulfilment stage, we may have a major hermeneutical key to the meaning and theology of the various authors of Scriptures.

2. An Emerging Staged Story

The critical issue concerns the method by which this story is detected in the subsequent Canonical literature. The texts of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Psalms, Prophets, Ezra Nehemiah, Matthew, Luke, Acts and Romans all seem to reflect a Genesis covenant interpretation of the Israelite story and even the usage of genealogies is an ingenious shorthand for linking the past and present into a coherent covenant history. Comparing the covenant interpretations

of the Israelite history by the various biblical authors appears to yield a rather consistent picture.⁶ N. T. Wright expressed the Israelite consciousness as it matured in the hopes and expectations of Second Temple Judaism by saying, “many first-century Jews thought of the period they were living in as the continuation of a great scriptural narrative, and of the moment they themselves were in as late on within the ‘continuing exile’ of Daniel 9” (Tom Wright 2009, 42). In other words they saw their covenant history as a God-directed journey extending from its perceived biblical past to its future consummation according to the biblical promise. The issue in biblical theology is not to prove that the recorded biblical history is true, but that there is a detectable unanimity in its perception and interpretation of that history and thus a common theological horizon.

2.1 Era of Promise

The genealogies in Genesis chapters 5, 10 and 11 parades a whole line of recipients of the initial redemptive promise, a promise that is seen as passing on through the descendants of Noah and which finds its constituent form in a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12; 15 and 17). The first 12 chapters of the Genesis story thus logically set the stage for the specific promise era expected to follow, which sets the stage for the anticipated fulfilment era.

With the covenant charter with Abraham God is seen as advancing the redemptive promise story through the family of Abraham as the historical human agent of bringing the promised divine blessings to the world. The covenant blessing pronounced to Abraham appears to be an echo of the primordial blessing from Paradise where it embodied the essence of God’s abundant purpose for the world (Gen. 12:2–3). Thus, the story of Abraham’s family is the story of God’s redemptive agent of blessing in the world. The covenant charter is thus foundational for the subsequent history as God here is seen as

⁶ The chronological covenant structure does not follow the order in which the various texts are located in the Canon. However, these texts implicitly and explicitly contain a historical chronology expressed by the thematic and historical markers in the text itself along with their covenant interpretation. For examples of how biblical authors think in terms of covenant story see: 1 Samuel 12:6–12; Psalms 78; 80; 83; 105; 106; Nehemiah 9:6–37; Daniel 9; Matthew 7:1–17; Luke 3:23–33; 24:1–50; Acts 7:1–60; Romans 11; 12; 13.

taking action to advance his specific plan to the restore the lost Paradise blessing for the world through the family of Abraham.

Thus, the Abraham story initiates a divine covenant commitment that guides the subsequent patriarchal history and moves it towards the promised Exodus and beyond. The descendants of Abraham are seen as the collective seed of Abraham (Ex. 1 and 19) delivered according to the covenant promise recorded in Genesis by the specific actions of God. The exodus event thus marks the historic action of God in directing the redemptive plotline and understood as such by the narrators of the alleged event. Faithful to the covenant, God is seen as hearing their cry and brings rescue and redemption from slavery and oppression (Ex. 3; 20). The covenant consciousness about Israel's role and mission appear to be foundational for the Pentateuch projection of the future story of Israel. Accordingly, the Israelite covenant story is seen a progressing within the boundaries of God's dual remedial response to evil in terms of blessing and curses (Deut. 27–30).

The exodus event is thus seen as God taking specific actions to further advance his plan for the world by constituting the nation of Israel. Even the amendment to the Abraham covenant (Ex. 19–25)⁷ with its institutions, places, objects and offices within the community of Israel is seen as additional divinely instituted means to ensure the mission of Israel as projected in the Covenant with Abraham (Ex. 25:8). From this juncture the divine plan for the world is seen as advancing through the turbulent history of Israel, from the time of Moses through the Judges to the rise of the monarchy, guided by the provisions of the covenant.

The appointment of David and the constitution of his dynasty as a permanent institution in Israel through a divine oath of covenant, represent a further sub-stage in the promise story. This appears as a further amendment to the constitution of Israel which fits thematically into all the previous promises as it provides a more explicit agenda God's plans for the world (2 Sam. 7; Gen. 17:6, 16) than those given to Abraham and Moses. This amendment to the covenant promise will definitively shape and determine the Israelite anticipations concerning God's plan for the world. From now on the idea of the kingdom,

⁷ In the comment of the Apostle Paul the Sinai event is best understood as an amendment as he insists that whatever the Sinai covenant adds it must be understood within the premises of the Abraham agreement. See Galatians 3:15–29.

and the king as God's servant within the servant Israel, will take centre-stage in the Israelite theological consciousness. (Psalms 2; 22; 72; 89; 110; 132).

However, the story of the kingdom after David will reveal that the kingship institution is not a cure for the problem of evil and that Israel despite the dynasty will continue to gravitate towards apostasy and disaster. Their history reveals that the remedial actions taken by God are apparently only provisional in nature as they are followed by a deepening crisis followed by further remedial actions. A repetitive negative drama thus unfolds through the biblical stories, reaching a catastrophic low point during the demise of the Israelite kingdom ending in destruction and exile (2 Chron. 36:11–21).

This is precisely the context in which prophets will begin to introduce a string of significant messianic-kingdom promises pointing to a "day" when God will take decisive remedial actions and thus liberate the world from the disruptive force of evil destroying Israel and the world. The prophet Isaiah in particular provides a grand vision of the future beyond the exile, a vision that will be echoed in other exilic and post-exilic prophetic writings. They will cast a grand vision of a glorious blessed future day when God will enter upon his world-wide rule through the anticipated kingship of a future son of David, who will terminate the reign of evil, restore the divine/human communion with God, spiritually renew the human hearts as the precondition for a renewed creation (Is. 9; 11; 35; 42; 49; 53; 59; 65). The prophetic vision leaves the inheritors of the covenant with a massive expectation regarding a future transitional intervention in which God will eventually deliver on the promises.

God's remedial actions and prophetic promises, in response to the deepening crisis of evil in the late Israelite kingdom era, will thus generate a growing anticipation of a coming major transitional event where everything will be transformed and renewed. Thus the whole Israelite journey reveals that the Israel provisions were only temporary provisions and not the real solutions to the problem of evil. The prophetic vision of the future messianic final solution to the human predicament thus points to a coming transition point in the Israelite narrative conceptually dividing the covenant story into two major parts, broadly defined as eras of *promise* and *fulfilment*. This, however, does not indicate that no covenant promises have been fulfilled in the past, but only that there is a significant build up to an anticipated future transitional grand messianic event, when the problem of evil causing continued disaster will eventually be resolved, and the eternal rule of the lost Paradise blessing will finally

be restored. Thus it is the Hebrew Scriptures themselves that anticipate the coming of a future decisive transitional stage in the human story, an anticipation that was already inherent to the logic of the Genesis worldview paradigm.

2.2 Era of Fulfilment

Given that it is the Hebrew Scriptures themselves that anticipate the coming of a future decisive transitional stage in the advancing Israelite drama, the real force of the apostolic proclamation is that with Jesus the decisive transition in God's mission to the world through Israel has arrived. The Apostles thus introduced Jesus as the fulfiller of all that was promised, predicted and intended in the antecedent covenant charter and accordingly they proclaim him to be the provider of the ultimate remedy to the problem of demonic/human evil.

Jesus is presented as the promised descendant of Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1) in line with the prophetic promises. His life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension are part of the final exodus from the continuing exile from Paradise into which humanity was plunged in the fall (Luke 9:31; John 8:33–36). Thus, Jesus is depicted as dealing with more than the temporal predicament of the Israelite nation but with the primordial human problem of exclusion from God through the evil arising according to the Genesis event (Luke 24:47; John 8:34–36). The Apostles will argue that with Jesus the great reversal in the cosmic drama of good and evil has occurred, thus initiating the anticipated grand era of fulfilment of God's plan for the world through the house of David. Jesus is thus being proclaimed from day one on the Day of Pentecost to be seated at the right hand of God as the rightful Lord and saviour, advancing the story to its ultimate goal (Acts 1–5).

However, the Apostles not only connect Jesus with the past kingship promise package but also present him as the one who deals with the central theme of evil as he is the one who crushes the head of the serpent (Heb. 2:14–15; John 12:31). Furthermore, they explicitly claim that through his death he has resolved the exclusion problem from God, opening the way for humans to return to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Christ is thus seen as the one who graciously reconnects humans to God and renews their spiritual life before restoring all things (Acts 3:21) as promised by the prophets. Given that it is the Hebrew Scriptures themselves that anticipate the coming of a future decisive transitional stage in the advancing Israelite drama, the real force of the apostolic proclamation is that with Jesus the decisive transition in God's mission to the

world through Israel has arrived; the Apostles thus proclaim Jesus as the fulfiller of all that was promised, predicted and intended in the antecedent covenant history.

However, the apostolic understanding is that this fulfilment will not be realized as a single event (Luke 19:11) but rather in major successive stages broadly seen as an apostolic *already and not yet*. Thus, in the apostolic proclamation, the past and present work of the Messiah is embodied in the “already” in anticipation of the “not yet”. Actually, it is Jesus himself who draws this line highlighting that the fulfilment will come in stages. More specifically, the fulfilment scheme divides the redemptive work of Christ into past, present and future stages.⁸ So while the Hebrew prophetic promise story leaves the impression that when the Messiah comes everything will be restored as a single cluster of events, it is Jesus himself who claims that he as the Messiah will orchestrate this fulfilment in a series of temporal stages. In other words, the fulfilment era will also be subdivided into further stages that will be crucial for the meta-hermeneutical reading of the biblical narrative.

Thus, the drama of Jesus does not end with his death, resurrection or even his ascension. Thus synchronized with his ascension, a new stage in the fulfilment story opens. In this new apostolic “already” phase of fulfilment Israel is seen as the restored as a community of faith centred in Jesus Christ without the support of an earthly temple and civil state (Acts 2–4; 10; Rom. 3:28–29; 9–11). The mission story now widens to include all the nations promised to participate in the blessing given to Abraham. Christ and his heavenly priestly work is thus depicted as constituting the ultimate divine antidote to the problem of human depravity as introduced in Genesis and portrayed in the biblical storyline (Gal. 3:13–14; Rom. 3:24). In this stage of the fulfilment the newly constituted community of believers now tells the story of God’s redemptive provisions for a fallen world and presents Jesus as the one who will be the ultimate fulfiller of God’s plan (John 15:26; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:1–6).

So, while Jesus is seen leading humans into a permanent relation with God through his priestly ministry in the apostolic “already” of fulfilment, he is also

⁸ The Apostles from the Day of Pentecost clearly distinguish between the past, present and future restorative work of Christ, thus further clarifying that the kingdom will not be restored as a single event: Luke 19:11. Acts 2:30–36; 3:19–21; 5:30–32; 17:30–31; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28; 2 Timothy 4:1.

presented as the one who in the “not yet” of the fulfilment will lead humans into a restored new creation through his kingly ministry, that is, the shalom of Paradise (Matt. 25:31–34). The Day of the Lord stage is in the apostolic thinking a future “not yet” activity of Christ in which he will fully execute his kingship as the judge of all the earth (Acts 10:42; 17:30–31; Rom. 2:16). Only after the termination of evil and death does the narrative finally arrive at the stage of God “being all” in all and thus a renewed Creation (1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21–22). This is where the curses will end and sin, death and all evil will be no more as all will be restored to the shalom of Paradise. Heaven itself is depicted as coming down on earth as God will dwell with humanity in a built-up Paradise named the Holy City (Rev. 21:1–10). The exclusion from God’s Paradise presence is now past and humanity will embark on its eternal journey with God, participating in His immortality (Rev. 21:4; 22:1–5).

Thus, this climactic activity of Christ is depicted as the final great transitional event in the human drama, effecting the final great exodus of all humanity from the present post-Paradise state of existence. This is depicted by the Apostles, especially Paul, as the great transitional event and includes a whole cluster of divine actions such as the judgment, Christ’s advent, the resurrection, the termination of the rule of evil and thus the final destruction of death, preparatory to the restoration of God’s rule in all creation (1 Cor. 15). While the Day of the Lord is seen as having the Parousia as its great central transitional divine act, it appears to embrace a series of pre-advent, advent and post-advent judicial activities of Christ (Dan. 7–9; Rev. 16–20).

Several scholars argue that the biblical covenant narrative divides into five or six major stages.⁹ On the basis of the apostolic evidence we suggest that the covenant story may best be divided into seven major stages and that such a division will be more in line with the inner meta-narrative logic of the biblical Canon seen as a whole, especially in the light of the apostolic “already” and “not yet” principle regarding the staged messianic fulfilment of the restorative promise. These seven major stages could be defined as: the creation event, the crisis event, the promise era, Jesus and the fulfilment, the gospel and fulfilment, the judgment and fulfilment and the restoration and fulfilment.

⁹ N. T. Wright argues for a five-stage narrative structure while Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen argues for a six-stage narrative structure of the Canonical master-narrative (Wright 2005, 89–94; Wright 1992, 121–144; Bartholomew and Goheen 2006, ix–xii).

A 7-stage Theistic-narrative Method

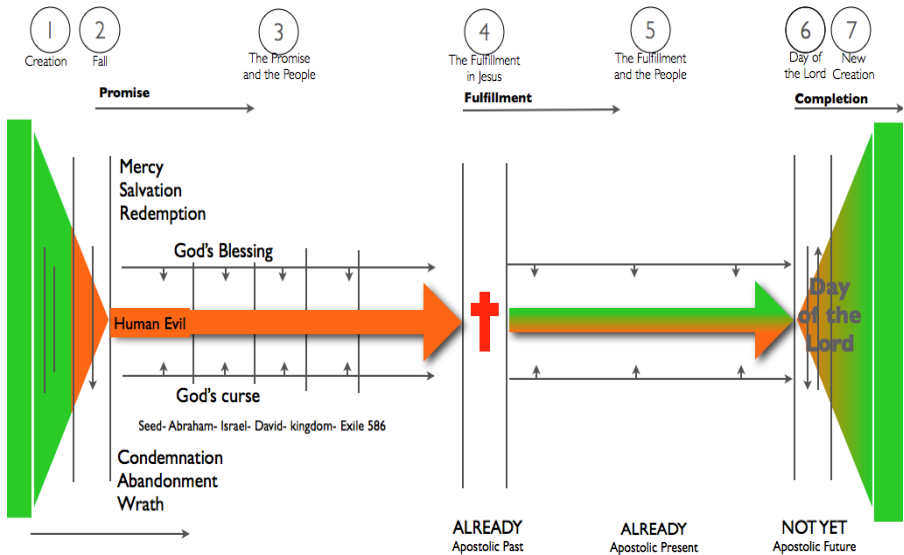


Fig. 1: A 7-Stage Theistic-narrative Method (Pedersen and Barna 2011: visual illustration on p. 2)

3. Concluding Hermeneutical Reflections

The general pattern of promise and fulfilment and the specific subdivisions of the fulfilment principle into the “already” and “not yet” thus provide the reader with a major key to understanding the staged structure of the biblical covenant story, a structure that has formative implications for the exegetical reading and doctrinal application of the Hebrew and Apostolic Scriptures. So when the apostolic fulfilment story is seen as proceeding through a temporal “already” and “not yet” sequence, the critical hermeneutical reading issue then relates to *which aspects of the promise, purpose and predictions have already been fulfilled, which aspects are in the process of being fulfilled and which aspects are still to be fulfilled as seen from an apostolic perspective.*

We propose that the biblical epistemic worldview horizon with its seven-staged covenant-history thus provides the necessary meta-hermeneutical controlling framework by which the Scriptures are allowed to tell their own story on their own premises. Actually, the biblical epistemic worldview horizon with its seven-staged covenant-history could be compared to a giant telescope with three sets of lenses, that is, the lenses of beginnings, the lenses of promises and the lenses of fulfilment. Thus this worldview perspective provides the mental lenses by which to interpret experienced and observed reality as it brings to view the promised divine hope for the future, a view that hermeneutically depends on the right setting of the lenses.

Accordingly, when it is textually and thematically established that a given Canonical author/text thinks in terms of the Genesis worldview horizon with its emerging stage covenant-history, then the immediate meta-hermeneutical implications are, that an *antecedent context principle* must apply in the reading of that Scriptural author/text. Irrespective of where that author/text sits in the Canonical literature one would then need thematically to trace backward in order to read the theological themes of that author/text in the light of the preceding Genesis epistemic horizon and its covenant-history and thus assess how the author/text is contributing to its vision and advance of the that covenant-history.

Furthermore, the apostolic principle of the “already” and “not yet” of messianic fulfilment when applied respectively to the *goal* of restoration and the *means* of restoration, will determine which elements in the Hebrew remedial institutions, practices and values have continuous validity despite temporary accommodations, and which elements will progressively discontinue and be redundant in the apostolic era of fulfilment.¹⁰ Accordingly then, this meta-hermeneutical principle has crucial implications not only for comprehending the continuities and discontinuities in the advancing covenant history but also for its doctrinal implications in the advancing stages of the covenant history.

Finally, the proposed biblical epistemic worldview horizon with its seven-staged covenant-history seems to provide the opportunity for a re-mapping of the methodological process by which the reader mentally moves from text

¹⁰ For a more comprehensive discussion of the interpretative implication of the apostolic “already” and “not yet” principle of fulfilment see: Pedersen 2016, 166–174.

to system. Methodologically we will suggest a triple methodical process beginning with *textual exegesis*, proceeding through a *thematic analysis* and ending in *systematic application*. Unfortunately the activity of thematic analysis both in part and as a whole is frequently sidelined, or neglected and thus appears as a missing link in the mental process of proceeding from text to system. Even when thematic analysis is recognized as a necessary methodical link in the theological process of moving from text to system, it is not always granted a critical bridging hermeneutical role as a discipline in its own right. Accordingly, we propose that it is the process of thematic analysis that is the hermeneutical hall-mark of the discipline of biblical theology.

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Zusammenfassung

Hier wird ein meta-hermeneutischer Ansatz vorgeschlagen, der dazu beitragen könnte, die tieferen Annahmen und den epistemischen Horizont eines bestimmten biblischen Autors aufzudecken. Zuerst wird die Logik der biblischen Geschichte vom Anfang untersucht und in Bezug auf ihren weltanschaulichen Horizont bewertet, einen Horizont, der die größere Perspektive darstellen könnte, in der spätere Autoren denken. Zweitens wird der Artikel eine umfassende Analyse der späteren Bundeserzählungen vornehmen und ihre Handlungsstränge hinsichtlich der Vorwegnahme der Zukunft nachzeichnen, einer Zukunft, die in den apostolischen Erzählungen als in Erfüllung seiend angesehen wird. Abschließend werden einige hermeneutische Prinzipien skizziert als mögliche Leitlinien bei der Lektüre und Anwendung des biblischen Materials in Bezug auf Lehre und religiöse Praxis.

Résumé

Cet article proposera une approche méta-herméneutique qui pourrait aider à découvrir les hypothèses plus profondes et l'horizon épistémique d'un auteur biblique donné. Premièrement, la logique de l'histoire biblique du début sera examinée et évaluée en fonction de son horizon de vision du monde; un horizon qui pourrait constituer la perspective plus large dans laquelle les auteurs suivants pourraient penser. Deuxièmement, l'article s'engagera dans une large analyse des récits d'alliance ultérieurs retraçant leurs intrigues en termes d'anticipation de l'avenir; un avenir que les récits apostoliques perçoivent comme des accomplissements. Enfin, il y aura une brève esquisse de quelques principes herméneutiques qui peuvent servir de lignes directrices pour la lecture et les applications des matériaux bibliques en termes de doctrine et de pratique religieuse.

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Reading Creation and Judgment Motifs in the Three Angels' Message (Rev. 14:6–12)

In Quest for a Theological Link

Laszlo Gallusz

Abstract

This article examines the link between the creation theology and the judgment theology of the Three Angels' Message of Revelation 14:6–13. It suggests that the concept of covenant provides the connecting link between these two themes which are of major significance for the theological vision of Revelation. An argument is advanced which demonstrates how the notion of covenant is woven into the Three Angels' message, and how it is integral to both the creation and the judgment motifs.

The central concern of the biblical doctrine of creation is the relation of the eternal God Creator with the world he has made.¹ One of the most elaborate New Testament treatments of that relationship is found in the book of Revelation. While in the last book of the biblical canon the creation theme has often been linked to protology (4:11), to the concept of worship (14:7) or to the eschatological solution (Rev 21–22), its relationship to the book's judgment theology has generally been overlooked. The link between the two themes surfaces most directly in the Cosmic Conflict vision (chs. 12–14), namely in the scene of the Three Angels' Message (14:6–13).

¹ In the last century number of significant works have been written which explored the theme of creation from biblical, theological and philosophical perspective. See e.g. Brunner 1952; Barth 1960; Moltmann 1993; Gunton 1997.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the nature of the connectedness of the creation theology and judgment in this scene, which delineates the eschatological proclamation of the “eternal gospel” (14:6). This necessitates, first of all, giving close attention to the book’s creation theology as the theological foundation of the exploration. After this, a structural and contextual enquiry will be pursued, which will be followed by the analysis of leading creation and judgment motifs and anti-motifs. Finally, a suggestion will be made for the link which connects creation and judgment in the Three Angels’ Message, but more widely in the entire book of Revelation.

1. Theological Foundation: Revelation’s Theism and Creation Theology

One of the most distinctive features of the book of Revelation is its highly developed doctrine of God. Its strong theocentric perspective dominates the book from its beginning to its end. The first thing John sees after his ascension to heaven and the last thing which he sees at the end of his vision is God’s throne (4:1; 22:1–5). God is the One who speaks before anyone (1:8) and he speaks at the end (21:5–8).² During the course of Revelation’s drama he remains silent, sitting on his throne, though his involvement in the course of human history is beyond doubt.³

A cardinal aspect of Revelation’s theism is its strong creation theology. God is not only pictured as the sovereign king of the universe, but as its sovereign Creator. The idea is rooted in the Old Testament in which it is repeatedly emphasized that Yahweh is the holy life-giver, the Creator of all things.⁴ Life begins with God, therefore his act of creation is “the primar[il]y foundation for human faith in God” (Doukhan 2016, 40). By creation “God has ‘made room’ for a reality that is not-God.” (Thiselton 2015, 45).

Therefore, creation is to be considered as the first act of “self-humiliation” of the omnipotent God who creates by a free will. As Barth persuasively argues, the aim of creation was covenant, the creation of humankind out of love

² Significantly, the central statement of God’s last speech (the fourth out of seven statements) corresponds theologically to his first speech: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (21:6). For a possible chiasmic structure of 21:5–8, see Gallusz 2014, 130–132.

³ From ch. 4 onward God is referred to twelve times as “the One sitting on the throne” (4:2, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 7:10; 6:16; 7:15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5). The reference occurs in six different grammatical forms. Also, the abbreviated form “the One sitting” (ὁ καθήμενος) occurs in 4:3.

⁴ E. g. Ps. 19:1–2; 33:9; Isa. 40:28; 45:18.

for a relationship in which the primary giver is God himself (Barth 1960, 42–329). So, the character of creation is that of absolute giving: a divine act without an antecedent (Schwöbel 1997, 163). His giving is a “faithful giving,” since he does not retire after completing his work, but he shows continued interest in his creation by maintaining it and working on its restoration after sin came to the earth (Schwöbel 1997, 167). Thus, God’s activity related to his creation is an expression of his faithfulness. As will be seen later in the course of this study, understanding the covenantal nature of Old Testament creation theology is of critical importance for relating creation theology and judgment theology of Revelation in the context of Revelation 14:6–13.

The throne-room vision (chs. 4–5) is considered the “pivotal section” of the whole book of Revelation. This vision defines the key symbolic images of the book and it lays the foundation for what is going to follow in the unfolding drama. More importantly, it provides the key for the theology of the entire book by providing a detailed picture of the true sovereignty in the universe: God, who is the unparalleled ruler of the reality (ch. 4) and who has a clear plan for solving the problem of evil (ch. 5). At the climactic point of the first scene of the vision God is praised as the creator: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (4:11). The causal clause introduced by ὅτι (“for”) indicates the basis of the praise: (1) God’s giving demonstrated through creation; and (2) God’s will as the reason for continuous sustaining of the creation. The emphasis on sustaining “all things” which were created seems to be motivated by a pastoral intention: to encourage God’s people by assuring them that “the Creator will not relinquish his creation to the Destroyer or be content when the world’s inhabitants worship what their hands have made rather than the Maker of all things” (Koester 2014, 371). Whatever situation God’s people need to face, they are ensured of God’s faithfulness to his creation and the triumph of his purposes.

According to Revelation, the fact that God is the Creator has number of implications. Four will be pointed out here, which bear significance for interpreting Revelation 14:6–13. First, he is the ultimate ruler of the creation. Therefore, the imagery of sovereignty is used in the book to define the relationship between him and the human beings. While the difference between the Creator and his creatures surpasses all human analogies, John uses the throne as a concept deriving from the human world to express the divine transcendence

in relation to all creaturely existence. This imagery, featuring in 17 out of 22 chapters of the book,⁵ will become particularly important in expressing the tension between the divine government of the Creator and the forces of evil who launch in the end-time a “new order” based on deification of human power (ch. 13). Second, the proper response to the Creator’s supreme authority is worship. The book of Revelation is the most liturgical book in the New Testament. It is replete with worship scenes.⁶ The Greek προσκυνέω (“to worship”) is applied in the heavenly temple setting both to God and to the Lamb (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 15:4; 19:4; 20:4), but it also features in earthly scenes designating the worship of evil forces (9:20; 13:4.8.12.15; 14:9.11; 16:2; 19:20). This duality highlights the centrality of the problem of idolatry, a misdirected worship in the drama of Revelation, and it clarifies the sovereign authority of God against the usurping attempts of the forces of evil (Osborne 2002, 46–48). In this theological context, of utmost significant is the call of the first angel given in a loud voice in 14:7: “worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” In the text a clear link is made between worship and God’s work of creation. According to Revelation 13–14 the choice regarding worship is the crucial choice which humanity faces: whether to acknowledge God’s sovereignty or turn toward quasi-sovereignities exercising authority in the world.⁷

Third, the Creator’s commitment to his creation provides the basis for hope for the future of creation. Clearly, God does not give up the earth as a lost territory, but he works on its restoration following a clear plan. He will demonstrate his faithfulness to his creation by “destroying those who destroy the earth” (11:18). This is an act of delivering creation from evil in order to preserve it. Only after removing the threat of evil will God renew the creation. Essential to his promises is that he is “making all things new” (21:5). The universal notion (τὰ πάντα) of the new creation echoes God’s original creative activity (Bauckham 1993, 50). So, the hope in eschatological renewal is rooted

⁵ The throne references are concentrated mostly in the throne-room vision of chs. 4–5: 4:2 (2x); 4:3–4 (3x); 4:5 (2x); 4:6 (3x); 4:9–10 (2x); 5:1; 5:6; 5:7; 5:11; 5:13. The other references are the following: 1:4; 2:13; 3:21 (2x); 6:16; 7:9–11 (2x); 7:15 (2x); 7:17; 8:3; 11:16; 12:5; 13:2; 14:3; 16:10; 16:17; 19:4; 19:5; 20:4; 20:11; 20:12; 21:3; 21:5; 22:1; 22:3.

⁶ On hymnic material in Revelation, see Schedtler 2014; Grabiner 2016.

⁷ Harrington 1993, 30 rightly notes: “Human creatures are, as creatures, subject to some lordship ... The choice is of fundamental importance.”

in faith in God as the Creator, in a belief in his faithfulness to his creation. Bauckham rightly concludes, "Where faith in God the Creator wanes, so inevitably does hope for resurrection, let alone the new creation of all things. It is the God who is the Alpha who will also be the Omega" (Bauckham 1993, 51).

Fourth, creation has a relational dimension which deeply affects human life. The faithful Creator is a person, therefore his worshippers are to relate to him not as an impersonal reality. Since the Creator is a person, all that he creates exists in the context of relationships. Human beings are creatures; therefore, they are to live in awareness of their creaturely nature (5:9–10) which implies giving glory to their Creator (14:7).⁸ The basic context for regulating the relationship between the Creator and his creation is covenant. To be a creature means to be called to a covenantal relationship with the Creator which presupposes a moral life in accordance with the order of creation.⁹

2. Structural and Contextual Consideration

Over the last several decades it has been gradually recognized that a chiasmic structure can be discerned in Revelation. If the temple motif is followed as an organizing principle, the structure is sevenfold, and the literary centre and the theological core of the book is the Cosmic Conflict vision (chs. 12–14). (Davidson 1992, 99–130; Paulien 1995, 247–255; Beale 1999, 131).¹⁰ This section had already been considered by Bousset, more than a century ago, "the pinnacle of the apocalyptic prophecy" (Bousset 1906, 335). The Three Angels' Message (14:6–13) features within the central vision of the book as one of its scenes, and because of the dynamics of the story-line it is natural that its details are closely linked with the other scenes of the vision. Therefore, an exegetically responsible approach to the Three Angels' Message requires a contextual interpretation which seeks to understand its function in the literary context of the entire vision.

⁸ For the ethical dimensions of Revelation's creation theology, see Lichtenwalter 2004.

⁹ Ethical dimensions of the covenant are indicated in 11:19; 12:17; 14:12.

¹⁰ In contrast to this view, in the middle of Fiorenza 1991, 35–36, sevenfold chiasmic structure is 10:1–15:4 and in the chiasmic structure of Stefanovic 2009, 37, is 11:19–13:18.

The Cosmic Conflict vision, similarly to other visions, is characterized by a clear line of progress. Its overall structure can be broken down into the following constituent parts:

- (1) The History of the Conflict: The Woman and the Dragon (12:1–17)
- (2) Satan’s End-Time Propaganda: Deceiving the Inhabitants of the Earth (13:1–18)
- (3) The Victors in the Conflict: The Lamb and His Army (14:1–5)
- (4) God’s End-Time Warning: A Final Call to the World (14:6–13)
- (5) The End of the Conflict: The Second Coming (14:14–20)

Three features related to this structural outline call for particular comments. First, the Cosmic Conflict vision is introduced by a short temple scene which sets the theological keynote for interpreting the entire vision: “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail” (Rev. 11:19). The focal object of the vision is “the ark of the covenant” (ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης). The ark was in the Old Testament the “pledge” of Yahweh’s presence, a powerful “symbol of leadership in time of both war and peace” (Zobel 2011, 371). It points in the context of the Cosmic Conflict vision to God’s sovereignty and his covenantal faithfulness. As the ark went in front of the Israelite army in the holy wars of the Old Testament, similarly God’s covenantal faithfulness involving his sovereign power are with his people in the eschatological conflict.¹¹ The proclamation of the Three Angels’ Message is the expression of God’s covenantal faithfulness to his creation: it is a warning which seeks the benefit of humanity in a situation of conflict of sovereignties on the earth.

Second, while ch. 12 focuses on the history of conflict which is delineated in three successive phases,¹² the focus in chs. 13 and 14 is on the eschatological

¹¹ For a detailed discussion on the significance of the temple scene of 11:19 for the Cosmic Conflict vision, see Gallusz 2011, 103–122.

¹² As LaRondelle 1997, 265, points out, “Revelation 12 covers the whole covenant history of the Christian church.”

The three phases of it are the following: (1) the birth of the male child and the woman – Jesus and the beginning of the church (12:1–6); (2) the dragon’s persecution of the woman – the history of the church (12:13–16); and (3) the dragon’s war against the remnant – the church in the end-

conflict for humanity's allegiance between the divine and the diabolic forces. In 13:1–18 and 14:6–13 two end-time strategies are pictured: both have as a goal securing the allegiance of the inhabitants of the earth. The question between the lines is logical: what is the final outcome of the conflict? The answer is given in the heavenly scene sandwiched between the two mentioned earthly scenes: the Lamb and his army are presented as the conquerors whose kingdom prevails over the diabolic kingdom (14:1–5).¹³ A fundamental implication of this structural insight is that 13:1–18 and 14:6–13 are counterparts: the interpretation of each requires the consideration of the other.

Third, Revelation, in an apocalyptic fashion, develops some of its major theological motifs by the means of contrasts. This literary technique is clearly seen at work in chs. 13–14. By the series of contrasts a complex network of cross-references is created, which shed light not only on the meaning of parts, but also on the whole (Bauckham 1993, 18). The root of Revelation's apocalyptic dualism is the irreconcilable contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world (Stevenson 2014, 96–97). Read in this context, the Three Angels' Message functions as "the divine antidote against the deceptions of the evil powers" (Mueller 2013, 149). Theological antithesis is used as an effective technique in unmasking deception and reinforcing truth. Ethically, the contrast between Satan's end-time propaganda and God's end-time message emphasizes the necessity of choice: If the world is God's creation, he is to be given glory (14:7) and not the quasi-sovereigns who usurp God's place by demanding worship (13:4 [2x]; 13:8; 13:12; 13:15; 14:9; 14:11).

The contextual analysis of the Three Angels' Message should not be limited to discussing the Cosmic Conflict Vision (chs. 12–14). The scene of Revelation 14:6–13 is to be understood also in light of the subsequent visions, which clarify details of the symbols by providing deeper insights. For example, the first reference to Babylon in the book occurs in 14:8 (in the context of the second angel's message), but the meaning and the fate of Babylon is elaborated only later, in chs. 16–19. Also, while the judgment of God is announced in the third angel's message symbolically as pouring out of the wine of the wrath of God

time (12:17). The section in 12:7–12 is an interlude which provides background information on the conflict.

¹³ On the structural and theological significance of the Zion Scene of 14:1–5 for the book as a whole, see Gallusz 2014, 243–251 and 264–265.

in its “full strength” (14:10 NKJV), the subsequent chapters portray its working out and its theological meaning. So, details of the cosmic conflict are progressively clarified throughout the book.

3. Analysis of the Leading Thematic Motifs and Anti-Motifs in the Three Angels’ Message

Revelation 13–14 pictures the conflict of two truth-systems. It makes clear that in the end-time two rival stories are told to the inhabitants of the earth about the realities which compete for shaping their worldview. The aim of both forces involved into the conflict is securing the allegiance of the inhabitants of the earth. This is clear from the fact that the central motif of the vision is worship. The repetition of the term προσκυνέω indicates the critical importance of the choice of humanity regarding the matter of loyalty. Since this choice is not without consequences, two clusters of thematic motifs meet in the Three Angels’ Message: creation motifs and judgment motifs.

3.1 Creation

3.1.1 The Creator and His World: The Structure of the Universe

The three messages of Revelation 14:6–13 follow subsequently, but they are not unrelated: they “merge into one threefold message” (LaRondelle 2000, 874). The impression is that a final call for repentance is issued here “to those who live on the earth” (14:6).¹⁴ The reason (ὅτι, “for”) for a repentance call given in a “loud voice” (indicating intensity) lies in the fact that “the hour of his judgment has come” (ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ; 14:7). The message consists of three calls expressed by three imperatives: (1) “fear (φοβήθητε) God;” (2) “give (δότε) him glory;” (3) “worship (προσκυνήσατε) him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” The recipient of the actions of all three imperatives is God.

Emphasizing the fact that God is the Creator of “heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water” reveals the truth about the structure of the universe. If the world is viewed as God’s creation, “the universe is caught up into the history of God’s rule” (Moltmann 1993, 56). Thus, creation provides the framework for understanding human identity and interpreting history. Acknowledging this fact is taking place by giving glory to God. The essence of

¹⁴ The phrase “those who live on the earth” is consistently used in Revelation for designating people who are not following God, but the evil forces (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:12; 13:14; 17:8).

this act is recognizing God's worthiness, his unique position in the world as the most important being in the universe. The imperative "give him glory" (δοτε αὐτῷ δόξαν), however, implies more than acknowledging God's sovereignty as a creator: It is equivalent to a call to repentance – so it has a pastoral dimension.¹⁵

According to Revelation 13, basic to the dragon's end-time propaganda is the intention of "robbing" God of his glory (Rodríguez 2002, 132). He works on achieving this goal by establishing a system which glorifies human power, instead of giving glory to God. Several sharp contrasts underscore this diabolic agenda. The dragon's principal agent, the beast, seeks to exercise "authority" (13:2.4.5.7.12), though the real authority in the universe belongs to God (14:7). The beast's authority is universal: He exercises control "over every tribe and people and language and nation" (13:7). The same fourfold formula, indicating universality (four is the number of the earth in apocalyptic literature),¹⁶ recurs in 14:6 in relation to the eternal gospel which is proclaimed similarly "to every nation and tribe and language and people." Clearly, the eschatological conflict is a global conflict of sovereignties. This is further supported by the fact that the beast is given a "throne" and it has "crowns" on its horns (διαδήμα is a term for "royal crown," in contrast to στέφανος which is a "wreath" [BDAG]; 13:1). In contrast, God is consistently designated in Revelation as "the One sitting on the throne" (ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος) and Jesus is pictured as having "on his head ... many diadems" (διαδήματα πολλά; 19:12). Clearly, the first angel's message affirms the worthiness of God as a Creator in a context where God's authority is challenged and his name is slandered (13:5–6).

The story about an eschatological conflict is not only a story about conflict of authorities: it is also a story about a conflict of worldviews. This is clearly indicated by the motif of creation which surfaces directly in 13:14–15. Namely, the earth beast, the second satanic agent, was given power "to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and

¹⁵ The appeal to acknowledging God's position in the universe as a Creator was an essential aspect of the early Christian appeal to the pagan world (Acts 14:15; 17:24–27; Rom. 1:19–20).

¹⁶ In the Genesis creation account universality of God's creation is emphasized by a reference to only two elements: "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished" (Gen. 2:1). The difference with Revelation is due to a difference in genre, which involves the theological meaning of numbers in apocalyptic literature.

cause ...” (13:15). Making the image of the beast alive in order that (a purpose is indicated by a ἵνα clause) it may speak and act proves his unrivalled role in the human power system. The idea recalls the Genesis creation account in which “the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). So, Revelation 13–14 is clearly a story of usurping God’s place in the universe as a Creator, a “drama of conspiracy, identity theft, and double-dealing.” (Tonstad 2019, 176).

3.1.2 The Order of Creation: An Ethic of Createdness

The proclamation of God’s identity as the Creator of “heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7) implies that there is an order of creation defined by the Creator which has ethical implications for human beings as creations. This order is a central idea in biblical creation theology.¹⁷

The notion of order in creation is clearly communicated in the creation account of Genesis 1:1–2:4 which presents a carefully ordered earth.¹⁸ The order was already established before human beings are created. The task of human beings was not to put things in order, but to exercise dominion over the ordered creation as the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27). The order of creation presupposes an ethic of createdness. Faith in the Creator which acknowledges his otherness is a basic aspect of what createdness means. It recognizes that human existence is not taken for granted, but it is a gift of God. Therefore, an existential trust in the Creator defines fundamentally the direction of all human activity (Schwöbel 1997, 150–153).

The first angel’s message is a call to human beings to recognize their creatureliness and act in accordance with the order of creation. This proclamation stands in contrast with the claims of the sea beast who denies the order of creation and makes efforts to deceive the inhabitants of the world to embrace its order of things. His pretensions materialize in demanding allegiance from the inhabitants of the world through worship. His self-image is reflected in a two-part liturgical affirmation: “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” (13:4) This expression of incomparability reflects Old Testament

¹⁷ See e.g. Schaeffer 2012, 190–280.

¹⁸ For the symmetry of the Genesis creation account set out diagrammatically, see Turner 2000, 19–20.

language applied to God, so it functions as the parody of "Who is like God?"¹⁹ Also, the expression of invincibility reflects Michael's role in 12:7, who "fought against the dragon" and overcame (Osborne 2002, 497–498). By confessing the incomparable and invincible nature of the beast, the inhabitants of the earth recognize that he occupies a position of authority, which belongs to God (Prigent 2001, 407). Thus, they deny the order of creation set by the real Creator.

God's response to the obscuring of the created order is a clarification in the mist of confusion and unmasking the perpetrators. The proclamation of the "eternal gospel" about God as a Creator (14:6) is a restoration of the truth about the created order and revealing the true character of the deceiver, "that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (12:9). From the larger context of the vision, it becomes clear that "the satan cannot escape the parameters set for it as a creature and imposed on it by the Creator" (Campbell 2012, 106: n. 34).²⁰ While he, together with his associates, consistently tries to "make" things happen (12:17; 13:5.7.13.14.15) to enhance his authority, in reality God is the real maker "who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (14:7). Significantly, the Greek *κτίζω*, a term used in New Testament to signify God's creative activity (Foerster 1965, 1028–1029), is never associated with the diabolic forces in Revelation.

3.1.3 The Creator's Relation to His Creation: Covenant

A basic aspect of the biblical creation theology is the notion of God's commitment to his creation. Creation came into existence because of the love of God. As Brunner notes, "God creates the world because He wills to communicate Himself; ... as the loving God He wills to give Himself to others" (Brunner 1952, 13). Thus, creation is a call to humanity: a call to an existence in faith and love towards Creator who is worthy of trust because of his faithfulness to his creation. The concept which lies at the heart of this interrelationship is the concept of covenant, a concept which is "the backbone of the storyline of the Bible" (Schreiner 2017, 12).

¹⁹ Exod. 8:10; 15:11; Deut. 3:24; Isa. 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5; Pss. 35:10; 71:19; 86:8; 89:8; 113:5; Mic. 7:18. As Prigent 2001, 407, notes, in these texts "the focal point is a polemical argument against false gods and idols."

²⁰ For a detailed study on the function of Satan in Revelation, see Gulaker 2021.

The tension between the call to worship the Creator God (14:7) and the propaganda to worship the beast and the dragon (13:4.8.12.15; 14:9.11) reflects a drama which can be interpreted in covenantal terms.²¹ The two diametrically opposed calls leave humanity with an “either-or” choice. Such a choice reminds readers of Deuteronomy 28 in which the covenant blessings and covenant curses delineated are seen as the outcome of the “either-or” choice made by the Israelites. Obedience or disobedience in carrying out the covenant are two ways of life which correspond to two different ends: reward vs. futility. Such a duality in the outcome of choosing allegiance (whom to worship) is pictured in the harvest scene of grain and grapes which is the closing scene of the Cosmic Conflict vision (14:14–20). The rhetoric of the two possible ways shows a parallel with the climactic argument of the Sermon of the Mount in which two builders are opposed who build their houses on two different foundations and are faced with the consequences of their choices (Campbell 2012, 210).

In Revelation 13–14, the dilemma regarding worship is a choice of belonging and identity. The eschatological call of God in 14:6–13 makes it clear that there is only one true Creator in the universe and choosing not to belong to him as a way of life is a fatal mistake. The call for a positive decision of acknowledging the worthiness of the Creator by revering him is a call to a covenantal relationship. It is not a message issued to God’s people, but to “those who live on the earth” (14:6) which consistently designates in Revelation those who do not worship God.

3.1.4 The Memorial of Creation: Sabbath as a Sign of Covenant

In the first angel’s message the object of God’s creation is “heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὑδάτων; 14:7). The reference is a direct allusion to the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue in which the Sabbath rest is related to God’s rest on the seventh day after creating “heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς;

²¹ The research of the concept covenant in Revelation is a largely neglected area. Some of the studies which deal with different aspects of the topic are Shea 1983; Campbell 2004; LaRondelle 2005; Decker 2017.

Exod. 20:11).²² The Sabbath commandment is the only place in the Decalogue where the rationale of God's authority over the reality is stated: he is the One who made all things. Therefore, it functions as a seal of ownership and authority of the Decalogue. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Sabbath became a covenant sign (Exod. 31:16; Ezek. 20:12,20), a visible manifestation of the fact that a relationship between a human being and the Creator God is alive. As the climax of the Genesis creation account (Gen. 2:1–3), the Sabbath functions as “the memorial of the origin and purpose of life,” (Tonstad 2009, 119) a reminder that God is to be worshipped as a Creator. Therefore, one cannot speak of creation without speaking of the Sabbath.

According to the end-time drama of Revelation 13–14, humanity is confronted with a choice between two signs: the mark of the beast (13:16–18) and the seal of God (7:1–3; 14:1). These two signs represent the two opposed sides in the eschatological conflict which propagate two different views of the reality: the anthropocentric worldview that glorifies human authority and the theocentric worldview that gives glory to God as a Creator (Tonstad 2009, 459). In light of the strong creation theology of the vision, it seems that the mark of the beast functions as a parody of Sabbath, a kind of anti-Sabbath – a sign which signals the authority of the beast (MacPherson 2005, 267–283). Thus, the strong warning of the third angel's message against receiving of the mark of the beast (14:9–11) can be seen as an indirect call to choose receiving the seal of God by making a decision to worship the Creator. It emphasizes that it is possible to turn one's back on forces which are unworthy of worship, no matter how attractive their propaganda is, and seek covenantal alignment with the real authority of the universe. There is no place for confusion and vagueness regarding this choice. Those who in spite of the warning receive the mark of the beast “have no rest” (οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν; 14:11). By contrast, the end-time call to worshiping God in 14:7 is given in the language of

²² In addition to strong verbal parallels between Revelation 14:7 and Exod. 20:11, clear thematic parallels have also been established between Revelation 14:7 and Exodus 20:1–11 (the first four commandments) which concern three motivations for obedience: (1) salvation (Exod. 20:2–3); (2) judgment (Exod. 20:5); and (3) creation (Exod. 20:11). Finally, structural parallels can be established between the vision of Revelation 12–14 and the Ten Commandments. On the basis of the cumulative evidence, Paulien 1998, 185, concludes that “there is no direct allusion to the Old Testament in Revelation that is more certain than the allusion to the fourth commandment in Rev. 14:7.”

rest (alluding to the Sabbath), calling the inhabitants of the world to “worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev. 14:7).²³

3.2 Judgment Motifs

3.2.1 Arrival of the Hour of Judgment

We have seen in the above discussion that Revelation 13–14 presents two worshipping communities. One adheres to the covenant with the Creator God by keeping his commandments and the faith of Jesus (14:12; cf. 12:17), while the other ignores the Creator and his covenant by giving glory to the beast (13:4). The conflict between Christ and the anti-Christ, and also between God’s people and Babylon comes to a dramatic end in the final scene of the Cosmic Conflict vision (14:14–20). Before it, however, a strong warning of a judgment is issued in the Three Angels’ Message (14:6–13). This warning runs through all the three messages and it is of increasing volume. The first message announces the arrival of the “hour” of God’s judgment and calls for worshipping the Creator (14:7). The second message declares the fall of Babylon with a language of intensity (“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!”; 14:8). The third message, given in a loud voice, is an explicit judgment which is the most frightening warning in the New Testament (14:9–11).

The first angel proclaims the “everlasting good news” (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον), a point of view which is under attack in the campaign of the evil forces. The proclamation counters the misrepresentation of the worldview which centers on the Creator God and it affirms that which is eternally valid (Tonstad 2009, 477). The reason for the call to worshipping the Creator is given with a causal clause introduced by ὅτι (“for”): “for the hour of his judgment has come” (14:7). Clearly, this “hour” is a critical moment. However, it is not a single moment or a literal 60-minute hour. In the context of the vision the “hour of his judgment” (ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ) precedes “the hour to reap” (ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι; 14:15), an expression which designates the second coming of Christ. Both “hours” are introduced by the same word, “came” (ἦλθεν), which shows that they are related. Before the harvest is gathered, there is a need for “the hour of his judgment,” a process in which decisions are made regarding as to who will constitute the harvest. The goal of this judgment is to provide clarity and security (Tonstad 2019, 204).

²³ For a further discussion of Revelation’s Sabbath theology, see Lichtenwalter 2011.

A striking thematic parallel can be observed between Daniel 7 and Revelation 14. Doukhan argues that the Old Testament judgment scene of Daniel 7 provides the primary background of the warning of the Three Angels' Message (Doukhan 2002, 123). However, while the Danielic theme of judgment is reflected in the statement of Revelation, Ferch correctly concludes that "the explicit description of a pre-advent judgment found in Daniel is not repeated" in the last book of the New Testament canon (Ferch 1980, 7).²⁴

The announcement of the arrival of the hour of judgment in Revelation 14:7 is not only a warning, but it is also good news. Namely, the first angel's message claims that the judgment is in process and this still is a time during which one has an opportunity to associate oneself with God in the cosmic conflict (Rodríguez 2002, 132). Also, it is good news, because judgment provides an answer to the "how long?" (6:10) question of God's people, assuring them of the triumph of God's purposes and that there is justice in the universe (Stefanovic 2009, 454). So in Revelation 14 the divine grace and the divine justice are closely linked: they are two aspects of the same work of God – the process of resolving the problem of evil in his work of renewing the creation (Paulsen 1981, 12).

3.2.2 The Fall of Babylon

In the book of Revelation several Greek words are used to denote the concept of judgment. Such are δικαίωμα (15:4), κρίμα (17:1; 20:4), κρίσις (14:7; 16:7; 18:10; 19:2) and κρίνω (6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:8; 19:2, 11; 20:12.13). While none of these words is employed in the second angel's message, declaring the fall of Babylon ("Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"; 14:8) this is clearly an announcement of judgment over it. The statement reflects the judgment oracle in Isaiah 21:9: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the images of her gods lie shattered on the ground."

The interpretation of the concept of the end-time Babylon and its fall in Revelation requires an understanding of the theological character of ancient Babylon. Leithart rightly notes that because of its rich biblical association, the

²⁴ Thompson 1981, 4, correctly observes: "Even though Dan. and Rev. are clearly linked, it is an oversimplification to view them as if written and bound together so that earliest Christians would always understand one in light of the other." For an in-depth study of the relation of the two books, see Beale 1984.

term “Babylon strikes a chord, not a single note” (Leithart 2018, 9). In the Old Testament Babylon appears as the archenemy of God and the persecutor of his covenant people, who destroyed the temple and took them into captivity. Thus, the fall of the historical Babylon, which took place shortly after announcing its moral fall (Dan. 5:27–28), opened a way for the freedom of Israel. LaRondelle notes the repetition of the same pattern in the end-time scenario of Revelation: first the verdict of the end-time Babylon’s fall is pronounced (14:8) before of its actual destruction during the seventh plague (16:17–21) (LaRondelle 2000, 877).

The closing chapters in the story of Revelation narrate, actually, a tale of two cities: Babylon and Jerusalem – a “great” city (14:8) and a “holy” city (21:2).²⁵ “Great” is clearly an ironic epithet for the eschatological Babylon (Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη), as it was for the historical “Babylon” in Daniel 4:30. The title is associated with Babylon’s arrogance.²⁶ What is actually great is her fall (ch. 18; cf. Campbell 2004, 87).

The most astonishing characteristic of Babylon, the harlot-city, is that she is a covenant breaker. The covenant framework is a critical point of orientation for interpreting the fall-of-Babylon motif.²⁷ The symbolic portrayal of Babylon as a “great whore” (17:1) who “has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” reflects covenantal language (14:8). This metaphor is to be understood in light of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea who portray the apostate Israel as Yahweh’s unfaithful wife who became a prostitute.²⁸ In the Old Testament oracles, idolatry is designated as the principal means of forsaking the covenant with Yahweh (Ezek. 16:38). Significantly, the crucial issue in the eschatological drama of Revelation 13–14 is the issue of true worship in contrast to idolatry. Thus, judgment over the harlot-city, the eschatological Babylon, is to be interpreted in covenantal terms, as facing covenant curses that are the consequence of her actions.

The antithetical parallels suggest that Babylon represents in Revelation a counter religious system to that which calls for the worship of the Creator God (14:7). It is an idolatrous system which “prizes human ambition, lust, wealth

²⁵ For an in-depth treatment of Revelation’s city motif, see Rossing 1999; Räßle 2004.

²⁶ On the theological significance of the motif of arrogance in Daniel, see Milanov 2014.

²⁷ This has been recognized by LaRondelle 1992, but unfortunately not much attention has been given to this important point by scholarship.

²⁸ Isa. 1:22; Jer. 3:1–3.8.9; Ezek. 16:15–34; Hos. 2:2.4.

and power" (Tabb 2019, 184). Her intoxicating influence, based on the promise of prosperous welfare (ch. 17–18), is unmasked by an alarming warning of the second angel: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great!" (ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη). The use of the aorist for announcing a future event is also a feature of the Old Testament prophetic oracles, and using it in a doublet underscores the absolute certainty of Babylon's fate. While she is successful in establishing her worldwide empire, finally she is unmasked by God's last warning (14:6–13) as "a charlatan city clothed with stolen scarlet and glistening with fool's gold, whose designer make-up covers her ugly face" (Tabb 2019, 184). As such, Babylon has no future.

3.2.3 Consequences of Misplaced Allegiance

While the second angel's message emphasizes the fact of Babylon's judgment and its cause, the third angel's message elaborates the fate of the inhabitants of the earth who align themselves with the diabolic system. So, the two messages form an unbreakable unit, together with the first message. They continue in flight side-by-side as a unified threefold eschatological warning issued by God. However, the third message forms the strongest and most frightening intervention, implying urgency.

The third angel's message begins and it also closes with stating the reason for judgment: worshiping the beast and his image, and receiving his mark (14:9, 11). The use of the literary technique of *inclusio* highlights that the final judgment is the verdict human beings "have passed on themselves by their attitude toward God and his saving purpose" (Bollier 1953, 24). The emphasis on misplaced worship as a cause of condemnation links the message to the first angel's message ("Fear God ... give him glory ... worship him who made...;" 14:7) indicating that the condemned rejected the call for worshiping the One who is worthy of it.²⁹ Since they identified with the evil of Babylon, they must share its fate (Bauckham 1993, 20).

The judgment over the condemned is stated in terms of drinking "from the wine of God's wrath (ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), poured unmixed

²⁹ Badenas 1988, argues that the leitmotif connecting the three messages is the issue of worship: the first message is a call for a true worship, the second message is a condemnation of false worship, while the third message is a warning against false worship. Both contextually and textually, this suggestion is convincing.

into the cup of his anger" (14:10). The expression is in contrast with "the wine of the wrath" (τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας) of the prostitute's fornication (14:8). The fact that "the wine of God's wrath" is "poured unmixed" (κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου) and that in the text θυμός ("wrath") and ὀργή ("anger") feature together indicate the intensity and decisiveness of God's reaction to evil.³⁰ The imagery of God's wine being "mixed unmixed" (lit. transl. of κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου) draws on the background of ancient wine drinking. Namely, in the first century the common practice was to mix water with wine at least by half, but at times even three to one ratios in favor of water (Aune 1998, 833). Since of God's wine it is clearly stated that it is prepared in full strength, the logical conclusion is that the prostitute's wine is diluted. While Babylon's influence in misleading people was very effective (ch. 13), God's response to the distortion of the truth about reality will be definitive and experiencing God's wrath all the worse.³¹

The parallel between 14:11 b and 4:8, the use of the phrase "day or night," has also an important theological significance which enlightens the relation of judgment and creation. The first text states of the fate of the beast-worshippers that "they have no rest day or night" (οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός) from the torment, while in the throne-room vision of ch. 4, which pictures an ongoing reality, the paradigmatic worshippers of God "do not rest day or night" (ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός) praising God. Because of their misplaced allegiance, choosing to worship the beast instead of the Creator God, the ultimate punishment of the condemned is not having "rest." Having divine rest is a privilege of all human beings, since the creation when God rested on the seventh day after finishing his work of creation (Gen. 2:2-3), but the eternal destiny of the beast-worshippers is losing the opportunity to find "rest." The seventh-day Sabbath, the memorial of the creation

³⁰ The two terms occur together also in 16:19 and 19:15.

³¹ In the Old Testament some enemies of the people of God had to drink the cup of wrath. The picture of judgment is drinking until extinction: "They shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been" (Obad. 1:16). "Drink, get drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you" (Jer. 25:27). At times, even the covenant-breaking Israel had to drink the wine of God's wrath (Pss. 60:3; 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22; Jer. 25:15,16,27; 49:12; Ezek. 23:31-34). Jesus' torments in Gethsemane are pictured, against this background, as accepting a cup of divine wrath from God's hand (Matt 20:22; 26:39,42).

and the sign of the covenant, points to God who remains faithful to his creation. Ignoring his covenant by worshipping a power which is unworthy of it results in chaos and loss of rest. As Lichtenwaller concludes, "This creation backdrop highlights the essential nature of the dragon's attack on God and his people. It is decreation – the reversal of creation" (Lichtenwaller, 2011, 305). It is the consequence of turning away from the truth which is available to human beings (14:6–7).

4. In Search of a Link between Creation and Judgement

The motif of creation is directly linked with the "eternal gospel" in the Three Angels' Message (14:6–7), since a basic aspect of the proclamation is that the world has a Creator who is faithful to his creation and is working on its restoration. This is "good news" (εὐαγγέλιον), in contrast to the "bad news" of the deceptive activities of the evil forces which manipulate people to align themselves with their diabolic agenda (ch. 13). The motif of creation is also directly linked with the matter of worship, since God's worthiness as a Creator provides the basis for demonstrating loyalty to him and giving him glory through worship. But how are creation and judgment linked in the Three Angels' Message?

A direct link of the motifs of creation and judgment in Revelation is found in 11:18, a text which throws some light on the nature of the relation of the two motifs in 14:6–13. This text, featuring at the very end of the seventh trumpet, begins and ends with the notion of judgment, while the middle of the verse refers to the "reward" which will be given to the faithful. It claims that the time has arrived (ἤλθεν ... ὁ καιρός) for administering justice and setting up God's kingdom (11:15–17) which involves "destroying those who destroy the earth." In Revelation there are four principal agents of destruction: (1) Satan; (2) the beast; (3) the false prophet; and (4) Babylon. The way they ruin others finally results in their own ruination (Koester 2014, 517). On the other hand, for the people of God the time of judgment is the demonstration of the fact that God has not given up on his creation. The allusion to the Genesis Flood narrative in 11:18 serves the purpose of stressing the theme of the Creator's faithfulness to his creation (Bauckham 1993, 52). In other words, God's judgment is to be seen as a crucial step in the process of the good Creator's restoration of his good creation. Its essence is that "Israel's God [is] dealing firmly and decisively with everything that has distorted and corrupted his

good creation, so that creation itself can be rescued from all its ills and transformed into the new world" (Wright 2013, 482; cf. Rev 21–22). So, the larger picture which provides the interpretive context for the concept of judgment is God's work of reclaiming and restoring his creation by solving the problem of evil.

The biblical view of God as a Creator presupposes his faithfulness to creation. God's faithfulness is rooted in his covenantal relationship with the world he created. While the actual term "covenant" (בְּרִית) does not feature in the creation story of Genesis 1–2, it does not have to feature for a covenant to exist.³² Basic to the covenant is covenantal loyalty not only of humanity (Gen 2:15–17), but of the Creator God to his creation. So, the work of creation and the covenant make "an unbreakable theological unity" (LaRondelle 2005, 17).

The link connecting the concepts of God as a Creator and God as a judge in the Three Angels' Message is his covenantal faithfulness. In the Old Testament God's fairness and justice were the basic assumptions of the covenant. God's covenant people expected the Creator to investigate and set matters right by exercising judgment (Gen. 16:5; 31:53; 1 Sam. 24:15; 2 Sam. 18:19; Ps. 7). The judgment acts of the Lord were aimed at safeguarding the covenantal relationship with his people, so they were the demonstration of his faithfulness. A good example is the Genesis Flood narrative in which the faithfulness of the Creator is clearly a central idea. This is suggested by the central significance of the statement "Then God remembered Noah" (Gen. 8:1) in the narrative.³³ The reference to the creation of the "springs of water" in the first angel's message (14:7) as an allusion to the Flood narrative (Gen. 7:11) seems to serve the same purpose: recalling God's faithfulness to his creation as a context for interpreting judgment (cf. Rev. 4:3).

Therefore, judgment in the Three Angel's Message is a logical outworking of the faithfulness of the Creator God. Because he as a Creator is faithful to his creation, he does not allow the evil to have the last word. With judgment over Babylon, he is setting boundaries to the work of evil which ruins the creation with violence, oppression and running a global idolatrous worship-system. God's faithfulness to his creation requires destroying the evil and eradicating

³² For evidence for a creation covenant, see e. g. Schreiner 2017, 19–29.

³³ For the chiasmic structure of the Flood narrative, centered on God's remembrance of Noah (Gen. 8:1 a), see Turner 2000, 55.

it from the universe in order to preserve and restore what was created in the beginning as a "very good" (Gen. 1:31) world. His purpose is "taking creation beyond the threat of evil" and transforming it into a home in which divine glory dwells together with humanity (Bauckham 1993, 53; cf. Rev. 21:3.22–23; 22:3–5).

The Three Angels' Message is a final call for humanity to respond to the Creator God by seeking a covenantal relationship with him. In contrast to the deceptive claims of the evil forces, Revelation 14:6–13 makes clear that there is one God from whom all things originate, to whom human being owe allegiance. His covenantal faithfulness to his creation requires him to put right things which are wrong in his cosmos and rescue his creation from what ruins it. His ultimate plan is to create a new world on the foundations of the old one (21:1–8).

Clearly, Revelation's view of the future is deeply creational: the things which pose a threat to the goodness and God-giveness of God's creational order are to be defeated and the reign of God over the whole creation is to be restored. The theme of judgment is to be understood within this framework, as a crucial step in the Creator's programme of renewal, as a step by which the health of the creation is restored and by which chaos is replaced with order (Gen. 1:1–2; Wright 2013, 481). Therefore, judgment is "good news" (εὐαγγέλιον), because it is a "no" to all that stand out against God's good purposes for the world and it is a "yes" to the restoration of the creation itself (Wright 2013, 483). As such, it is a responsible expression of the divine love.

5. Conclusion

The present study examined the link between the creation theology and the judgment theology of the Three Angels' Message of Revelation 14:6–13. Both themes are of major significance in the scene which stands in an antithetical relation with the end-time diabolic propaganda delineated in ch. 13.

The study presented an argument that the concept of covenant provides the connecting link between the creation and judgment themes of Revelation. It has been demonstrated how the notion of covenant is woven into the Three Angels' message and how it is integral to both the creation and the judgment motifs. Central to the argument is the claim that the faithfulness of the Creator to his creation, an essential aspect of the covenant theology, requires dealing with the problem of evil. His actions of salvation and judgment are to be seen

as expressions of his covenantal faithfulness to his creation which was made “very good” in the beginning (Gen. 1:31). Thus, Revelation’s covenant theme provides the basic framework for interpreting God’s judgments. The divine judgments are to be seen as an expression of his love by which he seeks to protect his creation. They are not arbitrary decisions, but they allow evil to be defeated by its own schemes, which will be followed by creating “all things new” (Rev. 21:5). Clearly, creation, covenant and judgment belong together in the theological horizon of John as related expressions of the work of God which are integral to the “eternal gospel” (14:6).

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Reading Creation and Judgment Motifs in the Three Angels' Message

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Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Verbindung zwischen der Schöpfungstheologie und der Gerichtstheologie innerhalb der Drei-Engelsbotschaft aus Offb. 14,6–13. Es wird vorgeschlagen, dass die Bundesvorstellung eine solche Verbindung zwischen diesen beiden Themen herstellt, die von großer Bedeutung für die theologische Vision der Offenbarung sind. Es wird ein Argument vorgestellt, das aufzeigt, wie der Bundesgedanke in die Drei-Engelsbotschaft eingeflochten ist und wie er sowohl mit den Schöpfungsmotiven als auch mit den Motiven des Gerichts wesentlich zusammenhängt.

Résumé

Cet article examine le lien entre la théologie de la création et la théologie du jugement inséré dans le Message des Trois Anges d'Apocalypse 14:6-13. Il suggère que le concept d'alliance assure le lien entre ces deux thèmes qui sont d'une importance majeure pour la vision théologique de l'Apocalypse. Un argument est avancé pour démontrer comment la notion d'alliance est incorporée dans le message des Trois Anges, et comment elle fait partie intégrante des motifs de création et de jugement.

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Two Separate Eschatological Resurrection Events

One for the Righteous and Another for the Wicked

Jan A. Sigvartsen

Abstract

Revelation 20–22 presents two separate eschatological resurrection events, one for the righteous and another for the wicked. This eschatological belief has become an integral building block in the eschatological belief structure held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fundamental Beliefs 24–28) – a composite belief structure founded on the reformation principles of *Sola Scriptura*, *Tota Scriptura*, *Prima Scriptura*, and the *Analogy of Scripture*. Apart from Rev. 20–22, there is only one other late first/early second century CE text which separates the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked by a temporal Messianic kingdom, making this a minority belief. This article will compare and contrast the eschatological belief conveyed in Rev. 20–22 with the belief appearing in the pseudepigraphical text *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, and with the composite eschatological belief statements held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church that are partially based on Rev. 20–22. It will demonstrate that although there are some important overall structural similarities between Rev. 20–22 (and by extension the Seventh-day Adventist belief) and the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, there are also some significant differences between the two belief scenarios in these contemporary eschatological resurrection texts.

1. Introduction

The Old Testament reveals little regarding the eschaton and the world to come. The poetic seams (Gen. 49; Num. 24; Deut. 32) in the mega-structure of the Pentateuch (Narrative – Poetry – Epilogue) focus on the eschatological

Messiah (Messiah ben Joseph, Messiah ben Levi, and Messiah ben David),¹ a theological theme also emphasized in the canonical seam-structure of the TaNaKh (Sailhammer 2009; Davidson 2000, 349–366). However, this kingdom is described as an earthly kingdom (e.g., Isa. 24–27, 65–66; Dan. 2:44–45; 7:27), where death is still a reality, Gentile nations still exist, and Jerusalem with its temple functions as its capital. This seems to contrast the Second Temple period Paradise, the heavenly kingdom of the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 6:19–21; 7:21; John 14:2–3; 1 Thess. 4:15–18) or the *world-to-come* (עולם הבא) in Rabbinic Judaism. Abba Arikha (175–247 CE), better known as Rav in Talmudic literature, describes this place in the following way (b. Ber. 17a:12):

Rav was wont to say: The World-to-Come is not like this world. In the World-to-Come there is no eating, no drinking, no procreation, no [business] negotiations, no jealousy, no hatred, and no competition. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns upon their heads, enjoying the splendor of the Divine Presence, as it is stated: “And they beheld God, and they ate and drank.” (Exodus 24:11)²

This echoes Jesus’ assertion that following the resurrection, the righteous will be like the angels in Heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt 22:30; Luke 20:34–36).

Although the Old Testament certainly shows an awareness of the heavenly realm and the possibility for an individual to enter this realm (e.g., Gen. 5:24; 2 Kgs. 2:1.11; Job 1–2; Dan. 7:9–14), the biblical writers do not show much interest in it as their major emphasis is the earthly promised land. The covenant with the nation of Israel, which was ratified at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 24), was conditional upon their obedience to God’s covenant as expressed in Moses’ exhortation to Israel to choose blessings and life, as opposed to curses and death (Deut. 30:11–20). This Deuteronomic retribution principle and the so-called “Noachide Laws” (Foley 2003, 19–49; Bockmuehl 1995, 72–101) became the foundation for the prophet’s judgment message. Richard Fuhr and Gary Yates write:

¹ For a discussion on how the three Messianic figures, Messiah ben Joseph, Messiah ben Levi, and Messiah ben David relate to each other, see Sigvartsen 2018, 64–90.

² The Talmudic text is from The William Davidson Talmud and its English translation is sourced from: <https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.17a.12?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>. The English word in brackets do not appear in the Aramaic but was added by the translator due to the context.

The primary role of the prophets was to proclaim the word of God as “covenant reinforcement mediators,” preaching to the people a message of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience, reinforced through fresh and sometimes shocking rhetoric. . . . In fulfilling this primary role, the prophets did fill a secondary role as foretellers of future things—but these prognostications were always set within the context of covenant obligation and fulfillment. They foretold the historical details of what would later take place as a result of Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness and Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness. (Fuhr and Yates 2016, 20)

Fuhr and Yates note the indictment brought against Israel by the prophets, God’s prosecuting attorneys, “revolved around five primary areas of violation: (1) idolatry, (2) social injustice, (3) violence, (4) hypocritical ritualism, and (5) spiritual apathy” (Fuhr and Yates 2016, 21–22). Three of these primary areas of violation, idolatry, social injustice, and violence were also brought against the surrounding nations as they, together with sexual immorality, would fall under the so-called Noachide laws. It is important to keep in mind that the judgment message of the Old Testament was primarily addressed to the collective and not the individual. Even though the judgment, grace, and salvation hope would certainly affect the individual member of a nation, it was the destiny of the nation as a whole that was the main focus. This being the case, the death and resurrection language, remnant motive, judgment, and eschatological language used in the Old Testament relates mainly to the nations—a nation’s destruction, revival, survival, and/or glorious eschatological future.

At the end of the First Temple period and during the Second Temple period, however, a shift in focus from the collective to the individual took place and the problem of theodicy became more apparent.³ Questions about the validity of the retribution principle, that God would reward the righteous Torah observant Jews with a long and prosperous life while cutting short the life of the wicked, were undoubtedly raised by some Old Testament writers (e.g. Book of Job; Jer. 12:1–3; Mal. 3:14–18) and was perhaps most succinctly expressed by the author of Ecclesiastes 8:14:

³ The question of theodicy is a central theme in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen. 18:17–32; Lev. 16; the Book of Job).

There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. (NRSV⁴)

The Jews during the Second Temple period experienced “foreign occupation and oppression; oppression of the righteous poor, religious persecution, and martyrdom. For the Torah observant Jews, justice had been perverted: the righteous were receiving the curses of the wicked, while the wicked enjoyed the blessings promised the righteous. A belief in an afterlife could solve this acute problem. If there was an afterlife, it was argued, God could set things straight and give the righteous and the wicked their proper due” (Sigvartsen 2019a, 10). However, the increased interest in an afterlife belief, although providing a satisfactory solution to the problem of theodicy for the individual, introduced a complexity that resulted in a plethora of afterlife views.⁵ In the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, eighteen complete and distinct death-to-eternity views appear. Even the partial views appearing in these writings seem to provide additional afterlife/eschatological scenarios. Sigvartsen concludes that “each literary work containing a ‘life-after-death’ view seems to present a unique perspective” (Sigvartsen 2019b, 209). This article will first

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is used in this article.

⁵ When introducing an afterlife belief, a number of questions emerge that require resolution. Perhaps the most important is what happens upon a person’s death, if something of that person survives and continues to exist beyond death. This is a question regarding human anthropology. It should be noted that the majority view appearing in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha is that humans have a soul – found in more than 80% of the literary compositions that present an afterlife view (Sigvartsen 2019b, 210–211). Thus, if a person has a soul, what happens to that soul when it leaves the body, is it stored somewhere in wait for an eschatological reunification with the body? If so, are the righteous souls and the wicked souls stored together or separately, and would they be conscious or unconscious during this phase? If the soul is conscious, would it experience any reward or punishment prior to reunification with the body? Would the wicked souls have an option to repent during this period? A different line of questions relates to the resurrection. Who will resurrect? Will the resurrected look the same or different than how they looked before they died? What and where is the final destiny of the righteous and the wicked? An afterlife view also raises the need for one or more judgments. In the eighteen complete views identified in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, two judgments are the norm as one is needed following death and a second following the eschatological resurrection. There is also a question regarding the purpose of the eschatological judgment.

consider the resurrection view presented in Revelation 20–22 and the view appearing in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* – which of the eighteen distinct and complete afterlife views found in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha is the most similar to that of Revelation. This article will also consider the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view that incorporates the two distinct resurrections of Revelation 20–22. This article will then identify the most important similarities and differences between these views that all present the same macro-structure of the temporal eschatological Messianic kingdom before making some concluding observations.

Some may question the value of comparing current Seventh-day Adventist beliefs with an early non-canonical pseudepigraphical Jewish-Christian text. One could legitimately wonder if a non-canonical composition could be of value when studying canonical literature, and by extension, question if non-canonical literature should even be studied at all. Regardless of the non-canonical status of the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, it is contemporary with the canonical Book of Revelation, shares a similar provenance, and parallels the macro-structure of the temporal eschatological Messianic kingdom of the Book of Revelation in a unique way – a macro-structure that came to play a foundational role in Seventh-day Adventist eschatological beliefs. While the author does not advocate for adding books to the canon, a case could be made that the study of non-canonical apocalyptic/eschatological literature can add valuable insight into the various expectations, beliefs, and mindsets held by Jews and Christians during the time-period when the books that later became canonized were written. Non-canonical books can provide interpretative assistance in cases when a canonical text is unclear or ambiguous to the modern reader. This could be caused by the original writer's assumption that their intended audience already understood certain concepts, technical vocabulary, and shared their religious worldview and beliefs. Thus, non-canonical literature can assist the interpreter in determining if the suggested interpretation would be a likely interpretation – if it would fall within the range of ideas of this period, if there is a precedence for the suggested interpretation, or if the interpretation lies outside the norm and that the canonical text provides a unique and new perspective. The academic study of non-canonical books could also help the reader to appreciate the continuity and change that took place within the beliefs held by various ancient faith communities and help

the reader gain an appreciation of the distinctive voices of each of the canonical writers.

2. Resurrection View Presented in Revelation 20–22

The Book of Revelation dates to the late first century CE, more specifically towards the end of the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE), about 95 CE, although some scholars argue for a date shortly after the death of Nero (37–68 CE) and the Roman destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 CE). Traditionally this apocalyptic text is associated with the Apostle John⁶ and was embraced by the Early Christian communities, however, it is numbered among the *antilegomena* books.⁷ There are only a few references and allusions in this apocalyptic book to a personal eschatology. Revelation 1:18 mentions that Jesus Christ

⁶ The introduction of the book states that this revelation was given by God through Jesus Christ and his angel to his servant John (Rev 1:1; cf. 1:4, 9; 22:9). Since the author of the book shows great familiarity with the Old Testament and the Temple in Jerusalem, he was most likely a Palestinian Jew, thus, Justin Martyr (100-165 CE) and other second century Christian writers identified this John with the Apostle John (Weinrich 2005, xvii) although John (Heb.: *Yāhōhānān/Yōhānān*; Gr.: Ἰωάννης) was a common Jewish name during this period and there is no internal evidence in the book suggesting that the author was one of the twelve apostles. David E. Aune concludes: “While the final author-editor of Revelation was named ‘John,’ it is not possible to identify him with any other early Christian figures of the same name, including John the son of Zebedee or the shadowy figure of John the Elder” (Aune 1997, lvi). For a discussion on date and authorship of the Book of Revelation, see *ibid.*, xivii–lxx; Beale 2006, 4–27.34–36; and Stefanovic 2009, 2–5.

⁷ The *antilegomena* books were compositions that had their authenticity or value disputed during the New Testament canonization process. The other New Testament canonical books belonging to this category were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. Elaine Pagels writes: “Ever since it [Book of Revelation] was written, Christians have argued heatedly for and against it, especially from the second century to the fourth, when it barely squeezed into the canon to become the final book in the New Testament” (Pagels 2013, 2). The Eastern Church, however, did not begin to include the book in the Greek manuscripts until the 10th and the 11th century CE, although it is the only New Testament book not included in the yearly lectionary and publically read in the Church (Collins 1992, 5:695). It should be noted that the protestant reformer Martin Luther questioned the canonicity of several New Testament books – Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation, leaving them un-numbered and separated from the other 23 books of the New Testament in his placing these four books in his 1522 translation of the Bible. In the preface to the book of Revelation, he states: “About this Book of the Revelation of John, I leave everyone free to hold his own opinions. I would not have anyone bound to my opinion or judgment. I say what I feel. I miss more than one thing in this book, and it makes me consider it to be neither apostolic nor

possesses the keys of Death and Hades, suggesting that the resurrected Christ has gained the power over death, alluding to a future eschatological resurrection event. This notion is further supported by the message written to the angels of the church of Ephesus and Laodicea, stating respectively: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7); and "To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Rev. 3:21). There is also an allusion to a personal eschatological hope when the fifth seal was broken and John was shown the souls of the martyrs under the heavenly altar that were crying for justice, who were given white robes, and told to rest until the number of martyrs was filled (Rev. 6:9–11). Adela Collins notes that "the expectation that God would avenge innocent blood" combined with the "idea of a fixed number of souls which must go to their rest before the end could come" are two distinctive elements of this passage⁸ and adds that, as such, "the eschatological catastrophe is seen primarily as vengeance on the adversaries of the martyrs." Thus, within this framework, she adds, it could be argued that the eschaton would be brought a little closer each time a martyr dies (Collins 1996, 209).

The fate of these martyrs reappears in the first key resurrection passage of Revelation 20 – at the commencement of the temporary eschatological Messianic kingdom, the millennial kingdom (Rev 20:4–6):

⁴Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death

prophetic" (quoted and translated in Beal 2018, 121). However, Luther and his fellow reformers came to embrace the book and used it effectively in their anti-Catholic literature – presenting the Pope as the anti-Christ and the harlot woman of the prophecy.

⁸ These are not unique concepts in the Book of Revelation as they are also attested in Second Temple period literature, as noted by Collins: 2 Macc. 7:36; 8:3; 1 Enoch 47:1–4; 4 Ezra 4:35–37.41–43; 2 Bar. 23:5 (cf. 30:2); As. Mos. 9:6–7 (Collins 1996, 209: n. 43).

has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.

Although Revelation 20:4–6 clearly states that the martyrs will be resurrected and rule with Christ a thousand years, this is a debated passage as several elements of this text are ambiguous – allowing various interpretations. There is also the hermeneutical question regarding the unity of scripture, the analogy of Scripture, and how the resurrection view in Revelation 20 should be related to (or harmonized with) other resurrection statements in the Bible. Thus, there are three major scholarly interpretations regarding the millennial kingdom and how it relates to the coming of the Messiah; if a literal interpretation of the millennial kingdom (chiliasm), premillennialism, or if a figurative interpretation (chillegorism), postmillennialism and amillennialism. The premillennial view, according to Eusebius, was the most dominant interpretative position in the Early Christian Church (*Hist. eccl.* 3:39:11–13) and holds that Jesus will return in order to establish his literal millennial kingdom following the resurrection of the righteous and prior to the eschatological judgment of the wicked. The amillennial view, on the other hand, spiritualizes/allegorizes the millennial kingdom, a view held by Clement of Alexandria and Origen and was later popularized by Augustine (Aune 1998b, 1089–1090). It maintains that this is not a future eschatological kingdom but a present heavenly reality, as this spiritual kingdom was established by Jesus at his first coming and encompasses all the righteous who have been raised to Heaven upon their death (Beale 2006, 991). The postmillennial view is closely related to amillennialism, but considers the spiritual kingdom to be an earthly reality, and becomes gradually more visible through the transformative work of the church, culminating in a golden age of righteousness and peace prior to the Second Coming and the eschatological resurrection, judgment, and God’s eternal kingdom. Through the work of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758; Gibson 2002, 157), this view became dominant in the 19th century among American Protestants before it was later eclipsed by other views following the Great War (Moorhead 1984, 61).⁹

⁹ For a detailed presentation and discussion of these three main views, see Blaising et al., 1999; Harris 2014; Klassen 2018; Waymeyer 2015; Waymeyer 2016. For an example of a non-literal interpretation of the resurrection, see Jensen 2020; Shepherd 1974.

If considering the eschatological vision of Revelation 20:4–6 within the larger body of Second Temple period literature, the dominant expectation is that God, through an apocalyptic act, will establish a literal eternal kingdom in the eschatological time following the eschatological resurrection and judgment that rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Although most afterlife and resurrection views in this literature consider humans to have a soul that can exist independently from the body upon death (Sigvartsen 2019b, 210–216), this view is not mutually exclusive from an eschatological bodily resurrection view and an eternal bodily existence for the righteous – either in an earthly or heavenly kingdom.¹⁰ There are only a few texts that present a temporal Messianic kingdom – similar to that of Revelation 20.¹¹ These temporal kingdoms are all presented as literal and earthly kingdoms that are established following a time of tribulation. Although there is an eschatological resurrection and judgment scene following all these temporal Messianic kingdoms and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom for the righteous, the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* provides a precedent for a premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20. This pseudepigraphical composition also separates the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked with

¹⁰ Of the eighteen complete afterlife and resurrection views appearing in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, only six do not see the need for the disembodied righteous soul to be reunified with its body in an eschatological resurrection. These six views are found in the *Book of the Epistle of Enoch*, *3 Enoch*, *Apocalypse of Zephania*, *Vision of Ezra*; *Question of Ezra* (Sigvartsen 2016a, 119–125.131–137.155–162), and *4 Maccabees* (Sigvartsen 2016b, 106–148). This also seems to be the perspective held by Philo of Alexandria although there may be some hints to a future Messianic age in his writings (Penner 2019). There is also a discussion regarding the view held by the Qumran community, as Josephus suggested that they believed in the immortality of the soul and not a bodily resurrection (*Ant.* 18.18; *J.W.* 2.153–158), however, recent scholarship has questioned this notion as there is evidence of a resurrection view in their literature (Elledge 2017, 150–174; Dimant 2000) and the eschatological belief in the Messiahs and the establishment of God’s Kingdom (Wróbel 2020).

¹¹ There are five temporal Messianic kingdoms mentioned or alluded to in the literature of the Second Temple period that are all divinely established and literal, but with different time-spans. The temporal kingdom in *The Apocalypse of Weeks* (1 Enoch 91–108) is described as lasting three weeks of the tenth and last period of the Apocalypse (1 Enoch 91). In *2 Baruch*, the kingdom lasts for an age until “the world of the corruption is at an end” (2 Bar. 40:3). The Messianic kingdom in *4 Ezra* lasts 400 years (4 Ezra 7:28), while its length is unspecified in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* (see discussion in the section “Resurrection View Presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*”). For further reading, see Aune 1998b, 1104–1108; Glasson 1990; Stewart 2016, 255–270.

an eschatological Messianic kingdom upon Christ's return (see discussion below). Thus, in light of the Second Temple period literature and the views regarding Revelation 20 held by the Early Church, a premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 seems the most appropriate.

Following a premillennial reading,¹² the cataclysmic events leading to the Second Coming of Christ introduce the events of Revelation 20 – the binding of Satan at the commencement of the millennial kingdom (vv. 1–3) and the resurrection of the righteous (labelled the first resurrection) who will judge and reign with Christ for a thousand years (v. 4–6). At the conclusion of the temporal Messianic kingdom, the wicked will be resurrected (labelled the second resurrection) and Satan will be loosed from his prison (vv. 5a and 7). The final events of Revelation 20 describes Satan and the wicked's unsuccessful attack on the saints and their punishment (vv. 8–10), a vision of the final eschatological judgment of the resurrected dead, and the ultimate end of Death and Hades (vv. 11–15). It is not the purpose of this article to consider the post release activities of Satan (vv. 7–10) and how the final judgment vision (vv. 11–15) relates to the first half of the chapter (vv. 1–6),¹³ nor to explore the many allusions to the Old Testament and parallels to Second Temple period literature.¹⁴ Perhaps the most interesting extra-biblical parallels to Revelation 20 are *1 Enoch* 10:4–6 and 8–11 that have some structural parallels regarding the binding of Satan as seen in Figure 1.

¹² The main scholarly criticism of the premillennial view of Revelation 20 is that it does not seem to fit with the other eschatological passages of the New Testament. See Blaising et al. 1999, 228–276; Merkel 2014; vs. Vlach 2018. By moving the temporal eschatological millennial kingdom from Earth to Heaven, as held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, several of the hermeneutical challenges outlined by Merkle and Krug dissipate. For a detailed description of the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view and its interpretation of Revelation 20, see the later section in this article entitled: “Seventh-day Adventist Eschatological View.”

¹³ Ekkehardt Müller provides a detailed study on the microstructure of Revelation 20 that attempts to show how the various sections of the chapter relate to each other and addresses several interpretative issues in light of the overall structure of the chapter, see Müller 1999. For a consecutive reader approach to Revelation 20 that considers how the original reader would have understood the text when Revelation is read in consecutive order, see Mealy 1992.

¹⁴ For the use of Old Testament and Second Temple period literature in the Book of Revelation and more specifically Revelation 20, see Aune 1998b, 1069–1108; Beale 2006, 972–1038; Beale 1998; Beale and Carson 2007, 1144–1150; Blackwell 2019, 164–167; Moyise 1995; Sanders 2004; Shively 2019.

Revelation 20:1–15	1 Enoch 10:4–6	1 Enoch 10:8–11
An angel authorized by Christ	Raphael authorized by God to bind Asael,	Michael authorized by God to bind Shemihazah and others.
binds the dragon/ancient serpent/devil/Satan, throws him into the pit, and locks and seals the pit over him,	casts him into the darkness, covers him with darkness,	binds them in the valleys of the earth
so that he will deceive the nations no more for a thousand years.	and heals the earth that the watchers desolated for an exceedingly long time.	and heals the earth for seventy generations.
Afterwards he is released from his prison ... [war against the saints] and Satan is thrown into the lake of fire for everlasting torture.	On the great day of judgment, he will be released to the burning conflagration.	On the day of judgment, they will be released to the fiery abyss.

Fig. 1: Revelation 20 and the Book of the Watchers. Sourced from: Shively 2019, 165.

Regarding the many allusions to the TaNaKh/Old Testament appearing in Revelation 19:19–20:3, the most important is probably Isaiah 24:1–27:1, as John the Revelator follows the pattern of the prophet Isaiah closely. Although scholars have questioned if Isaiah was describing an eschatological bodily resurrection in this passage, Revelation 20:4–6 suggests that this is how it was interpreted by John. Webb Mealy has noted six parallel aspects between these two passages (see Fig. 2) that forms his conclusion that Isaiah 24:20–23 played an important background in John’s description of the binding of Satan (Mealy 1992, 98–101).

Isaiah 24:1–27:1		Revelation 19:19–20:10	
24:1–22	Day of the Lord, punishment, and imprisonment of heavenly and human powers.	19:19–20:3	Parousia, punishment, and imprisonment of rebellious human beings and Satan.
24:23; 25:6–9	Reign of God, messianic banquet.	20:4–6; cf. 19:9	Reign of God, Christ and his saints, previously referred to under the figure of the messianic banquet.
26:14–19	Resurrection for those in distress, but no resurrection for the wicked.	20:4–6	Resurrection for the saints persecuted under the beast, but no resurrection for “the rest of the dead.”
26:20–21; cf. 26:11	Punishment of the inhabitants of the earth, which has apparently been predicted as fire sent from the LORD.	20:9	Destruction of “Gog and Magog” by fire from heaven.
Cf. 27:2–4 [5:1–7]; 26:1; 26:11–12	Intimation that the fiery destruction of enemies is because they are attacking Israel and Jerusalem.	20:7–9	Fiery end of Gog and Magog, because they have come to attack the “camp of the saints and the beloved city.”
27:1	Punishment, in other words, killing, of “Leviathan the fleeing serpent.”	20:2; 20:10	Final slaying by destruction in the lake of fire for Satan, who has been pictured as Leviathan in ch. 12, and called “the serpent of old.”

Fig. 2: John’s use of Isaiah 24:1–27:1 in Revelation 19:19–20:10. Sourced from Mealy 1992, 100.

If the eschatological view of Revelation 20 is not harmonized with other eschatological passages in the Old and the New Testament, but is evaluated within the context of the book itself, the many ambiguities become apparent. Although premillennial interpreters agree that Satan will be neutralized at the commencement of the millennial kingdom, and the text describes a very vivid picture of a literal act of imprisonment in the *abyss* (Rev. 20:1.3), suggesting a real subterranean location (cf. Rev. 9:1.2.11; 11:7; 17:8; Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:7) similar to the account in 1 Enoch 10, there is still a question of how literal this description should be taken and how the Greek word *abyss* should be understood (Aune 1998a, 525–527; Aune 1998b, 1081–1082; Mealy 1992, 95–101, 122–126; Stefanovic 2002, 576–577). There is also a question regarding the millennium itself, if it should be understood as a literal one thousand year period, or if it is a symbolic number of unspecified time (Mealy 1992, 184–186, 243–248; Sanders 2004). Regarding the first eschatological resurrection described in verses 4–6, the text is not clear whether it is a limited resurrection of just the righteous martyrs or a universal resurrection of all righteous dead (Aune 1998b, 1084–1090; Collins 1996, 210–212; Mealy 1992, 102–119; Müller 1999, 245–248). There is also a question regarding the location of the temporal eschatological Messianic kingdom, if it will be an earthly millennial kingdom like all the other temporal Messianic kingdoms appearing in Second Temple period literature, or if it will be a heavenly one, introducing a unique element (Mealy 1992, 230–235; Müller 1999, 232–233; Shea 1985; Sigvartsen 2022). Regarding the second eschatological resurrection at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom, the text is not clear whether this resurrection is only for the wicked dead or if it would be universal in nature, including all the righteous (apart from the righteous martyrs that resurrected in the first eschatological resurrection) and all the wicked. Depending on the nature of this second resurrection, the vision of the final eschatological judgment (vv. 11–15) could depict the judgment of only the wicked and their eternal destiny, referring to the books of their recorded deeds. However, the introduction of the Book of Life (v. 12) could suggest that both the righteous and the wicked are being judged at this time (Aune 1998a, 223–225; Aune 1998b, 1101–1104; Mealy 1992, 143–189; Müller 1999, 238–241; Stefanovic 2009, 582–583).

Apart from Revelation 20–22, there is only one other late Second Temple period text which separates the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked

by a temporal Messianic kingdom, the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, a literary work which will be considered in the following section. Some readers may wonder why there are only two texts from this period that present such a view and may be curious as to how the authors/communities of these two writings came to believe in two separate resurrections, in contrast to the other literature of this period that only presents one resurrection event. Did they utilize a different hermeneutical strategy or did they perceive the problem of theodicy differently than other faith communities? This intriguing question goes beyond the scope of this article but may warrant further investigation.

3. Resurrection View Presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*

The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* is a composite work consisting of two distinct literary works—the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 1–5) and the *Ascension of Isaiah* (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 6–11). It is a non-canonical pseudonymous work dated to late first and early second century CE.¹⁵ The most relevant passage for this study is the climax of the first half of the book (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:14–22, see proceeding textbox), and follows the reign of Beliar (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:1–13). This vision summarizes the key events that will take place following the Second Coming of Christ (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:14–18).

Second Coming of Christ
(Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:14-22)

¹⁴And after [one thousand] three hundred and thirty-two days the LORD will come with his angels and with the hosts of the saints from the seventh heaven, with the glory of the seventh heaven, and will drag Beliar, and his hosts also, into Gehenna. ¹⁵And he will give rest to the pious whom he finds in the body in this world, but the sun will be ashamed. ¹⁶and (to) all who because of their faith in him have cursed Beliar and his kings. But the saints will come with the LORD with their robes which are stored up in the seventh heaven above; with the LORD will come those whose spirits are clothed, they will descend and be present in the world, and the LORD will strengthen those who are found in the body, together with the saints in the robes of the saints, and will serve those who have kept watch in this world. ¹⁷And

¹⁵ For recent studies on the question of dating, provenance, and composition structure, see Dochhorn 2020; Hall 2004; Knibb 2009, 289–306; and publications by Jonathan Knight and Enrico Norelli in the Reference List.

after this they will be turned in their robes upwards, and their body will be left in the world. ¹⁸Then the voice of the Beloved will reprove in anger this heaven, and this earth, and the mountains, and the hills, and the cities, and the desert, and the trees, and the angel of the sun, and that of the moon, and everywhere that Beliar has appeared and acted openly in this world. There will be a resurrection and a judgment in their midst in those days, and the Beloved will cause fire to rise from him, and it will consume all the impious, and they will become as if they had not been created. ¹⁹And the rest of the words of the vision are written in the vision of Babylon. ²⁰And the rest of the vision about the LORD, behold it is written in parables in the words of mine that are written in the book which I prophesied openly. ²¹And the descent of the Beloved into Sheol, behold it is written in the section where the LORD says, "Behold, my son shall understand." And all these things, behold they are written in the Psalms, in the parables of David the son of Jesse, and in the Proverbs of Solomon his son, and in the words of Korah and of Ethan the Israelite, and in the words of Asaph, and in the rest of the psalms which the angel of the spirit has inspired, ²²(namely) in those which have no name written, and in the words of Amos my father and of Hosea the prophet, and of Micah, and of Joel, and of Nahum, and of Jonah, and of Obadiah, and of Habakkuk, and of Haggai, and of Zephaniah, and of Zechariah, and of Malachi, and in the words of the righteous Joseph, and in the words of Daniel.

(Knibb 1985, 2:162–163)

Figure 3 illustrates the death and resurrection view presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. According to this view, this current life determines the future destiny of each person. Assumedly, a judgment of the soul takes place at death because the righteous soul leaves the "robes of flesh" behind, is brought to the Seventh Heaven to be with the saints, and given "robes of above" (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:16; 8:14–15; 9:7–9).¹⁶ While not specifically stated,

¹⁶ This apocalypse does not mention the soul specifically, however, it does mention the "robes of flesh" and the "robes of above," indicating that something lives on that is separate from the "robes" or "body." It is not revealed in the text the type of "robes" the wicked will have after death. The "robe of above" which will be given to the righteous upon their ascension to the Seventh Heaven is also mentioned in Mart. Ascen. Isa. 1:5; 3:25; 7:22; 8:14, 26; 9:2.9.17–18.24–26; 11:40. This robe symbolizes a transformation which needs to take place to enable a person to dwell in the Seventh Heaven with God.

it could be assumed the wicked are brought to Sheol (or Gehenna), where they will be kept until the resurrection of the wicked.

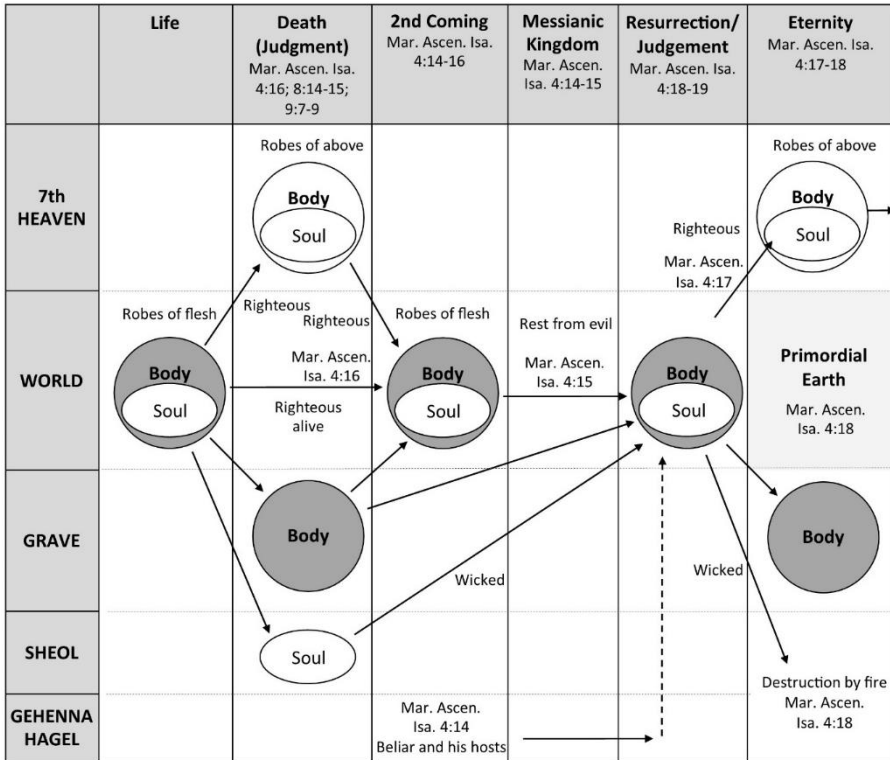


Fig. 3: The death and resurrection view presented in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. Sourced from Sigvartsen 2019b, 67.

The Second Coming of the Lord and the establishment of his temporal Messianic kingdom follows the “three years and seven months and twenty-seven days” long reign of Beliar (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:12) or 1332 days according to v.

14,¹⁷ based on an interpretation of Dan. 12:12. The hosts of saints who accompany God and his angels (alluding to Zech. 14:15),¹⁸ when descending from the Seventh Heaven, is the resurrection of the righteous, as they will once more be clothed in the “robes of flesh” and become a part of the earthly Messianic kingdom. As a part of the Second Coming, Beliar and his hosts¹⁹ will be dragged to Gehenna²⁰ where, it could be assumed, they will remain until the

¹⁷ This time period is reminiscent to the 1335 days of Dan. 12:12. Knibb notes the 1332 days (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:14) or the three years, seven months, and twenty-seven day period (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:12) are the same and, according to the Julian calendar, converts to 1335 days (Knibb 1985, 2:162: n. j). Jonathan Knight observes the 1332 days is most likely an error for 1335, thus bringing the two references to the reign of Belial into agreement (Knight 1995, 62). There is a precedence from the book of Revelation, a contemporary work, which refers to the same time-period in three different ways, as three-and-a-half years (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14), 1260 days period (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), and also as 42 months (Rev. 13:5).

If the time-period in this text is indeed 1335 days, it is a clear link to the resurrection passage of Daniel 12 which describes a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. It would also shed some light on how the author of this apocalypse understood the 1335 day period of Daniel 12:12, suggesting that the end of this period would directly precede the Second Coming and the establishment of an earthly Messianic kingdom, possibly an interpretation of the following passages from the book – Dan. 2:34–35.44–45; 7:13–14.18.22.26–27; 12:1–13.

¹⁸ Although this passage does not mention who these saints are, Mart. Ascen. Isa. 9:6–11 notes that all the righteous, upon death, go to dwell with God in the Seventh Heaven, leaving the “robes of the flesh” behind to receive “the robes of above” (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 9:7–9). This might be an interpretation of Zechariah 14:5 which states: “And you shall flee by the valley of the Lord’s mountain, for the valley between the mountains shall reach to Azal; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.” This image is also present in the New Testament writings, where either angels (Matt. 16:27; 24:29–31; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 13:24–27; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:14) or the saints (1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 1:14) are depicted as coming with Jesus Christ at the Second Coming. Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:14 mentions both the angels and the saints accompanying the Lord.

¹⁹ From the immediate context, the hosts of Beliar seem to parallel the hosts of saints coming with the Lord. It is not clear if Beliar’s hosts would also include Beliar’s loyal angels since, in the parallel, the angels of the Lord were mentioned in addition to the saints.

²⁰ It is not clear what the nature of this “Gehenna” is in this passage, if it is a place of eternal torment as suggested by the final Christian redactor in Mart. Ascen. Isa. 1:3. However, Mart. Ascen. Isa. 10:8 makes a distinction between Sheol and Haguel, an Ethiopian word which means, “perdition.” Knibb adds that “‘destruction’ is probably intended here as the name of the final place of punishment for the wicked” (Knibb 1985, 2:137: n. l). Even though it may be tempting to assume Gehenna carries the same meaning as in Jewish apocalyptic literature, as a place of eternal

day of resurrection and judgment of the wicked. The Messianic kingdom will be a temporary earthly kingdom²¹ bookended by the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection and judgment of the wicked. As Beliar and his hosts reside in Gehenna, this unspecified time period will be without wickedness (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:14–15). The period of the earthly Messianic kingdom concludes with the resurrection and the judgment of the wicked. The wicked will be destroyed by fire while the righteous will return to the Seventh Heaven, leaving their “robes of flesh” behind and receiving their “robes of above” (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:18–19). The whole of creation will return to the state of pre-creation (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:18) while the Seventh Heaven will become the eternal home for the righteous (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:17). The wicked are destroyed permanently by fire (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:18).²²

Before considering the differences and the similarities between the resurrection views presented in Revelation 20–22 with that of *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* – the only two examples of a temporal eschatological Messianic kingdom bookended by a resurrection event – it would be appropriate to consider the Seventh-day Adventist Eschatological view as it has adapted this macrostructure as a fundamental element of its belief system. The belief statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church also provide the interpretative positions held regarding the exegetical ambiguities found in Revelation 20.

punishment (4 Ezra 7:36; 1 En. 90:26; Sib. Or. 4.186; 2 Bar. 59:10), there is no indication in this Christian apocalypse that the wicked have an immortal soul, rather, the emphasis is on their complete destruction (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:18).

²¹ There is no indication in this passage, nor in the apocalypse as a whole, regarding the duration of this Messianic kingdom.

²² It is not mentioned in this text how long the torment will last, but Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:18 states fire “will consume all the impious, and they will become as if they had not been created.”

4. Seventh-day Adventist Eschatological View

The Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view (Beliefs 24–28)²³ is a harmonized and composite belief founded on the reformation principles of *Sola Scriptura*, *Tota Scriptura*, *Prima Scriptura*, and the *Analogy of Scripture*. The members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hold a high view of Scripture, believing “all scripture,” both the Old and the New Testament, is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16–17)²⁴ and its writers were “moved” by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20–21). This is a part of the foundational belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (*Belief 1: The Holy Scripture*) and forms the hermeneutical foundation on which all the other official beliefs rest (Beliefs 2–28). The implication of this belief holds that although there were many biblical writers, there was, in effect, only one author—the Holy Spirit (Belief 5). Consequently, this allows the reader to consider the Bible as a unit which contains a consistent and harmonious message. While only the Holy Spirit has the complete picture, the individual writer presents a part or aspect of this picture, and by combining these individual parts or aspects it may be possible to recreate this larger picture.²⁵ Figure 4 provides the composite Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view.

Belief 19: The Law of God, *Belief 22: Christian Behavior*, and *Belief 24: Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary* note that this current life determines the future destiny of each person – either their reward and eternal life or their punishment and eternal death (see also Matt. 25:31–46; John 5:28–29; 1 John 2:3–6). *Belief 7: The Nature of Humanity* and *Belief 26: Death and Resurrection* state that death (Death 1 in Fig. 4) is “an unconscious state for all people” and each person “is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God

²³ For the 28 official belief-statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, see: www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28Beliefs-Web.pdf.

²⁴ It should be noted that most Seventh-day Adventists apply 2 Tim. 3:16–17 both to the Old and the New Testament, although when these words were first written by Paul, there was not a canonized “New Testament.” This being the case, Paul was most likely speaking of the books that were in the process of becoming canonized as the Old Testament.

²⁵ For the official statement by the Seventh-day Adventist Church on “Methods of Bible Study,” approved by the Annual Council, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 12, 1986, see: www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/0/methods-of-bible-study. At the General Conference Session in San Antonio, TX (July 10, 2015), the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) was tasked to restudy the biblical principles of interpretation.

for life and breath and all else.” This view is based on Genesis 2:7 that suggests a living being consists of a body and God’s breath. Death is the reversal of God’s creation act – when the body returns to dust while the breath returns to God who gave it (Gen. 3:19; Eccl. 3:19–21; 12:7). Seventh-day Adventists believe this breath-of-life should not be confused with a “soul,” something that lives on independently from the body upon death (*Belief 7: The Nature of Humanity*).

Belief 24: Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary states that before the Second Coming, commencing in 1844 at the conclusion of the 2300 day-year prophecy in Daniel 8:13–14, there will be an investigative judgment (Judgment 1 in Fig. 4). This judgment will determine who will be a part of the resurrection of the righteous (Resurrection 1 in Fig. 4) and who are numbered among the righteous living – those whom Jesus will bring to Heaven for the Millennium.²⁶

²⁶ The element of a judgment (Judgment 1 in Fig. 4) prior to the resurrection is not unique to the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view. This is the majority position among the eighteen complete and distinct death-to-eternity views appearing in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. Sigvartsen observes that twelve of these views mention a pre-resurrection judgment specifically and it is implied in three views (Sigvartsen 2019, 217–220). However, in most of these cases, the pre-resurrection judgment takes place upon death or soon thereafter as it needs to be determined where the person’s soul should be sent while awaiting the resurrection. Regarding the views that do not contain a soul which can exist separately from the body, the pre-resurrection judgment would take place at some point prior to the resurrection to determine who will participate in the resurrection. If there is only one universal eschatological resurrection event for all the righteous and the wicked dead, and there is no soul involved, there is no need for a pre-resurrection judgment.

The distinctive element of the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view is that the pre-resurrection judgment has been given a specific commencement date. According to Dan. 7:9–10.22.26, the judgment scene takes place after the little horn’s “time, times, and half a time” (v. 25) rule and before the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom (Dan. 7:12–14.18.22.27). By synchronizing Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (Dan. 7) with his vision of a ram and a goat (Dan. 8) and the 70 weeks-of-year prophecy (Dan. 9:20–27), Seventh-day Adventists make a case that 1844 CE is the start date, and more specifically, October 22, as this date was the equivalent of the 10th day of Tishrei, the Jewish date for Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). For further reading, see Shea 1982; Holbrook 1986 a; Holbrook 1986 b.

Two Separate Eschatological Resurrection Events

The first general resurrection (Resurrection 1 in Fig. 4) takes place at the Second Coming and includes all the righteous dead (*Belief 25: The Second Coming of Christ* and *Belief 26: Death and Resurrection*). Following the resurrection, all the righteous will be transformed and be “clothed in immortality” and become like the angels before they are brought to Heaven to be with God during the Millennium (*Belief 27: The Millennium and the End of Sin*; Luke 20:36; 1 Cor. 15:42–45; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 20:4–6). There is some New Testament evidence that there will also be a “special” and limited resurrection of those who killed Jesus (and the most wicked) which will take place before the Second Coming and the resurrection of the righteous (Matt. 26:64; Rev. 1:7). Then following the Second Coming, they will die a second time and await their final annihilation at the end of the Millennium. Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist pioneer and writer, expands on this special resurrection in the *Great Controversy* (White 2002c, 643). White also seems to suggest that there will be a second “special” and limited resurrection of some righteous who will be counted among the 144,000 which will also take place before the Second Coming (White 1999b, 1:205–208). The wicked, however, will be destroyed (Matt. 24:37–39; Luke 17:28–30; Rev. 19:18–21) and be dead until the resurrection of the wicked (Resurrection 2 in Fig. 4) at the end of the Millennium (*Belief 26: Death and Resurrection* and *Belief 27: The Millennium and the End of Sin*).

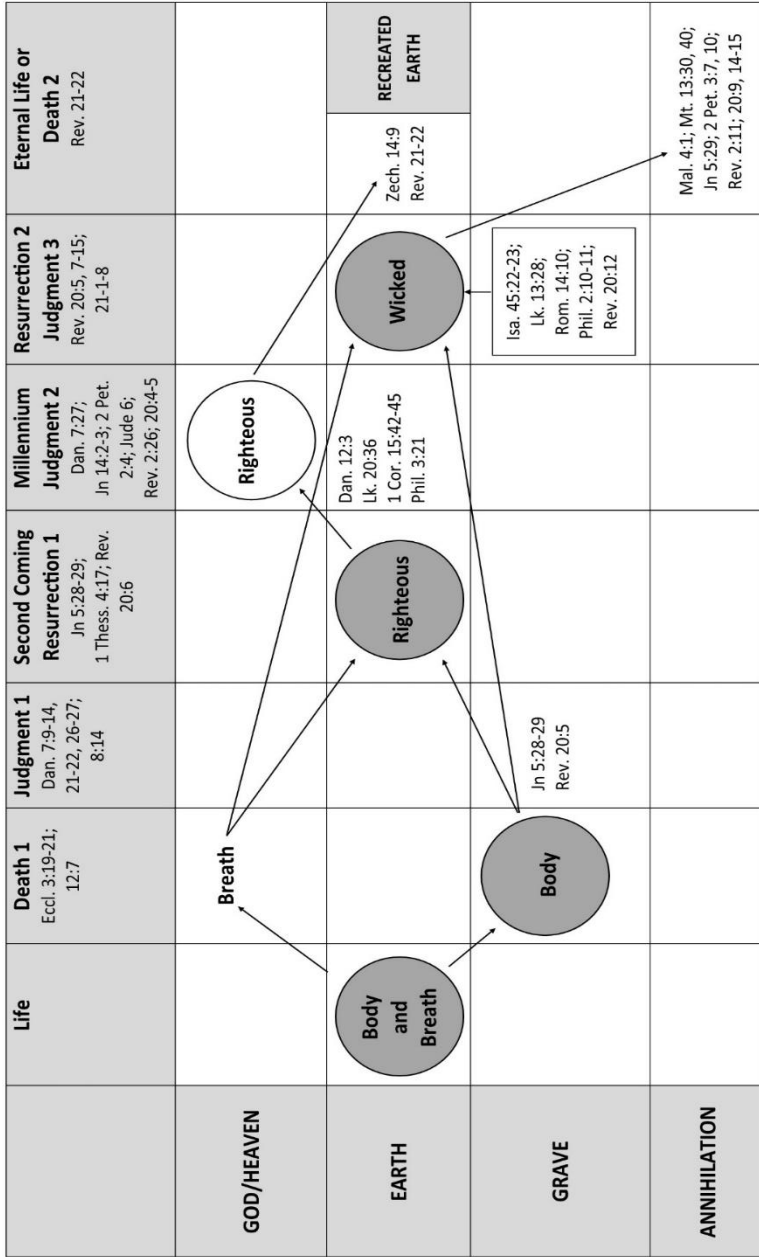


Fig. 4: The Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view. Modified from Sigvartsen 2019b, 223.

Belief 27: The Millennium and the End of Sin states that during the millennium, the Earth will be desolate (Jer. 4:23–25 || Gen. 1:2 [LXX]), and only Satan will be roaming the Earth (Rev. 20:2–3), while the righteous are in Heaven reigning with God (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 2:26; 20:4) and “judging the wicked” (Judgment 2 in Fig. 4; 1 Cor. 6:2–3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jud. 6; Rev. 20:4) before the resurrection and sentencing of the wicked.

The resurrection of the wicked (Resurrection 2 in Fig. 4) takes place at the end of the Millennium when the righteous have returned to the Earth with God and the New Jerusalem (*Belief 26: Death and Resurrection* and *Belief 27: Millennium and the End of Sin*). Following the sentencing of the wicked (Judgment 3 in Fig. 4),²⁷ the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7–15; 21:1–8; Death 2 in Fig. 4). The righteous will live on a recreated Earth with God for all eternity while the wicked are completely annihilated (*Belief 28: The New Earth*; Rev. 21–22).

This brief summary of the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view shows how the unique macrostructure of the temporary eschatological kingdom of Revelation 20 and the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* has been embedded into its belief system. Moreover, it also shows the interpretations given to the ambiguous elements of Revelation 20. The final section of this article will compare and contrast the resurrection view presented in Revelation 20–22 with that of the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, noting several important points of comparison while referring to the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view whenever it is deemed relevant.

²⁷ There is only one literary work in the Pseudepigrapha which mentions three judgments, the *Testament of Abraham*. This work is a Jewish composition most likely originating from the Jewish diaspora in Egypt at the turn of the first century CE (for a discussion on dating and provenance, see Sanders 1983, 1:874–875). The first judgment is given by Abel at the first gate of Heaven (T. Ab. A11:1–13:5), the second judgment by the twelve tribes of Israel (T. Ab. A13:6), and the third and final judgment by God himself (T. Ab. A13:7). This triple judgment follows the direction of Deuteronomy 19:5, which requires three witnesses in a legal matter: “One witness cannot establish any wrongdoing or sin against a person, whatever that person has done. A fact must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” The Targum adds that the Word of the Lord is also required. This thoroughness ensures that God’s justice is ultimately settled. For further reading, see: Nickelsburg 1976, 23–64.

5. Similarities and Differences

The first, and perhaps the most important, point of comparison between the view in the Book of Revelation and that of the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* is the time interval between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. Although Daniel 12 suggests there will be a resurrection of the righteous and a resurrection of the wicked, the reader is given the impression that these two resurrections will take place at the same time. However, the eschatological view appearing in Revelation 20–22 and in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* have these two resurrections bookend the temporal Messianic kingdom, a unique eschatological scenario shared by these two literary works. This macro structural view merged into the eschatological view held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a foundational element. All other canonical texts and resurrection passages in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha that mention a dual resurrection, have the righteous and the wicked resurrect in one resurrection event. The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* does not mention the length of the time interval while the book of Revelation adds a time interval of 1,000 years between these two resurrections events, the latter timeframe also adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

A second major point of comparison is the location of the temporal Messianic kingdom. While the apocalypse in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* seems to suggest that the temporal Messianic kingdom will be an earthly kingdom as opposed to a heavenly one (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:16), Revelation 20:4–6 does not provide the specific location of the millennial kingdom. Joel Badina makes a case for the millennial kingdom being located in Heaven based on a word-study of the noun θρόνος, *throne*, used in Revelation 20:4. This word appears 47 times throughout the apocalypse and the throne's location is always in Heaven when associated with God or Jesus (three of the 47 cases refer to the throne of Satan [Rev. 2:13], dragon [Rev. 13:2] or the beast [Rev. 16:10], all of which are located on Earth as opposed to Heaven). Thus, he states: "it is reasonable to conclude that the thrones of 20:4 are in heaven, too, since they are thrones of people who will '[reign]' with Christ a thousand years' (20:4, 6)." Badina also finds support for his conclusion by linking the "conquerors" in Revelation 20:4 with the "conquerors" seen in Revelation 15:2 and 3:21, who are located in Heaven (Badina 1992, 239–241). These two arguments assume the location of God's/Jesus' throne is fixed and does not move from Heaven

to Earth at the Second Coming event. A case could be made that, if the temporal Messianic kingdom was established on Earth, his throne would also be based on Earth. Willliam Shea adds a third argument for locating the millennial kingdom in Heaven based on the parallel literary structure of Revelation 12 and 20. Based on his analysis, he sees a similar shift “Earth–Heaven–Earth,” in both chapters, thus considering Revelation 20:1–3 and 20:7–15 as describing events taking place on Earth, while the middle section (Rev 20:4–6) takes place in Heaven, thereby viewing the millennial kingdom as a heavenly kingdom (Shea 1985, 47). Thus, the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes the temporal Messianic kingdom to be in Heaven, in contrast to the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* which considers it an earthly kingdom, in line with Dan. 2:35.44–45; 7:27.

A third point of comparison is the neutralization of Satan or Beliar at the beginning of the temporal Messianic kingdom, following the resurrection of the righteous. As a part of the Second Coming, Beliar and his hosts are dragged to Gehenna which will bring “rest” to the righteous who were persecuted by Beliar and his hosts. In doing so, this would effectively bring an end to evil, thus establishing the supreme authority of the Lord (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:15). This act is depicted in Revelation 20:1–3 by an angel coming down from Heaven with a great chain to seize and bind Satan before throwing him into the abyss that will be locked and sealed for a thousand yours. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, provides a different interpretation. It teaches that the binding of Satan in the abyss for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1–3) refers to the period when the righteous are in the millennial kingdom in Heaven, while the wicked are all dead awaiting the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the 1,000 years. Thus, Satan is alone on Earth, effectively neutralizing him. It is noted that the Greek word for abyss, ἄβυσσος, is the same word used in the *Septuagint* version of Gen. 1:2, when describing Earth prior to the creation week, suggesting the Earth, during the millennium, is unfit for life (see *Belief 28: The Millennium and the New Earth*).

A fourth point of comparison is the righteous dead. According to the Mart. Ascent. Isa. 4:14–16; 8:14–15; 9:7–9, following their death, the righteous ascend to the Seventh Heaven where they will receive “robes of above” while leaving their “robes of flesh” behind on Earth. They will dwell in Seventh Heaven until the Second Coming, when they will descend to the Earth together with the Lord and take on their “robes of flesh,” which is the resurrection of the

righteous, and dwell with Him on Earth and be a part of His temporal Messianic kingdom. In the book of Revelation scenario, upon death, the righteous dwell in the ground until the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. However, as noted earlier, there is an ambiguity regarding the extent of the first resurrection – if it will be a universal resurrection of the righteous dead or if only the righteous martyrs will resurrect, leaving the remaining righteous in their graves until the second resurrection. This would make the second resurrection and final judgment at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom more universal in nature as it would include most of the righteous and all the wicked. Thus, there is a major structural difference between these two second-coming accounts. The book of Revelation does not mention the saints descending from Heaven at the Second Coming.²⁸ Instead, the righteous dead (the martyrs) will be resurrected from the Earth (Rev. 20:4.6).²⁹ The Seventh-day Adventist view falls somewhere in the middle, considering both resurrections as selectively universal, the first for all the righteous and the second for all the wicked, similarly to the view in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*. However, unlike the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, it follows the view presented in Revelation that the righteous dead will remain in their graves until the eschatological resurrection.

A fifth point of comparison is human anthropology. Although the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* does not specifically mention the soul, it does mention that something of the righteous dead survives as the righteous have their robes of flesh removed to have them replaced with the robes of above. Apart from the vision of the souls of the saints under the altar in Heaven (Rev. 6:9–

²⁸ Revelation 19:14 mentions the armies of Heaven accompanying the Messiah, however, this may be an allusion to one of God's titles used frequently (245x) in the TaNaKh, the Lord of Hosts or armies, is most likely a reference to His angels.

²⁹ It should be noted that Seventh-day Adventists believe there are already a few righteous in Heaven, like Enoch (Gen. 5:24), Moses (Deut. 34:5–6 || Jude 9), Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:11) – the latter two are mentioned talking with Jesus in the New Testament (Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30). Matthew records there were a number of saints who resurrected when Jesus died (Matt. 27:52–53). Ellen G. White expands on Matthew's account (White 1999a, 184–185) and adds that they were brought to Heaven as the first fruit of His act of salvation (White 2002a, 786). There is also a reference in Revelation 6:9–11 to the souls of the martyrs under the Heavenly altar crying out for justice, however, Seventh-day Adventism would give this passage a symbolic reading. Thus, although the righteous will rest in the earth until the Second Coming, there are some exceptions.

11), Revelation is mute on this topic and focuses instead on the bodily resurrections in the eschatological time. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not teach a belief in a soul which can exist independently from the body, and as such, it teaches that all dead will sleep in the ground until the day of the resurrection of the righteous or the wicked seemingly more in line with the perspective of Revelation. However, *Belief 25: The Second Coming of Christ* states the righteous will be glorified before taken to Heaven (1 Cor. 15:51–54). This transformation could also be supported by the glorification of Moses when receiving God’s law on the mountain (Exod. 34:29–35), Daniel describing the resurrected saints as shining stars (Dan. 12:3), or by Jesus’ transfiguration—when “His face shone like the sun. Even His clothes became as white as the light” (Matt. 17:2). Sigvartsen states that: “Some ancient Jewish traditions claim that the first couple were clothed in light, as humans were created in God’s likeness (Gen. 1:26), and received a tunic of skin (ancient traditions makes a wordplay on the two Hebrew words אור [“light”] and עור [“skin”]) after the fall to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:21)” (Sigvartsen 2011, 175; Also see discussion on “Glorious Clothing” in Kugel 1998, 114–120). White seems to support this tradition when she writes that prior to the fall, Adam and Eve “were clothed with a covering of light and glory such as the angels wear” (White 2002b, 45). Thus, the robing-disrobing-robing of heavenly garments, based on location, that is depicted in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, would not be a completely foreign idea.

A sixth point of comparison is the pre-second-coming judgment. This judgment is required in both eschatological frameworks. If both resurrections are universal in nature, it becomes necessary to determine the category of each person to ensure they are allocated to the proper resurrection – the resurrection of the righteous at the Second Coming or the resurrection of the wicked following the temporal Messianic kingdom.³⁰ However, there is a major difference, in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, the judgment is ongoing until

³⁰ However, if the first resurrection described in Revelation 20:4–6 does not relate to all the righteous dead but only to the martyrs, then an argument could be made that a pre-advent judgment would not be necessary. A martyr’s destiny would not need a judgment process to determine whether they belong among the righteous or the wicked. Moreover, if the first resurrection only describes the martyrs, it follows that it is the martyrs who will judge the dead, both the righteous and wicked, during the millennium, preparing the books for the final eschatological judgment described in Revelation 20:11–15.

the day of the Second Coming, as it needs to be determined on a case by case basis who will be sent directly to the Seventh Heaven and who will remain dead until the resurrection of the wicked. If the first resurrection of Revelation describes a universal resurrection of the righteous, a judgment upon death is not necessary as long as a judgment of all dead takes place prior to the allocated resurrection, since the dead will remain in their graves until their allotted resurrection. This is the eschatological view of the Seventh-day Adventist church (*Belief 24: Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary*). The judgment during the millennium in Revelation 20:4–6 (a view also expressed in the Seventh-day Adventist belief statement *Belief 27: The Millennium and the End of Sin*) is lacking in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* although both views have a judgment of the wicked following their resurrection.

A seventh point of comparison is the wicked dead. Both apocalypses have the wicked resurrected, judged, and then destroyed by fire; however, the book of Revelation mentions specifically that Satan will be included in this destruction (Rev. 20:9–10.15; 21:8; *Belief 27: The Millennium and the End of Sin*), while this element can only be assumed in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*.

The last point of comparison regards the final abode of the righteous. Following the millennium in Heaven, John the Revelator states that God will create a new Heaven and a new Earth (Rev. 21:1), where the New Jerusalem will be located (Rev. 21:2), and all the saints will dwell in this city with God forever (Rev. 21–22). This is in stark contrast to the view presented in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, which states that at the end of the Messianic era, after the resurrection of the wicked and their complete annihilation by fire, the righteous will ascend to the Seventh Heaven, leaving their “robes of flesh” to receive the “robes of above.” Knight notes the end of this world “would involve a full-scale destruction in which the Beloved’s voice would angrily reprove” (Knight 1995, 63) the whole creation (Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4:18), thus returning it to the state of pre-creation. There will be no need for a recreation, a new Heaven, or a new Earth, since all the righteous are gathered in the Seventh Heaven, their eternal home.

6. Conclusion

The Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view separates the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked by a heavenly millennial kingdom based on Revelation 20–22. This is an almost unique eschatological view in the Second

Temple period as only one eschatological resurrection event is the majority position. There is only one other apocalyptic text, also Christian and dating to the late first or early second century CE, that separates the two resurrections, however in that case, it is separated by an earthly temporal Messianic kingdom. A comparison of the composite eschatological belief held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the view presented in the pseudepigraphical text, showed some important and helpful overall similarities, although there were also several significant differences. Even though there were several important shared elements, the overall eschatological structure is reversed. In the Seventh-day Adventist view, the Book of Revelation suggests the righteous dead remain in the grave until the Second Coming, when they will then be resurrected and brought to Heaven with the living righteous. At the end of the 1,000 year Messianic kingdom in Heaven, the righteous will be brought back to Earth, and the wicked will be resurrected, judged, and annihilated. The righteous will live with God for all eternity on a newly recreated Earth. Thus, the movement is: Earth=>Heaven=>Earth. The pseudepigraphical text has the righteous dead transition straight to the Seventh Heaven where they will be with the saints until the return to Earth at the Second Coming and the temporary Messianic kingdom will be established. The resurrection of the wicked will take place at the end of the temporary Messianic kingdom, when they will be judged and annihilated. At this point, the righteous will once more return to the Seventh Heaven where they will live with God for all eternity, and the Earth will return to a pre-creation state. Thus, the movement is: Seventh Heaven=>Earth=>Seventh Heaven. The distinctiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist eschatological view and the lack of literary work from the Second Temple period that shares all its elements is not surprising as it is a composite belief structure founded on the reformation principles of *Sola Scriptura*, *Tota Scriptura*, *Prima Scriptura*, and the *Analogy of Scripture*.

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Zusammenfassung

Offb. 20–22 zeigt zwei separate eschatologische Auferstehungsereignisse, eines für die Gerechten und ein anderes für die Ungerechten. Diese eschatologische Glaubensüberzeugung wurde ein integraler Bestandteil der eschatologischen Glaubensstruktur der Freikirche der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten (Glaubensüberzeugungen 24–28) – eine zusammengesetzte Glaubensstruktur, die sich auf die reformatorischen Prinzipien *sola Scriptura*, *tota Scriptura*, *prima Scriptura* und der *analogia Scripturae* gründet. Neben Offb. 20–22 gibt es nur einen weiteren Text aus dem späten 1./frühen 2. Jh. n. Chr., der die Auferstehung der Gerechten und der Ungerechten voneinander trennt, und zwar durch ein temporäres messianisches Königreich. Somit bleibt diese Glaubensüberzeugung eine Minderheitenmeinung. Dieser Artikel vergleicht und kontrastiert den eschatologischen Glauben aus Offb. 20–22 mit Inhalten des pseudepigraphischen Texts *Himmelfahrt des Jesaja* und mit den eschatologischen Glaubensaussagen der Freikirche der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten, die teilweise auf Offb. 20–22 beruhen. Es wird gezeigt, dass es zwar einige wichtige allgemeine strukturelle Ähnlichkeiten zwischen Offb. 20–22 (und erweiternd: den adventistischen Glaubensüberzeugungen) und der *Himmelfahrt des Jesaja* gibt, aber auch einige signifikante Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Szenarien dieser aus derselben Epochen stammenden eschatologischen Auferstehungstexte.

Résumé

Apocalypse 20–22 présente deux événements de résurrection eschatologiques distincts: l'un pour les justes et l'autre pour les méchants. Cette croyance eschatologique est devenue un pilier à part entière de la structure de croyance eschatologique détenue par l'Église Adventiste du 7e Jour (Croyances Fondamentales 24–28) – une structure de croyance composite fondée sur les principes suivants de la Réforme: *Sola Scriptura*, *Tota Scriptura*, *Prima Scriptura*, et l'analogie des Écritures. Hormis Apocalypse 20–22, il n'y a qu'un seul autre texte de la fin du premier au début du deuxième siècle de notre ère qui sépare la résurrection des justes et des méchants par un royaume messianique temporel, ce qui en fait une croyance minoritaire. Cet article comparera et mettra en contraste la croyance eschatologique véhiculée dans Apocalypse 20–22, avec la croyance apparaissant dans le texte pseudépigraphe, *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* (Martyre et Ascension d'Isaïe), ainsi que les déclarations de croyance eschatologiques composites tenues par l'Église Adventiste du 7e Jour qui sont partiellement basées sur Apocalypse 20–22. Il démontrera que, bien qu'il existe d'importantes similitudes structurelles globales entre Apocalypse 20–22 (et par extension la croyance adventiste du 7e jour) et *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, il existe également des différences significatives entre les deux scénarios de croyance dans ces textes de résurrection eschatologiques contemporains.

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Adventist Orthodoxy Codified

The Fundamental Beliefs of 1931

Stefan Höschele

Abstract

This is the first scholarly article to focus exclusively on the Adventist Fundamental Beliefs of 1931. Although this text is largely forgotten today, it played an important role in the self-expression of Adventist orthodoxy in the middle part of the 20th century. Its swift genesis and, subsequently, significant rise in importance demonstrates that the denomination's leaders at the time were in need of precisely such a tool of self-presentation and self-assurance and that they felt little discomfort with a move that actually ran contrary to the anti-credal mood of 19th century Adventists. Theologically, the 1931 statement reconfigured Adventist beliefs as (1) squarely fitting in with the conservative strand of Protestantism at its time, including trinitarian orthodoxy, (2) implying continuity with most (but not all) key tenets of the movement in the 19th century, (3) strongly oriented towards matters of Christian lifestyle, and (4) containing a kind of upgraded sanctuary theology, which overhauled earlier expressions but retained the crucial elements of Adventist peculiarity in an environment where these were heavily contested.

The development of Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal statements entails both a number of surprises and parallels to Christian confessional texts at large. After denominational beginnings during one of the most intensely anti-credal periods in Christian history, Adventists refrained from publishing an official confession of faith until well into the 20th century. Meanwhile, Uriah Smith's *Fundamental Principles* of 1872 functioned as a substitute in some ways. Only in 1980, five generations after its formation as a movement, did the denomination create an official text entitled "Fundamental Beliefs" at a representative meeting. However, already 50 years earlier, the need to produce such a text

was acutely felt and it was actually published, albeit without an initial vote confirming the wording in any of the church's leading committees or constituency meetings.

This article is devoted to the 1931 doctrinal statement, which was titled "Fundamental Beliefs" like its 1980 successor. There is a significant amount of published information on the latter and at least some academic discussion on its 1872 predecessor text;¹ however, publications addressing the 1931 statement are few and commonly only mention the text in passing. The most significant scholarly treatment so far is found in Michael Campbell's 2016 article "Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity," which devotes about two pages of discussion to it.²

While the following reflections cannot explore the overall historical impact and theological details in each section of the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs, it is clear that the 1980 statement, which has defined Adventism until today, is much better understood against the background of its precursor text. Although it is largely forgotten today, the 1931 statement played a significant role as the Seventh-day Adventist denomination grew in self-awareness, sophistication, and in its ability to engage in dialogue (e. g. with representatives from the Evangelical Movement in the 1950s).³ This paper will use the same approach as a previous study on Uriah Smith's 1872 Fundamental Principles: It will analyse it with regard to its historical background, theological significance (including aspects arising from its structure), and enduring relevance.

¹ The present study is a sequel to an earlier paper on Uriah Smith's 1872 Fundamental Principles; see Höschele 2020. For literature on the 1872 statement, see *ibid.*

² Campbell 2017, 203–208; two more pages are filled with a table of comparisons with the 1872 text. An important source with historical reminiscences is Froom 1971, 409–419; however, Froom embeds what he knows into a narrative of divine providence rather than a more objective theological history.

³ The complete text is included in the well-known tome *Questions on Doctrine* (1957), which resulted from such conversations in North America (pp. 11–18).

1. Historical Context

The post-World War I period is an extremely interesting phase of Adventist history.⁴ John Loughborough, the last of the “pioneers” – i.e. of the earliest ministers and leaders of the denomination – died in 1924. Ellen White, the church’s prophetic voice, had lived up to 1915 and had not witnessed the development of the European war activities into a global conflict. Many in the church believed that the Great War, as it was then called, would usher in the final events of history. When the fighting finally ended, denominational leaders and theologians had therefore to contemplate questions of prophetic interpretation and the interweaving of Adventist theology and history anew.⁵

From 1915 onward, the Fundamental Principles of 1872 were no longer included in the denominational *Yearbook*. Whether this omission was due to theological differences⁶ or merely reflected the fact that the statement was, after forty years, no longer considered appropriate for public self-presentation is not entirely clear. Presumably both factors played a role. The author, Uriah Smith, had died in 1905, and the text had evidently not gained such a prominence that discontinuing its publication mattered a lot. After all, the original text was simply a peculiar combination of a non-credal self-understanding with the need for presenting Seventh-day Adventists’ convictions to the outside world in 1872, and later modifications implied that the wording, number of elements, and some of the content were handled in a flexible manner.

What is particularly impressive in the genesis of the first official Adventist statement of Fundamental Beliefs published in 1931 is how swiftly the text was voted. This process shows the efficiency with which the denominational machinery worked in that period, but also that those involved were well-prepared and evidently did not face any major internal tensions – a state of affairs

⁴ Research on this period has increased rather recently; see, for instance, Campbell 2019 and Valentine 2018.

⁵ Cf. the forthcoming volume on Adventism and World War I by Pöhler (to be published 2022).

⁶ This is what Froom suggests (in *Movement of Destiny*, 1971, 412–413 – he mentions conflicting views on the trinity and the atonement).

that can be regarded as fairly typical of this “maximum efficiency” phase⁷ of Adventist history. Similar processes of professionalization took place on the level of church administration: Paralleling the publication of the first *Church Manual* in 1932 and the General Conference *Working Policy* in 1926, the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs both updated a crucial factor in the denomination’s self-definition and stabilized it for the decades to come.

The actual impulses that led to drafting the text were at least two. As is noted in the extant literature, one of them came from the then African Division – a request reaching General Conference in December 1930 “that a statement of what Seventh-day Adventists believe should be printed in the Year Book [sic], since ... such a statement would help government officials and others to a better understanding of our work.”⁸ The other factor was that the employee responsible for the denominational yearbook, H. Edson Rogers, had repeatedly urged the inclusion of such a text; he felt that this publication was more representative of the denomination’s identity with the addition of such a text (Froom 1971, 412–413).

Both of these factors were not only random stimuli, but implied the crucial question of how definite the denomination’s doctrine was to be and what contours it was to have. This element overlaps with a third factor, which was most probably the strongest, even if this last factor did not result in the drafting of such a text by itself: In his massive volume *Movement of Destiny*, Leroy E. Froom adds the church leaders’ desire “to correct publicly the distorted assertions as to the Advent Faith persistently made – for example, by E. S. Ballenger” (ibid., 418–419). Although Froom is right in principle, he does not mention that the early 1930s were actually a time of acute theological conflict outside America. Challenges regarding the traditional Adventist sanctuary teaching and the understanding of Ellen White’s ministry came both from Australia⁹ and Europe.¹⁰

⁷ For this term and the theory behind, see the classic *The Church as a Social Institution* (Moberg 1962, 118–126).

⁸ General Conference Committee Minutes, December 29, 1930, General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, USA [GCA]. The actual letter was written by African Division President J. F. Wright to C. H. Watson, November 20, 1930, GCA, 21 General Files 1930 – African Division.

⁹ In Australia, the major challenge came from William W. Fletcher; see Fletcher 1932 and the biographical sketch Devine 2021.

¹⁰ Ludwig Richard Conradi, the leading Adventist missionary and church administrator in Europe for many years, had written a new manuscript on biblical prophecies in the late 1920s which

Because of this ferment, just a few weeks before the request from Africa came in, three committees established by the General Conference leaders had already begun to work on of “statements on doctrine” addressing the sanctuary teaching, the second coming of Christ, and the Spirit of Prophecy. The work of these committees was apparently never completed, and it is well possible that they discontinued their activities after the drafting of the Fundamental Beliefs was deemed sufficient in this regard.¹¹ At any rate, the time was ripe for articulating Adventist beliefs, and the general feeling that the absence of a statement was a disadvantage certainly added to making this quick decision as the new decade began.

The African Division request resulted in an action that the General Conference president, Charles H. Watson, “appoint a committee of which he shall be a member, to prepare such a statement for publication in the Year Book [sic].” The minutes include three names in addition to his, which indicates that the choice of these men – Milton E. Kern, Francis M. Wilcox, and Edwin R. Palmer¹² – happened quickly and was not considered a sensitive matter. In fact, the action was titled “Statement of Our Faith for Year Book” and was one among many other administrative issues – e.g. itineraries of missionaries, allowances to individuals, a statement on the “motion picture business,”¹³ and

had just been submitted for review. Escalating conflicts around the manuscript and Conradi’s views led to his exit from the denomination a short time afterwards.

¹¹ [N.N.]—Dear Brethren, n.d., GCA 21, General Files, 1930 – Circulars. This letter contained a leaf entitled “Suggestions regarding the Work of the Three Committees on the Preparation of Statements on Doctrine,” November 21, 1930, which spelled out seven guidelines on how the three committees were to work. The idea was to prepare three short statements, each “to be supported by Biblical proofs” and to be supplemented by “additional proofs and citations as a separate document.” The aim was to submit the drafts “to the officers previous to the Autumn Council of 1931.” At subsequent spring and autumn councils, these statements are, however, not mentioned. Each committees consisted of three persons, mostly senior leaders (such as C.H. Watson, A. G. Daniells, W.H. Branson, C.S. Longacre, M. E. Kern, and J. L. McElhany; F.M. Wilcox was to serve on the “Sanctuary Question” committee).

¹² Kern was Associate Secretary of the General Conference at the time but had also been active in the training of pastors; in 1936, he was appointed president of the SDA Theological Seminar. Palmer had been serving in various administrative roles and, since 1912, as the manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, the major denominational publisher. Francis McLellan Wilcox was the editor of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* since 1911.

¹³ The parallel is intriguing because the minutes record that considerable time was spent discussing this item shortly after the action on “statement of our faith”: “What we can do to assist in a

sympathies to some who had lost relatives. It appears, therefore, that this task, which could also have been viewed as a theologically demanding assignment, was considered a straightforward matter of *articulating* “our faith,” i.e. of expressing something that was entirely agreed upon, in a proper manner.

This perspective on the 1931 text as simply expressive rather than elaborately theological is also confirmed by the crucial role that Wilcox played. At the time, he had been editor of the major denominational church paper (and, thus, one of the successors of Uriah Smith) for twenty years. This position gave him considerable influence and made him one of the most well-known names in the denomination – even though he was not a theologian of Uriah Smith’s stature in his generation. Little is known about the number of meetings that the committee needed, but the fact that Wilcox presented the result to the public in the February 19, 1931, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* editorial,¹⁴ just about seven weeks later, indicates that the team had worked in an extremely rapid manner.

Wilcox was a driving force not only in publishing the final result but also in formulating large portions of the text. He had published precursors of what was to become the 1931 statement several times starting from 1913. When a well-formulated wording of Adventist beliefs was needed in 1931, he was, therefore, quick to accept the task of writing the draft,¹⁵ which heavily relied on his earlier texts.¹⁶ The exact steps until its publication are unknown; it is

movement to prevent the exhibition of demoralizing and crime-breeding moving picture films was discussed at some length.” As with the statement of faith, a committee was appointed by the chair, this time with a more far-reaching task – “to make a study of the question as to what our attitude should be toward the enactment of such measures as a law for regulating the motion picture business.” GC Committee Minutes, December 29, 1930, GCA.

¹⁴ “Faith of Seventh-day Adventists,” 1931.

¹⁵ Froom 1971, 413, reports that persons involved in this process told him details about the genesis of the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs, which he reports. Regarding Wilcox, he reports, “As no one else seemed willing to take the lead in formulating a statement, Wilcox—as a writer and editor—wrote up for consideration of the committee a suggested summary of ‘Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.’” (Ibid.)

¹⁶ [Wilcox] 1913, W[ilcox] 1919, W[ilcox] 1920. For further details, similarities and differences, see the appendix. Froom 1971 and Campbell 2016 seem not to be aware of this connection. Kidder and Campbell Weakley (2021) even call the 1931 text “Wilcox’s Fundamental Beliefs” – which is an overstatement, since much of the material did not actually appear in the precursors.

clear, however, that (1) Wilcox drew on outside expertise,¹⁷ (2) the committee in all likelihood met again, and (3) at least one more draft was made before the text was released,¹⁸ for an undated pre-final version that lists the committee members' names including that of General Conference President C. H. Watson contained a few minor (merely technical) variants and two major textual differences – even though these are not theologically significant.¹⁹ Although not all details of the preparation process are known, the overall picture is, therefore, clear: a swift appointment of Wilcox, his key role in preparing the draft on the basis of previous texts, and a consensual release of the final version even though a few details were still adjusted in terms of copy editing.

2. Theological Significance

The importance of the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs statement can be best appreciated (1) when comparing it to the 1872 Declaration and (2) to precursor texts from Wilcox's pen, (3) by analysing its parts and content, and (4) by relating it to the changed context in which it emerged.

(1) The overall structure of the statement (see next page) reveals both remarkable continuity with the 1872 Fundamental Principles and differences between the two texts. Eschatology naturally continues playing the key role; here it neatly fills half of the sections (in 1872, it was even more – 15 of 25 sections). The first five points essentially address the same topics as in 1872, only that the sequence was changed – now starting with (1) Holy Scriptures (instead of God) and exchanging New Birth (4) and Baptism (5). The inclusion of the doctrines of the trinity and the divine nature of Christ certainly represent the most visible and significant differences both in this section and in the text as a whole; they mirror the theological development that had taken place since the 1890s (see Burt 2006) and effectively added a seal of approval to the Seventh-day Adventist shift towards theological orthodoxy.

¹⁷ From 1971, 413–414, mentions that Wilcox involved the associate editor of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Francis D. Nichol, in reading and commenting upon the text.

¹⁸ "Proposed Statement for the Yearbook," [1931].

¹⁹ *Ibid.* These last changes are indicated in the footnotes to the full final text below.

The sections and structure of the statement can be summarized as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <i>A Christian Faith</i> | <i>D Eschatology II – Mainly Present</i> |
| 1. Holy Scriptures | 12. Purging of the Universe |
| 2. The Godhead | 13. 1844 |
| 3. Jesus Christ | 14. Sanctuary |
| 4. New Birth | 15. Three Angels |
| 5. Baptism | 16. Investigative Judgment |
|
 | |
| <i>B Christian Life I</i> | <i>E Christian Life II</i> |
| 6. Ten Commandments | 17. Christian Life |
| 7. Sabbath | 18. Stewardship |
| 8. Justification | 19. Gifts of the Holy Spirit |
|
 | |
| <i>C Eschatology I – Individual</i> | <i>F Eschatology III – Universal</i> |
| 9. Immortality | 20. Second Coming |
| 10. Death | 21. Millennium |
| 11. Resurrection | 22. New Earth |

With the exception of Uriah Smith’s detailed points on prophecy, history, and premillennialism (no. 6, 7, and 8 in the 1872 statement), all major elements reappear, even though much of it in a consolidated manner.²⁰ This shortening is paralleled by completely new formulations in many instances; while sections 2, 3, 4, and 5 contain at least some wording that is similar to 1872, much of the rest is the result of what appears as the result of a complete overhaul. The exception is the language of part D (sections 13 to 16); substantial parts are copied verbatim from the 1872 Declaration.

The strong continuity in what is called part D here is significant in several regards. The sanctuary doctrine – together with the associated interpretation of 1844, the Investigative Judgment doctrine, and the perspective on the Three Angels of Revelation 14 – was and is among the very few Seventh-day Adventist teachings that no other denomination shares, at least not in the way this movement has formulated it. The basic stability in language implies that a major refurbishment, as was done in the doctrine of God and in Christology,

²⁰ Campbell 2016, 105–107, discusses some of the details.

was not thinkable. Since the denomination had been plagued by defections related to and disagreement centring on precisely the sanctuary doctrine in the years and decades before, the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs must be understood as a contextual attempt at upgrading a major distinctive Adventist doctrine in the post-pioneer period while maintaining the theological basis on which this teaching had been developed three generations earlier.

(2) The sanctuary doctrine is of importance as well when one compares the 1931 statement with its 1913, 1919, and 1920 precursors (cf. appendix). While the content of these three texts underwent slight changes, it is significant that precisely the sections on 1844 (13), the sanctuary (14), the three angels of Revelation 14 (15), and the investigative judgement (16) are *missing* in them. At the same time, Wilcox included a paragraph on “The Mediation of Christ” in all the three earlier texts. This paragraph is noteworthy because it uses sanctuary language, but essentially presents general Christian teachings on the subject:

4. That in fulfilment of the Old Testament types, Jesus, the Son of God, is now “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” That, as our great High Priest in this heavenly sanctuary, he presents his own sacrifice before the Father in behalf of sinful men, and to those who will accept it he ministers the needed grace with which they carry on their warfare against sin. Thus he serves as the one Mediator between God and man, rendering both unnecessary and impossible any other system of mediation. Heb. 4:14–16; 7:24–27 ([W]ilcox 1920, 2).

The 1931 Fundamental Beliefs do not contain these lines: they replace them with an enhanced version of the 1872 sections on the sanctuary topic and thus return to the specifically Adventist interpretation of the theme. Therefore, the 1931 statement is essentially a merger of Wilcox’s 1913–1920 texts with an overhauled 1872 sanctuary theology, poured into a structure that was changed in a few respects but basically upheld the overall content and the main emphases of Uriah Smith’s text – the Christian faith (part A), the Christian life (parts B and E), and eschatology (parts C, D, and E), this time with parts neatly arranged in a parallel fashion.

Of the three precursor texts, the 1919 version, with its 21 sections, is the longest. A comparison of this version with the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs shows a few other theological adjustments that Wilcox himself made and that

the small committee agreed upon. The 1919 text presents several items which were dropped later: The 1920 version, as well as the 1931 text, omits sections of a somewhat polemical nature – on “Delusive Doctrines and Movements” and on the “doctrine of the world’s conversion.” The latter had appeared (with a somewhat different wording) in the 1872 Declaration.²¹ A separate paragraph on “Relation of the Law to the Gospel” in the 1919 and 1920 versions as well as the section on “Relation of Church and State” (1913, 1919, and 1920)²² were not included in the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs either. Evidently some elements in these earlier versions were deemed too specific (church-state relations) or too extensive (the topic of Law & Gospel was inserted into the justification section).

All in all, the differences to the earlier Wilcox texts reveal an overall picture of an Adventist theology that sought to be (a) *orthodox* in its general Christian foundation, (b) *in continuity* with the apocalyptic-driven Adventism of the 19th century by emphasizing eschatology, (c) as much *oriented towards the Christian life* as later versions of the 1872 Fundamental Principles, and yet (d) *distinctively Adventist* in its somewhat more sophisticated sanctuary understanding.

(3) Beyond questions of continuity and change, a look at the overall content and parts of the Fundamental Beliefs indicates a matured theological structure. This structure was still heavily impacted by the particular eschatological setup which Adventism inherited from its founders, but balanced by a significant focus on the Christian life in addition to the five general sections on the Christian Faith in the beginning. It may be coincidental that the two parts of the Christian life are positioned right in the middle of the two halves that constitute the main organizational principle of the text (A–C / D–F), but the fact

²¹ Sections 11 and the first part of 10; see Wilcox, “Conference on Christian Fundamentals,” 6–7. The latter, a rejection of the postmillennialist idea of an eventual conversion of the globe (which had been part of some Protestant mission theologies in the 19th century), had also been part of no. VIII in the 1872 Declaration; this theological concept was no longer of major importance at that time.

²² For these sections, see Wilcox, “Conference on Christian Fundamentals,” 6 and 7. The section on “Justification by Faith” (no. 6) was probably sufficiently similar to “Law and Gospel” (no. 13) so that inclusion of both was not deemed necessary.

that *two* such portions exist plainly indicates significant interest in the here and now in addition to future events.

The parallels in the overall construction of the statement are intriguing. The Christian Faith and the theological interpretation of the Adventist experience (parts A and D), the two parts addressing the Christian life – themes connected with the law (B) and with ethics and church life (E) – as well as the sections on individual and universal eschatology, respectively (parts C and F): In each case, the respective second part complements the first. Thus the overall text is structured somewhat like the well-known creation story parallelism in Genesis 1, where day 1 is connected with day 4, day 2 with day 5, etc. Of course in the case of these Fundamental Beliefs, the entire setup may not have been constructed as consciously as in Hebrew literature, but the changing theological foci in the text are nevertheless fascinating.

At the same time, what is missing in the text is as telling as what appears in it. Ecclesiology, for instance, is almost absent – the word “church” only appears in the context of baptism (“an ordinance of the Christian church”), of spiritual gifts (“God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit”) and of the parousia (“the second coming of Christ is the great hope of the church”). No separate section on ecclesiality exists, and the Lord’s Supper, which is so crucial for many Christian traditions, is omitted altogether. It is, therefore, certainly not an overstatement that in the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs, ecclesiology is absorbed in eschatology. In the absence of a definite explanation given by the drafters, one can only surmise that the lack of ecclesiology in the 1872 and 1913–1920 texts (and in early Adventism in general)²³ combined with the “movement” self-image of Seventh-day Adventists implied for the men behind the 1931 statement that there was no need to develop an elaborate concept of the church at that particular time.

²³ Cf. Hörschele 2013. The earliest Adventists advocated a teaching that implied a kind of “anti-ecclesiology.” While their identity became strongly focused upon the “remnant” concept, it took time to build a constructive and comprehensive ecclesiological model around this originally church-critical motif.

One of the most significant elements in comparison with Uriah Smith's text is the lengthy section on justification.²⁴ Even the fact that it is much longer than the paragraphs on the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath combined is telling. Moreover, the actual content is so much more differentiated than Smith's short reference to "justification" that this necessitates discussion at some length. For Smith in the 1872 text, justification is part of the question of obedience, for "all have violated the law of God, and cannot of themselves render obedience to his just requirements," and "we are dependent on Christ, first, for justification from our past offences." The 1931 statement corrects this emphasis on obedience by stressing the "new-covenant relationship," "the indwelling Christ." While continuing the view that justification is "for the sins of the past," the overall focus is on grace and the law of God being "written on ... [the] hearts" of believers. The 1931 text thus clearly mirrors a shift away from the semi-pelagian tendencies of the Christian Connection heritage in early Adventism (Höuschele 2008, 131–134) to an essentially Wesleyan evangelical understanding of the appropriation of salvation.

(4) The context in which the 1931 statement was drafted was characterized by several factors, each of which is reflected in the text to some extent. One was a general maturation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: its numerical growth came with an unfolding and differentiation of theology. During Ellen White's lifetime, she was a major voice that influenced the shift from non-orthodox to orthodox views (especially with regard to a trinitarian expression of faith) and from the legalistic tendencies inherent in the traditional stress on the Decalogue to a Christ-centred, more evangelical understanding of redemption.²⁵

The growing numbers and worldwide spread of Adventists also implied that the earlier inclination to indulge in an inward look and to define one's faith with regard to the other groups that had arisen from the Millerite awakening in the United States became increasingly unimportant. While the 1872

²⁴ The judgment by Kidder and Campbell Weakley (2021) that "[m]ost of the differences" between the 1872 and 1931 texts "were minor and due to differences in the organization of the two documents" is somewhat misleading and certainly does not apply to this section.

²⁵ For the most recent piece of the mosaic of research on these developments, see Valentine 2017.

Fundamental Principles were still written with those non-sabbatarian Adventists in perspective, the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs abandoned these references altogether. The Millerite past and its theological interpretation remained one of the building blocks of the statement (part D), but it no longer played the hermeneutical role that it had in the 1870s.

Instead, the changed American religious context assumed an increasing importance. This importance is visible both in the genesis of the 1931 statement and in some traces found in the text itself. The 1919 pre-version was published by Wilcox as a response to the “World Conference on Christian Fundamentals” in the same year, which was a major event in consolidating anti-modernist fundamentalist Protestant forces. After reporting at length on this conference and reproducing the nine-point doctrinal statement that this World Conference had drafted (and to which Adventists could largely agree),²⁶ Wilcox added that their “list is by no means complete”; for according to him,

this company of earnest men and women, taking the Word of God as their guide in all matters of faith, should have enunciated as clearly other great principles which lie at the foundation of the superstructure of Christian faith, doctrines which are even more generally denied by Christendom than are some of the doctrines contained in the conference pronouncement. The doctrinal statement is weak in that it fails to do this. It is more at fault in its omissions than in the misstatement of what it expresses. (Wilcox 1919, 5)

While Wilcox did not point out which particular “great principles” the Fundamentalists *in statu nascendi* should have mentioned, he immediately proceeded to listing “Fundamental Principles for Which Seventh-day Adventists Stand.” Since it is from this 1919 text that he later developed the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs and since he unambiguously places Adventists on the Fundamentalist side in the controversy of the period, the 1931 text may best be understood as resulting from an Adventist modification of Protestant Fundamentalist convictions in that phase of American church history.

This perspective on the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs is confirmed by elements in the text itself. While Uriah Smith’s text started with God and Jesus (I, II),

²⁶ [W]ilcox 1919, 5. Wilcox could not desist from pointing out that Adventists rejected the idea of “eternal punishing” and differed with regard to interpretations of premillennialism.

Wilcox begins with the Holy Scriptures. The 1931 version replaces the formulation “infallible rule of faith and practice” with “inerrant rule of faith and practice” – i.e. typical fundamentalist wording of the time. The change to frequent capitalization (Eternal, He, His) reflects the mood of the epoch as much as the essentialist language (nature, essence – no. 3). While the questions of apparel and drinking were mentioned in later modifications of the 1872 statement, they are now also included in this more official text and thus reflect the type of Christianity to which Adventism largely belonged at that time and in which such issues were commonly codified – Evangelical Fundamentalism.

3. Enduring Relevance

Unlike the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs, which were developed by the denomination’s theologians and discussed at length at a General Conference session before being voted there, the 1931 statement of beliefs did not quite achieve the level of international prominence that its successor text had from the beginning. Nonetheless, the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs authentically reflect the mood of their epoch. This quasi-confession of faith continues being of importance for understanding Adventist theology in several respects: (1) its official status and growing importance *further relativized the denomination’s inherited anti-credal stance*; (2) it *codified both doctrinal continuity and change*, including the Adventist move towards Christian orthodoxy; and (3) it *reflected various controversies* – both internal struggles and those with opponents outside the denominational realm.

(1) By the 1930s, one could no longer discern an open anti-credal stance in Seventh-day Adventism. About three generations after denominational beginnings, a clear self-definition was evidently more valuable than upholding the Christian Connection heritage of creedless Christianity, which had meant so much to many early sabbatarian believers (Höschele 2009, 133–136). Actually it appears that by this time, the anti-credal position was little more than traditional rhetoric. The fact that the denomination created a *Church Manual* in precisely the same period and included the Fundamental Beliefs from the outset,²⁷ and the decision at the General Conference session of 1946 to place the text right at the beginning of the *Church Manual* – which is to be interpreted as a somewhat belated affirmation – and to resolve that changes be only made

²⁷ They were first placed at the very end; see *Church Manual* 1932, 180–186.

at such sessions²⁸ indicates that the career of the text as a functional equivalent to Protestant confessions of faith could hardly be stopped.

(2) This functional parallel was matched by developments on the level of actual theology. The significant Adventist moves toward the Evangelical Protestant mainstream and Christian orthodoxy in the late 19th and early 20th century are well documented; as demonstrated above, these developments are unambiguously reflected in the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs. At the same time, the statement displays strong continuity with earlier Seventh-day Adventist doctrine in many ways. The denomination's doctrine is embedded in general Christian teaching in such a way that one must interpret the statement as a testimony to "double orthodoxy" – Christian *and* Adventist. The crafting and expression of denominational orthodoxy was completed, as it were, in 1950, when an additional sentence on the "gift of the Spirit of prophecy" in relation to Ellen G. White was added to section 19 ("Gifts of the Holy Spirit") in 1950.²⁹

(3) Ancient creeds and later affirmations or confessions alike often reflected discord as much as they were formulas of concord.³⁰ Unsurprisingly, this was also the case with Adventists in the early 1930s – they sought to clarify, draw boundaries, eliminate what seemed to threaten their core convictions, and thus to provide orientation for those who might sympathize with, or feel troubled by, the denomination's heretics and adversaries.

All in all, the Fundamental Beliefs of 1931 remain a testimony of a period in the history of Adventist theology in which the codification of denominational orthodoxy was a logical (and almost necessary) trend. After the passing of its entire pioneer generation including the prophetic voice of Ellen G. White, after a war that had seemed to bring the long-awaited eschaton but then left the movement in bewilderment and with a minor schism, in the midst of global missionary expansion and while facing in-house frictions regarding the two most distinctive Adventist teachings (on the sanctuary and the ministry of Ellen G. White), and in the larger context of the American Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, the Fundamental Beliefs expressed much

²⁸ General Conference Proceedings as reported in *RH*, June 14, 1946, 197 (recommendation) and 199 (action).

²⁹ See section 19 and its annotation below.

³⁰ Cf. the chapter "Formulas of Concord – And of Discord" in Pelikan 2003, 186–215.

of the contemporary denominational consensus. They positioned Adventism as a doctrinally matured movement that had not reached a significant level of theological refinement but was ready to define itself as a church with a global perspective, a comprehensive self-consciousness, and a message for people of their time – which differed considerably from the century of Adventist origins.

In this first attempt to formulate the denomination's doctrine in an official manner, a number of theological points were not as well-wrought and sophisticated as was necessary in the long run, and some areas were simply missing. Thus replacing the 1931 text or at least changing it considerably would at some point become inevitable. It had to remain, as it were, a way station rather than the terminal. Yet precisely this dynamic and contextual nature of Adventist doctrinal self-expression was actually in accord with the movement's anti-credal tradition and the claim that its faith is to originate from the Bible alone. As further maturation, global expansion, and change in the religious and social environment of Adventism occurred, the denomination would adapt its theological self-expression to the needs of later generations.

Text and Revisionsⁱ

Seventh-day Adventists hold certain fundamental beliefs,ⁱⁱ the principal features of which, together with a portion of the scriptural references upon which they are based, may be summarized as follows:

[*Holy Scriptures*]

1. That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice. 2 Tim. 3:15–17.

[*The Godhead*]

2. That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. Matt. 28:19.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ *Year Book* 1931, 377–380. Notes on revisions are found in the following footnotes.

An additional introductory text in the *Review and Herald* of February 19, 1931, 6, says:

Through the years Seventh-day Adventists have taken the Bible as their basis of faith and doctrine. As the Scriptures teach clearly certain fundamental truths, Seventh-day Adventists have come to hold those truths as a part of their belief. While by no formal action have they ever adopted any statement as a creed, they have published through the years from time to time a summary of their beliefs.

The following statement was prepared for publication in the 1931 *Year Book*, from which we copy it. So far as we know, it represents the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists throughout the world.

The statement is not an arbitrary one. The same principles might be expressed, of course, just as acceptably in different phraseology. We are asked from time to time what Seventh-day Adventists believe. We are glad to give room for this new declaration, and hope that it may prove valuable to our readers in their own study and in correctly presenting the views of the denomination before their neighbors. It would be found very helpful in the way of Bible study to take the various articles composing the statement and look up the Scripture references given in connection therewith.

ⁱⁱ The pre-final draft (“Proposed Statement for the Yearbook,” [1931] = FB-PS) said *certain well-defined points of faith* instead of *certain fundamental beliefs*. Further last changes are indicated with the abbreviation “FB-PS”; mere orthographical or very minor adjustments are not included here.

ⁱⁱⁱ Here significantly more Bible references were listed in the versions from the 1971 *Church Manual* and *Yearbook* onward: Matt. 28:19; Isa. 44:6; 48:13; Matt. 12:32; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:8.11 (*Church Manual* sequence). Similar additions appeared in parts 21 and 22.

[Jesus Christ]

3. That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, lived on the earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our example the principles of righteousness, attested His relationship to God by many mighty miracles, died for our sins on the cross, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us. John 1:1, 14; Heb. 2:9–18; 8:1, 2; 4:14–16; 7:25.

[New Birth]

4. That every person in order to obtain salvation must experience the new birth; that this comprises an entire transformation of life and character by the recreative power of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. John 3:16; Matt. 18:3; Acts 2:37–39.

[Baptism]

5. That baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church and should follow repentance and forgiveness of sins. By its observation faith is shown in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That the proper form of baptism is by immersion. Rom. 6:1–6; Acts 16:30–33.

[Ten Commandments]

6. That the will of God as it relates to moral conduct is comprehended in His law of ten commandments; that these are great moral, unchangeable precepts, binding upon all men, in every age. Ex. 20:1–17.

[Sabbath]

7. That the fourth commandment of this unchangeable law requires the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. This holy institution is at the same time a memorial of creation and a sign of sanctification, a sign of the believer's rest from his own works of sin, and his entrance into the rest of soul that Jesus promises to those who come to Him. Gen. 2:1–3; Ex. 20:8–11; 31:12–17; Heb. 4:1–10.

[Justification]

8. That the law of ten commandments points out sin, the penalty of which is death. The law cannot save the transgressor from his sin, nor impart power to keep him from sinning. In infinite love and mercy God provides a way whereby this may be done. He furnishes a substitute, even Christ the Righteous One, to die in man's stead, making "Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:21. That one is justified, not by obedience to the law, but by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. By accepting Christ, man is reconciled to God, justified by the blood of Christ for the sins of the past, and saved from the power of sin by His

indwelling life. Thus the gospel becomes “The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” This experience is wrought by the divine agency of the Holy Spirit, who convinces of sin and leads to the Sin Bearer, inducting the believer^{iv} into the new-covenant relationship, where the law of God is written on his hearts; and through the enabling power of the indwelling Christ, his life is brought into conformity to the divine precepts. The honor and merit of this wonderful transformation belong wholly to Christ. 1 John 3:4; Rom. 7:7; Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8–10; 1 John 2:1, 2; Rom. 5:8–10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Heb. 8:8–12.

[Immortality]

9. That God only hath immortality. Mortal man possesses a nature inherently sinful and dying. Immortality and eternal life come only through the gospel, and are bestowed as the free gift of God at the second advent of Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Tim. 6,15, 16; 1 Cor. 15:51–55.^v

[Death]

10. That the condition of man in death is one of unconsciousness. That all men, good and evil alike, remain in the grave from death to the resurrection. Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 5:28, 29.

[Resurrection]

11. That there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. The resurrection of the just will take place at the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the unjust will take place a thousand years later, at the close of the millennium. John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:5–10.^{vi}

[Purging of the Universe]

12. That the finally impenitent, including Satan, the author of sin, will, by the fires of the last day, be reduced to a state of nonexistence, becoming as though they had not been, thus purging the universe of God of sin and sinners. Rom. 6:23; Mal. 4:1–3; Rev. 20:9, 10; Obadiah 16.

^{iv} From the 1951 *Church Manual* onward, the plural (“believers”) is used here and in number 17 (on the Christian life), which may indicate a move to a slightly more communal mode of thinking.

^v Starting from 1934 (apparently the 2nd edition), the *Church Manual* contained this wording:

9. That God “only hath immortality.” 1 Tim. 6:15. Mortal man possesses a nature inherently sinful and dying. Eternal life is the gift of God through faith in Christ. Rom. 6:23. “He that hath the Son hath life.” 1 John 5:12. Immortality is bestowed upon the righteous at the second coming of Christ, when the righteous dead are raised from the grave and the living righteous translated to meet the Lord. Then it is that those accounted faithful “put on immortality.” 1 Cor. 15:51–55.

The *Yearbook* changed the wording starting from the 1935 edition.

^{vi} Parts 11 and 12 were exchanged in FB-PS.

[1844]

13. That no prophetic period is given in the Bible to reach to the Second Advent, but that the longest one, the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14, terminated in 1844, and brought us to an event called the cleansing of the sanctuary.^{vii}

[Sanctuary]

14. That the true sanctuary, of which the tabernacle on earth was a type, is the temple of God in Heaven, of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 8 and onward, and of which the Lord Jesus, as our great high priest, is minister; and that the priestly work of our Lord is the antitype of the work of the Jewish priests of the former dispensation; that this heavenly sanctuary is the one to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14; its cleansing being, as in the type, a work of judgment, beginning with the entrance of Christ as the high priest upon the judgment phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary foreshadowed in the earthly service of cleansing the sanctuary on the day of atonement. This work of judgment in the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844. Its completion will close human probation.

[Three Angels' Message]

15. That God, in the time of the judgment and in accordance with His uniform dealing with the human family in warning them of coming events vitally affecting their destiny (Amos 3:6, 7), sends forth a proclamation of the approach of the Second Advent of Christ; that this work is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; and that their threefold message brings to view a work of reform to prepare a people to meet Him at His coming.

[Investigative Judgment]

16. That the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, synchronizing with the period of the proclamation of the message of Revelation 14, is a time of investigative judgment, first with reference to the dead, and second, with reference to the living. This investigative judgment determines who of the myriads 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. 1 Peter 4:17, 18; Dan. 7:9, 10; Rev. 14:6, 7; Luke 20:35.

[Christian Life]

17. That the followers of Christ should be a godly people, not adopting the unholy maxims nor conforming to the unrighteous ways of the world; not loving its sinful pleasures nor countenancing its follies. That the believer should recognize his body as

^{vii} In part 13, 14, and 14, the 1931 version does not list any biblical texts. From the 1971 version onwards, the following texts were listed: 13: Dan. 8:14; 9:24, 25; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; 14: Dan. 7:9, 10; 8:14; Heb. 8:1, 2, 5; Rev. 20:12; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; 15: Amos 3:6, 7; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 14:6–12.

the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that therefore he should clothe that body in neat, modest, dignified apparel. Further, that in eating and drinking and in his entire course of conduct he should shape his life as becometh followers of the meek and lowly Master. Thus the believer will be led to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, tobacco and other narcotics, and to avoid every body- and soul-defiling habit and practice. 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 9:25; 10:31; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 John 2:6.

[Stewardship]

18. That the divine principle of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel is an acknowledgment of God's ownership in our lives, and that we are stewards who must render account to Him of all that He has committed to our possession. Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 2 Cor. 9:6-15.

[Gifts of the Holy Spirit]

19. That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts^{viii} operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ. Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 1 Cor. 1:5-7.

Addition of 1950:^{ix} That the gift of the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church (1 Corinthians 1:5-17; 1 Corinthians 12:1-28; Revelation 12:17; 19:10; Amos 3:7; Hosea 12:10, 13). They recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.^x

[Second Coming]

20. That the second coming of Christ is the great hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel and plan of salvation. His coming will be literal, personal, and visible. Many important events will be associated with His return, such as the resurrection of the dead, the destruction of the wicked, the purification of the earth, the reward of the righteous, and the establishment of His everlasting kingdom. The almost complete fulfillment of various lines of prophecy, particularly those found in the books of Daniel and Revelation, with existing conditions in the physical, social, industrial, political, and religious worlds, indicates that Christ's coming "is near, even at the doors." The exact time of that event has not been foretold. Believers are exhorted to be ready, for "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man" will be revealed. Luke 21:25-27; 17:26-

^{viii} Here FB-PS has an interesting addition, which the final version omits: "That these gifts *do not constitute an addition to the Bible, but* operate in harmony with its divine principles and are given..."

^{ix} The relevant General Conference Proceedings with this text are reported in *RH*, July 23, 1950, 230.

^x From the 1970 version of the *Yearbook* onward, the last sentence was changed to: "The remnant church recognizes that ..."

30; John 14:1–3; Acts 1:9–11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; James 5:1–8; Joel 3:9–16; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; Dan. 7:27; Matt. 24:36, 44.

[Millennium]

21. That the millennial reign of Christ covers the period between the first and the second resurrections, during which time the saints of all ages will live with their blessed Redeemer in heaven. At the end of the millennium, the Holy City with all the saints will descend to the earth. The wicked, raised in the second resurrection, will go up on the breadth of the earth with Satan at their head to compass the camp of the saints, when^{xi} fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them. In the conflagration which destroys Satan and his host, the earth itself will be regenerated and cleansed from the effects of the curse. Thus the universe of God will be purified from the foul blot of sin.^{xii} Rev. 20; Zech. 14:1–4; 2 Peter 3:7–10.

[New Earth]

22. That God will make all things new. The earth, restored to its pristine beauty, will become forever the abode of the saints of the Lord. The promise to Abraham, that through Christ, he and his seed should possess the earth throughout the endless ages of eternity, will be fulfilled. The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Christ, the Lord will reign supreme, and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth. and such as are in the sea," will ascribe "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.^{xiii} Gen. 13:14–17; Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:8–16; Matt. 5:5; Isa. 35; Rev. 21:1–7; Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:13.

^{xi} FB-PS reads: *the wicked will be raised to be punished, fire will come down* and does not contain the longer version above (*The wicked, raised in the second resurrection, will go up on the breadth of the earth with Satan at their head to compass the camp of the saints, when fire will come down*).

^{xii} The main elements of this entire sentence (*In the conflagration ... purified from the foul blot of sin*) was still found in part 22 in FB-PS almost verbatim. Instead, part 21 ended, *and Christ will reign King of Kings and Lord of Lords*.

^{xiii} Except for the first two sentences (*That God ... saints of the Lord*) and the elements finally moved to part 21, FB-PS did not have the long text that follows here (and was thus much shorter): *The promise to Abraham ... unto the Lamb for ever and ever* was evidently added in the last round of corrections.

Appendix: Precursors

As mentioned above, three texts published by Francis Wilcox contained significant parts of the sections and wording that later became the 1931 Fundamental beliefs:

1913: [No title; introduced as “the cardinal features of the faith held by this denomination”]

[Wilcox, Francis M.] “The Message for Today.” *RH*, October 9, 1913, 21.

1919: “*Fundamental Principles for Which Seventh-day Adventists Stand*”

W[ilcox], F[rancis] M. “A Conference on Christian Fundamentals.” *RH*, June 19, 1919, 2, 5–8.

1920: “*Fundamentals of Christian Doctrine*”

W[ilcox], F[rancis] M. “The Glorious Consummation – No. 5: Present World Conditions in Their Relation to the Coming of Christ.” *RH*, April 1920, 2, 4–5.

A comparison of the 1920 and 1931 texts demonstrates the extent of similarity:

1931 FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS	1920 FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE <i>[in italics: 1931 FB = largely identical wording]</i>
<i>A Christian Faith</i>	
1. Holy Scriptures	1. <i>The Inspiration of the Bible</i> ^{xiv}
2. The Godhead	2. <i>The Divine Trinity</i>
3. Jesus Christ	3. <i>The Deity of Christ</i>
4. New Birth	7. <i>The New Birth</i>
5. Baptism	5. <i>The Ordinance of Baptism</i>
<i>B Christian Life I</i>	
6. Ten Commandments	11. <i>The Ten Commandments</i>
7. Sabbath	13. <i>The Bible Sabbath</i> ^{xv}
8. Justification	12. <i>Relation of the Law to the Gospel</i> ^{xvi}
--	6. <i>Justification by Faith</i>

^{xiv} This section is almost identical to both the 1872 and the 1931 texts.

^{xv} The 1920 text contains about half of the 1931 text.

^{xvi} Some similarities with the 1931 version, but essentially different wording.

[cf. 1872 text]^{xvii}

[no parallel]

C Eschatology I – Individual

9. Immortality

10. Death

11. Resurrection

8. The Prophecies of the Bible

14. Relation of Church and State

15. *Life Only in Christ*

16. *The State of the Dead*

18. *The Resurrection*

D Eschatology II – Mainly Present

12. Purging of the Universe

13. 1844

14. Sanctuary

15. Three Angels

16. Investigative Judgment

17. *The Punishment of the Wicked*^{xviii}

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4. The Mediation of Christ^{xix}

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E Christian Life II

17. Christian Life

18. Stewardship

19. Gifts of the Holy Spirit

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F Eschatology III – Universal

20. Second Coming

21. Millennium

22. New Earth

9. *The Second Coming of Christ*^{xxi}

10. *The Millennial Reign of Christ*^{xxii}

19. *The New World*^{xxiii}

N.B. The 1931 Fundamental Beliefs do not have section headings (they have been supplied by the author of this paper); the 1920 text has the headings that appear above (and the 1919 text has largely the same headings).^{xxiv}

^{xvii} The 1872 has a section on prophecy and one on world history. Although the formulations are different, their thrust is similar. The 1931 text has nothing on this subject.

^{xviii} The 1920 text is twice as long as the respective 1931 section.

^{xix} Completely different wording; see part 2 of this paper.

^{xx} The 1919 text has a short section (“The Closing Gospel Message”) with a similar thrust but a very different wording.

^{xxi} Only about half of the length of the 1931 text.

^{xxii} Only about half of the length of the 1931 text.

^{xxiii} 1920 text is much shorter and partly appears in no. 21 of the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs.

^{xxiv} The 1913 version is much shorter and contains no headings.

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Zusammenfassung

Dies ist die erste Untersuchung, die sich ausschließlich den adventistischen Glaubensüberzeugungen von 1931 widmet. Obwohl dieser Text heute weitgehend in Vergessenheit geraten ist, spielte er im mittleren Teil des 20. Jahrhunderts eine wichtige Rolle im Hinblick auf die Selbstartikulation adventistischer Orthodoxie. Seine zügige Entstehung und sein nachträglicher Bedeutungsaufstieg zeigt, dass die damaligen Leiter der Denomination genau solch ein Instrument der Selbstdarstellung und Selbstvergewisserung benötigten, und dass sie bei einem solchen Schritt, der eigentlich der Anti-Credo-Stimmung der Adventisten des 19. Jahrhunderts zuwiderlief, wenig Unbehagen empfanden. Theologisch wurde der adventistische Glaube in der Erklärung von 1931 so umgestaltet, dass er (1) gut zum konservativen Protestantismus jener Zeit passte, einschließlich einer trinitarischen Orthodoxie, (2) die Kontinuität mit den meisten (aber nicht allen) Schlüssellehren der adventistischen Bewegung im 19. Jahrhundert implizierte, (3) sich stark an Fragen des christlichen Lebensstils orientierte und (4) eine Art aktualisierte Heiligtumstheologie enthielt, die frühere Ausdrucksformen überholte, aber die entscheidenden Elemente dieser adventistischen Besonderheit in einem Umfeld beibehielt, in dem diese stark umstritten waren.

Résumé

Il s'agit du premier article académique à se concentrer exclusivement sur les croyances fondamentales adventistes de 1931. Bien que ce texte soit largement oublié aujourd'hui, il a joué un rôle important dans l'auto-expression de l'orthodoxie adventiste au milieu du 20e siècle. Sa genèse rapide et, par la suite, sa montée en puissance significative démontrent que les dirigeants de la confession de l'époque avaient précisément besoin d'un tel outil d'autoprésentation et d'assurance et qu'ils ressentaient peu de gêne dans une démarche qui allait en réalité à l'encontre de l'humeur anti-crédos des Adventistes du 19e siècle. Théologiquement, la déclaration de 1931 a reconfiguré les croyances adventistes comme (1) s'accordant pleinement avec le courant conservateur du protestantisme à son époque, y compris l'orthodoxie trinitaire, (2) impliquant une continuité avec la plupart (mais pas tous) des principes clés du mouvement au 19e siècle, (3) fortement orienté vers les questions de style de vie chrétien, et (4) contenant une sorte de théologie du sanctuaire améliorée, qui a révisé les expressions antérieures mais a conservé les éléments cruciaux de la particularité adventiste dans un environnement où ceux-ci étaient fortement contestés.

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Book Review

Stefan Höschele and Chigemezi N. Wogu, eds. *Contours of European Adventism: Issues in the History of the Denomination on the Old Continent*. Adventistica New Series 2. Friedensau: Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, 2020. 398 pp.

This book of 398 pages is a collection of papers presented at the Third International Symposium of the Institute of Adventist Studies at Friedensau Adventist University, held on April 23–26, 2018. The book, published in 2020, gives a rich *tour d'horizon* of Adventist life on the European continent. In the global Adventist village, there might be only two Europeans out of a hundred, but if there were something like a “quality-index,” the score of European Adventism would be higher. And the strength of this volume is its eye-opening extensive presentation of the quality of theology, history, practice, faithfulness and creativity against all odds of the European Adventist church. The worldwide Adventist Church has allotted three divisions (of their global total of 13) to Europe. And although these divisions have their place administratively, it also really creates divisiveness. As an Adventist living in the Netherlands and therefore being part of the Trans-European Division (TED), there is not only a state-border with our eastern neighbour Germany, but churchwise as well since Germany is part of the Inter-Europe Division (EUD). This administrative structure also creates barriers between me and other European countries, such as Romania and Russia (which are part of the Euro-Asia Division – ESD).

Since we have five authors from TED, ten from EUD and three from ESD, and all authors have competency in their particular field and chosen topic, I feel we have a volume of abundant expertise. In addition to these 18 authors, we find another three authors writing from the USA, which makes a total of 21 contributions to this book.

The topic is covered from a wealth of angles: historically, sociologically, theologically, missiologically, ecumenically and ecclesiologically.

I feel that this volume breaks new ground in the sense that European Adventism is treated as one unit *vis à vis* the rest of the global Adventist church and *vis à vis* the public at large. For me it is a new experience to identify with European Adventism as a whole and with what it stands for. Denis Fortin in his opening article puts it well when he says: "European Adventism can be a prophetic voice to speak to the rest of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and make significant contributions in understanding the Church's relationship with society and other Christian churches. The rest of the Church awaits this witness and one need not be shy about it" (pp. 23–24).

Subsequently the three parts of the book are as follows: (I) Mission and Diversity of Adventism in Europe; (II) European Adventism Facing Violence, with attention mainly to the Eastern-European context; (III) European Adventists, the Public and the Christian Other, with thought provoking issues like Adventist identity in the political and ecumenical arena.

Let me now move a little more in-depth. It is of course impossible to share the richness of each article in a review like this. But let me take some of its gems. It was quite revealing to me that Ellen White after her visit to Europe (1885–1887) changed several chapters in the *Great Controversy* to put more emphasis on Huss, Jerome, Zwingli, and countries like France, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. By doing so she indicated that Adventism is not just an American phenomenon, but a movement with a message that had its origins in Europe, a long time before William Miller began to preach it (cf. p. 12). This reminds me of *The English Connection* (1981) written by Adventist scholar Bryan Ball, who was my Newbold teacher. Ball very eloquently showed that the English Puritanism of the 17th century provided all the roots for 19th century Adventism in America. So, the unique elements of Adventism can be traced back to earlier Christian sources. I remember by the way, as a theology student at the time, that it was quite an achievement to have this book published by James Clarke in Cambridge, a general and widely respected Christian publishing house.

Furthermore, this volume is a voice to make bridges with Christian thought leaders of the past and the present. And maybe that is the most important contribution of European Adventism to the rest of the global Adventist community: to be open-minded, to build bridges and to value diversity within the unity of Christ's Body, His Church.

A few gems on mission-outreach, past and present:

In his paper and in his own words, Chigemezi Nnadozie Wogu “has demonstrated that Adventist missionaries have been able to develop a significant range of contextual approaches, not only in terms of actual thought, but also with regard to ‘method’ and types or reasoning. This happened in spite of Adventism generally presenting itself as theologically homogeneous” (p. 97).

In his paper on reaching secular Europe, Petr Cincala quotes Rudy Dingjan, a prolific church planter: “Winning secular European people will not happen by simply making worship more entertaining and fancy. To connect with people is the key. We need ministries in which we can mingle with them and let them taste Kingdom life” (p. 110).

Daniel-Adrian Neagu throws some revealing light on the issue of the persecution of Seventh-day Adventists in Romania during the inter-war period. He says that “the recent declassification of the documents from the Military Archive ... brought to light new elements regarding the purpose and role of military priests. One of the major objectives of their activity was to fight against what they perceive as the ‘sectarian offensive.’ Their declarations ... towards Adventists and Baptists, must be understood, however, in the Romanian interwar context, in which for many people nationalism was the appropriate expression of their love for their country, and Orthodoxy was deemed the highest form of romanism (that is, the national sentiment of the Romanians, the Romanian spirit)” (p. 175). This makes plausible his argument for why the persecutions against Adventists (and other smaller denominations) took place. Very aptly Neagu calls it “in the name of right faith against real faith.”

What is the attitude of European Adventists towards the European Union? Reinder Bruinsma asserts that “while Adventists have not turned away from this interpretation [of the prophecy of Daniel 2 that a complete unification of political Europe will not happen], current Adventism does not place much emphasis on it, apart from more critical comments from representatives at the conservative edges of the church ... On the other hand, there is appreciation for some practical advantages that the EU has brought” (p. 243).

The disconnectedness, ‘iron and clay,’ of three regional divisions results in hardly any sharing of knowledge and talents. This is seen in Jón Stefánsson’s paper about so many different hymnals.

The story is told of Einstein and his wife, that when she said to him “for me there are two important elements in life: time and space” Einstein responded, “and what is the second one?” While for Einstein time and space fall together, Michael Person shows very profoundly that church and place fall together: He argues that it is necessary for a local church to be embedded in a local setting. For a local church to be part of a global institution at the cost of its local flavour, traditions and culture is unhealthy and counterproductive. He says: “But why would people in my place recognize the importance of my church when my church does not recognize the importance of my place?” (p. 258) Let me continue quoting him: “We need to re-assess our dependence on our host church in the USA and avoid an unhealthy co-dependency ... A pastor struggling to make Jesus known in secular Frankfurt or Amsterdam needs all the encouragement and understanding she can get from her leaders in the world church. Her place is not their place” (p. 261). And his concluding words says it all: “There is opportunity for the local church to become a place of genuine welcome and resource – of belonging. We must learn hospitality as holiness. Finally, unless the Seventh-day Adventist church has a sense of its place, its rootedness in Europe, it can have no enduring place in the hearts of Europeans. In short, the Adventist Church in Europe will have no rich history to tell unless it respects the geography of the heart, unless it pays greater attention to hearts nurtured by the natural and cultural landscapes of Europe” (p. 262).

The presentation of the Dutch Adventist parliamentarian Marianne Thieme created quite a positive impact on the Symposium participants at Friedensau back in 2018. When I read her timely words on ecology, care for animals and the environment, I cannot help thinking of the young pioneers of the Adventist movement in the nineteenth century. They were in the foreground when it came to abolishing slavery, promotion of healthy foods and lifestyle and equality of all citizens. If our church – local and international – would get hold again of this pioneering, creative and prophetic spirit we would have 100 Thiemes around the globe where there is now only one. These words of Thieme may help us get there again: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has ... It always seems impossible until it is done!” (p. 272)

The high level of research in *Contours of European Adventism* is demonstrated by the paper of Tiziano Rimoldi, in which he presents “Italian Seventh-

day Adventists, Military Service and Conscientious Objection.” In his article containing 78 footnotes, he digs into Italian, European and worldwide Adventist magazines to make his argument. He (of course) quotes extensively from *Il Messaggero Avventista* and *L’opinione*. He concludes: “Italian Adventists were forerunners of a change of perspective. In fact, Italy ... in 1998 recognized conscientious objection to military service as a personal right for all (Law no. 230) and practically abolished obligatory military (or civil) service from 2005 onward (Law no. 226)” (p. 291).

Bernard Sauvagnat relates the interesting involvement of Adventists with Bible Societies; for example, in 2003 Dr Rudy Van Moere an Adventist minister and then Professor of Old Testament at the Brussels Protestant Theological Faculty became a member of the board of the Flemish Belgium Bible Society and was elected vice-president, plus he was very much involved as board member of the Netherlands Bible Society. Sauvagnat concludes: “Adventist contributions were possible because of the high quality of training of ministers and scholars in Biblical languages. Moreover, the general atmosphere of brotherhood in Christian universities and churches in Europe facilitated the inclusion of Adventist scholars among the scientific teams of the Bible societies” (p. 300).

How European Adventists relate to other Christians is illuminated by four case studies and with a very comprehensive overview of types of interchurch relations (juridical, cooperative, communicative, experiential), in the article by Stefan Höschele. He shows the blessings and challenges of interchurch relations. In Hungary, the Adventist Church experienced a break-away of concerned brethren in the past. Höschele writes: “In spite of the partial reconciliation, the general relationship to other free churches in Hungary remained distant, and the ‘Hungarian schism,’ as it has become known, remained a sign to many Adventist leaders that aiming at closer relations with other denominations is potentially divisive for the SDA Church itself” (p. 309).

Before this volume closes with an impressive “Working Bibliography” of more than 70 (!) pages, Rolf J. Pöhler articulates in the concluding article the ways in which Europe may contribute to the growth and wellbeing of the global church. “Among its ‘treasures’ are its cultural sensitivity, Protestant identity, conscientious adaptability and critical loyalty” (p. 315). Finally, Pöhler indicates that migration may challenge the European Adventist uniqueness.

Book Review

Since there is so much disconnectedness and individualism in the DNA of the European, it is a *tour de force* and a compliment that the Symposium, the publication of this book and also the European contribution to the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventism* (ESDA) have succeeded.

I recommend this book as a must read for every leader in the European Adventist church (local and regional) as well as for the leadership of the global church.

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Book Review

Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett, eds. *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. 240 pp.

If *ecotheology* feels like an unfamiliar word, or worse – like a theological fashion statement – it might be good to begin this book by circling it overhead. First, look at the credentials of the editors and contributors. Of the editors, Alan G. Padgett, is Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Kiara A. Jorgenson is Assistant Professor of Religion and Environmental Studies and Director of the Environmental Conversations Program at St. Olav College with a Ph.D. from the aforementioned Luther Seminary. Their interest in *ecotheology* seems to have an established institutional base. And we may wish to ask: Is *ecotheology* a feature of *Lutheran* theology? Of the contributors, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda is Professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Seminary. Steven Bouma-Prediger is the Leonard and Marjorie Mass Professor of Reformed Theology and Chair of the Campus Sustainability Advisory Committee at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. Again, it is tempting to ask: Is *ecotheology* a feature not only of *Lutheran* but also of *Reformed* theology? John F. Haught is Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. We are told that his area of specialization is systematic theology “with a particular interest in issues pertaining to science, cosmology, evolution, ecology, and religion.” This leads to the following question: Is *ecotheology* also a feature of *Roman Catholic* theology? Finally, there is Richard Bauckham, my former mentor at the University of St. Andrews and now Professor Emeritus at that institution. His spiritual home is the Church of England, and he has contributed prolifically to *ecotheology* for many years. Thus, it behoves us to ask: Is *ecotheology* now a feature of *Anglican* theology?

The answer to all these questions is “yes”. And then, also by way of circling the subject, we may look at the references for the respective entries. This will confirm that *ecotheology*, although a recent term, has achieved a depth and breadth to confirm that its time has arrived. I say this advisedly, aware that

there may be churches and institutions where *ecothology* has not yet arrived or where its arrival may be greeted with suspicion.

Richard J. Bauckham, the first contributor, is one of the most highly respected New Testament scholars of his generation. His impact is huge in areas as diverse as Revelation, Johannine Studies, Gospel criticism, Jürgen Moltmann, and biblical ecology. His books on ecology include *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (2010) and *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (2011). His essay in this book, "Being Human in the Community of Creation," revisits concepts developed earlier. The textual point of departure is Genesis 1:26–28 and the meaning of the "dominion" in the divine commission to humans. To many readers, "dominion" equals "domination." This was the legacy of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), perhaps the leading thinker for the industrial society and the modern world. While Bacon understood the God-given mandate as "domination," he meant it to be a relationship of benefit. In hindsight, this has not worked. "Domination" has come to mean predation and exploitation. It is striking, as James Barr has pointed out, that a predatory relationship between humans and animals is precluded by the dietary prescription in the creation story. Humans are *not* authorized to have animals as a food source (Gen. 1:29).

Bauckham questions the utility of "stewardship" as a viable model for the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation. This model puts humans *above* other creatures rather than among them; it puts humans *outside* "the community of creation," as Bauckham calls it, rather than *within* it. All too often, the notion of stewardship has acquired a utilitarian tenor: Other creatures and the earth exist primarily for human benefit and not for their own sake or – for God's sake. Moreover, "stewardship" assumes a degree of insight and competency on the part of humans that vastly exceeds actual human capacity. Thus, it is better if humans see themselves as members *inside* "the community of creation" and, situated *within* that community, humans can rediscover and reclaim the true meaning of being created in the image of God and entrusted with "dominion" as a form of care and sensitivity to others.

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda's essay on "Hope and Moral-Spiritual Power for Climate Justice" combines biblical categories with poignant awareness of climate change for the most vulnerable communities. She notes, quoting Maxine Burkett, that the people who "suffer most acutely [from climate change] are

those who are least responsible for the crisis to date." Without awareness of those most affected, measures to ameliorate the damage may do little or nothing for the most vulnerable. She invokes biblical concepts like "love" and "neighbour" to bring her point home. In a world aware of climate change, the "neighbour" is not only a person living nearby. Global sensibility rewrites the notion of "neighbour" to a new scale: patterns of consumption in the privileged parts of the world have an immediate impact on people living in distant lands. Moe-Lobeda ends with *Seven Guideposts for Lovers*. The *Second Guidepost* holds that "lovers will rise each day remembering who they are and who everyone is." The *Third Guidepost* says that "lovers will practice a moral vision that enables seeing structural brutalities *in order to change them*, while also maintaining hope."

Steven Bouma-Prediger's essay is entitled: "The Character of Earth-Keeping: A Christian Ecological Virtue Ethic." With reference to Paul Santmire, he promotes "earthkeeping" over the more traditional "stewardship," faulting the latter term for the connotation of "management, control, and exploitation of persons and resources." In sum, says Bouma-Prediger, "the term 'stewardship' is beyond redeeming." This concern – and its alternative – echoes Bauckham. Humans are set *within* creation, *among* other creatures. "For example, in the Genesis 1 narrative, the creation of humans does not occur on a day different from the creation of other animals." It is a same-day event. The appeal to Virtue Ethics, here with reference to Paul Cafaro, emphasizes virtues like "care, patience, persistence, self-control, humility, respect, and self-restraint." Concepts like "wonder" and "humility" are especially singled out under the heading "Ecological Wonder and Humility." The author drives these winsome points home by examples from experiences with students at Hope College in Michigan, outings in nature designed to recover and develop the faculty of "wonder" as well as "humility."

John F. Haught's essay, "The Unfinished Sacrament of Creation: Christian Faith and the Promise of Nature," may be the most challenging to the present reading audience as it was to me. He appeals to the notion of an ongoing creation, that is, to the built-in potential and promise of a creative process still unfinished. Three visions ground his view, the "archaeological" reading, the "analogical" (sacramental) reading, and the "anticipatory" vision. In the first two, the outcome seems fixed or constrained. The third, "the anticipatory

vision," is an invitation to "celebrate evolutionary science and the new astrophysical and cosmological discoveries." This vision foresees "a restless quest," calling for "preparation along with preservation." Ultimately, however, hope will depend mostly on the belief that "the cosmos is pregnant with incalculable future outcomes that lie far beyond the range of what we can presently predict or plan for." By this criterion, says the author, "in the anticipatory reading of nature the fundamental ecological virtue is hope."

While there is much with which to agree in the essays, there are also several things with which I found myself in deep disagreement. Thus, it was a relief that the chapter authors were given an opportunity to respond to the essays of fellow writers. For me, at least, meaningful reservations and misgivings are expressed in these responses, with Richard Bauckham's responses in my view the best. Where Bouma-Prediger reads the naming of animals in Genesis as a form of human authority over non-human creatures, Bauckham sees it as an act of *recognition* or even *discernment*. "Adam, we might say, was the first taxonomist." More necessary and trenchant is his critique of Haught's "anticipatory reading" as the substrate for ecological hope. Bauckham objects that "the universe, as science understands it, cannot, from its own immanent possibilities, produce either the resurrection of the dead or its own new creation." He calls Haught's vision utopian, then says that "Christian hope is more radical than anything we can envisage the universe becoming: it is for *resurrection of the dead*." Indeed, he says, "it does not privilege the future (as in Haught's vision) but holds out hope for the past."

Whether this book is the best introduction to *ecothology* is debatable, but it is a place to begin. *Ecology* (as topic, not as the book) is a big concern in the Bible. It was denigrated and decimated by de-materialized reading traditions in Christian theology. Perhaps I read the book wistfully, wondering when or whether *ecology* will reach my church and its many institutions, a church where the raw material for *ecology* is already in place. Let me mention *materiality*, *the Sabbath*, and *the life to come on an earth made new*. And then stop.

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Book Review

Turner, Philip. *Christian Socialism: The Promise of an Almost Forgotten Tradition.* Foreword by Stanley Hauerwas. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2021. 216 pp.

This book's author calls it "an interpretive essay." Following up on an interest of his which began when he was a seminary student, he wrote it after he retired to Austin, Texas after years of service as Dean at the Berkeley Divinity School. He is active today in Texas as an Episcopalian Priest. The Episcopalian denomination continues the legacy of the Church of England in the United States.

Turner studied at Washington and Lee University. It is now named after George Washington, the "Father" of the United States who was one of its most generous benefactors, and Robert E. Lee, a general in the rebellious Confederate States of America who served as its President after the Confederacy lost the Civil War. Despite these differences, they were both Virginians and they were both Anglicans or what today we call Episcopalians.

Turner also studied at Virginia Theological Seminary, an Episcopalian school, Oxford University, and Princeton University. He served as an Episcopalian missionary in Uganda and as a professor specializing in Christian Ethics at the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas and at General Theological Seminary in New York, City before moving to Yale. Both of these are Episcopalian schools.

All of this establishes that the frequently aristocratic Episcopalian heritage in the northeast region of the southern part of the United States shapes Turner's outlook. It has been a significant feature of life in the Commonwealth of Virginia and surrounding areas since the first colonists arrived in 1607 and founded Jamestown. Turner studied the English Socialist Tradition as a son of the Church of England. Historians of Christianity are often too hard or too easy on their own denominations. Turner is neither.

Although its name might suggest some relationship with the Berkeley campus of the University of California, the Berkeley Divinity School is actually an

Episcopal theological seminary which is located in New Haven, Connecticut.

Founded in 1854, it is now “a full partner and affiliate” of Yale University Divinity School. This enables it to maintain the distinctive ethos, theological perspectives, liturgical practices and spiritual formation of students which are characteristic of the Anglican tradition while enjoying the benefits of being a part of a major university.

Andover Newton Theological School moved in 2017 from Newton, Massachusetts to New Haven, Connecticut where it now has a similar relationship with Yale Divinity School. Andover Theological Seminary, the first of its predecessors, was founded in 1807 as Congregationalist seminary by some who thought that Harvard University had become too liberal. Newton Theological Institute, the second of its predecessors, was founded in 1854 as an American (“Northern”) Baptist seminary. This was seven years before the outbreak of the Civil War which split some major denominations into “Northern” and “Southern” ones. They merged as “Andover-Newton” in 1965.

These historical details are important because they exhibit trends in the ecumenical, as distinguished from the evangelical, Protestant denominations in the United States. These trends are those of serious decline. This is related in part to the unpopular positions these denominations have taken on controversial social issues and the inadequate theology and ineffective methods with which they sometimes did so. It is evident that these trends were among the things which were in Turner’s mind as he researched English Christian Socialism.

Turner writes that his first subtitle began with “The Pathos and Promise.” He shortened it to “The Promise” because the “naivete” of most of those he studied “became quite apparent” and did not require “extensive explication.”

He believes that this movement is worth studying for at least five reasons. The first is that the Industrial Revolution caused societal problems that the Digital Revolution is now causing. The second is that this movement emphasized the importance of educating people about “ideals” and “principles,” which he describes as “interlocking, coherent and appealing” to Christians and non-Christians alike. The third is that it forces reflection about the efficacy of ideals and principles in comparison with material factors in bringing about positive societal change. The fourth is that this, in turn, invites an assessment of what these ideals and principles should be and to what they should aim.

The fifth is that all of these prompt considerations about what our “basic vocabulary” when discussing these matters should be. In Turner’s view, studying English Christian Socialism provides a much-needed opportunity for post-modern Christian leaders to learn from some of their modern predecessors.

Turner might have presented his account of this movement biographically. In this case, he would have profiled the lives and ideas of its most influential leaders. This list at minimum would have included F.D. Maurice (1805–1872), John Ludlow (1821–1911), B.F. Westcott (1825–1901), Charles Gore (1853–1932), R.H. Tawney (1880–1962) and William Temple (1881–1944). He compares their views with those of Rowan Williams (1950–), John Millbank (1952–) and Adrian Pabst (1972–) in our own time. If Turner had presented his material this way, he would have given us a detailed report of this movement’s inner development, dynamics, agreements and disagreements. This was not his goal.

His goal was to display this movement as a whole so that we can compare it with others in their entirety. He specifically mentions the Fabians in England, Marxists on the European Continent and Social Gospellers in the United States and elsewhere.

The biggest difference is that all of these other movements called for the reform of both public and private institutions, whereas English Christian Socialism explicitly rejected proposals to restructure society in favour of educating citizens and fostering in them virtuous characters. The priority it placed upon duties more so than on rights, upon love more so than on justice and upon the fundamental equality of all humans before God more so than upon human autonomy and dignity interacted with its refusal to call for institutional reform.

This movement’s frank refusal to challenge the existing social order might be surprising until one realizes that “socialism” for it was a concept in moral psychology or philosophical and theological anthropology rather than it was an idea in politics and economics. For its leaders, English Christian Socialism was first and foremost about clarifying the nature of human nature.

Its leaders attributed society’s illnesses to a profoundly mistaken understanding of human nature as individualistic, atomistic, agonistic and irreducibly competitive even though it is actually relational, or socialistic, and collaborative. They held that nothing would improve until this misunderstanding was corrected.

They sometimes left the impression that everything would change for the better when enough citizens exchanged this wrong view of human nature for the right one. They preached, taught, organized voluntary societies, published articles, magazines and books and founded a religious order. They also volunteered to serve in poor areas and made many other sacrifices. Turner commends them for doing all this and more on behalf of the least fortunate. He also calls their efforts "optimism on steroids."

Turner's goal to display this difference prompted him to present his material thematically. This led him to divide his book into four "Parts," each of which has two or three sections. Part One is "Origins: Historical and Theological." It situates the movement in England when the Industrial Revolution had turned the lives of many people into living hells and the Church's response was inadequate. Part Two is "The Incarnation: How Firm a Foundation?" It plumbs the richness of this doctrine as a basis for Christian social ethics; however, he faults it for not having a complete Doctrine of Christ and for insufficiently drawing on other theological resources such as the Doctrines of Sin and Last Things. Part Three is "Moral Ideals: Their Statement and Application." This is where Turner examines the contributions of "Ideals" rather than material factors in the character formation of citizens and what English Christian Socialism thought they should be. He holds that what they said about both of these was right but not enough. Part IV is "Assessment, Influence and Promises." Turner had been appraising the movement all along; however, here he gathers his evaluations in a helpful summary.

With regard to the movement's optimism and the Bible, he states: "The witness of Scripture does not suggest steady advance but a struggle that carries on and intensifies throughout the course of Christian history. In this struggle, manifestations of the Kingdom of God appear but are always fragile, incomplete, mixed with the alloy of sin. They are, in fact, always contested by opposing forces. These manifestations of the Kingdom of God will, nevertheless, be vindicated and brought to completion by a final appearance of Christ. On that day, Christ will judge our rebellion and establish the saints firmly within the life and victory of God."

The last section of Part Four is "Promise." It contends that Christians everywhere can learn many important lessons from English Christian Socialism despite its shortcomings. One of these lessons is that it is wise for a Church to oppose destructive societal arrangements and propose better ones in broad

terms while leaving the details of implementing them to specialists in public policy and related fields. After all, he reminds us, Christians can agree about what the ends of public policy should be but disagree about the means of reaching them. The Church should serve them both.

My own view is that much that is promising and much that is perilous about English Christian Socialism is encapsulated in its call for a "return to Christendom." On the one hand, it was a time when Christian convictions were intense and widespread enough to build magnificent cathedrals, create splendid works of art, produce long-lasting philosophical and theological systems and create institutions that improved the lives of many. It is also true that all societies depend upon at least some widely shared views and values. The English Christian Socialists realized this and we are fortunate that they did.

On the other hand, Christendom was also the time of the Crusades and the Inquisition, of burning at the stake people on the margins with uncommon convictions, drowning them, axing off their heads, pulling them apart on racks, hanging them but cutting the ropes before they died in order to torture them on the ground as long as possible and on and on.

English Christian Socialism's call for a return to Christendom does not include these offensive aspects of it. On the other hand, its leaders explicitly refused to challenge in their time the remaining injustices of Christendom's economic system. It was one which guaranteed that there would be many poor citizens at the bottom, fewer in the middle-classes and a very small number of excessively wealthy ones in the ruling classes. Turner says that their expositions were "often frankly condescending, utopian and seriously unfair." My impression is that they were residually feudalistic.

Stanley Hauerwas wrote in his Foreword that "some will wonder if I should be writing" it. This is a fair question because the call of the English Christian Socialists for a return to Christendom is precisely what he has spent his whole professional life opposing. His response was that its leaders were "people I deeply admire" because at least they desired "to make the church an alternative to capitalism."

Hauerwas noted that "the Church of England was and is the soul of the nation." On most occasions, he would have added that too often in England and in many other places the nation was and is the soul of the Church.

Book Review

I thank Philip Turner, Cascade Books in Eugene, Oregon and the people he mentions in his Acknowledgements for an “interpretive essay” from which I learned much because it is thoroughly researched, well organized, effectively written and judiciously balanced.¹

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¹ Those who want a comprehensive account from the Hebrew Bible to the present might consider: Cort, John C. *Christian Socialism: An Informal History*. Second edition. New Introduction by Gary Dorrien. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2020. 448 pp.

Book Review

David J.B. Trim. *A Passion for Mission*. Binfield, UK: Newbold Academic Press, 2019. 461 pp.

This book is a response to a commission by the officers of the Trans-European Division (TED) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) to take stock of the TED's history. The occasion was the TED's ninetieth anniversary (1929–2019). The goal was to commemorate it and evaluate how the church's leaders "tried to shape the development of Adventist mission and ministry" in that period of nearly one century. The hope was, and is, that this will inform and, hopefully, instruct and inspire present missional politics. The author set out to reach a "modest goal of analysing the higher levels of Adventist Church structure" (p. 12).

Mission in an Ever Changing Area

The 90-years long history is that of a church Division where everything was in almost constant change. In this period, the Division's name was ever-changing – involving three times Northern European Division, and once each, North Atlantic, Northern Europe-West African, before arriving at the present Trans-European Division. The territory was ever-changing – involving always European countries as its core but whose composition was also changing, sometimes including mission fields in Africa and the Middle-East, again over time involving different countries, until finally TED became exclusively European with the last alignment in 2011 when the Middle East and the Pakistan Union Mission "left". And finally, this has been a time when the leadership has had to find its way through ever-changing socio-political and cultural changes – from the Great War, the Great Depression, post-colonial and Cold War times, through the deep social and cultural revolutions of the 1960s, to the post-socialist end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, and the Europe since the 2000s with its secularism and post-Christian culture, then multiculturalism, economic crisis and migrations; a way not only of survival but of living up to the ambition of even flourishing. Dr Trim has done

his homework very well and this should not surprise us for he was ideally suited for the task.

Author and Historical Approach

Dr David J.B. Trim is Director of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Born in India to missionary parents, he is a graduate of Newbold College and the University of London, and served in Adventist higher education for twelve years. His publications include eleven books, some seventy scholarly book chapters and journal entries, and fifty articles in Adventist magazines. Trim is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He has previously authored and co-edited two books on Adventism in Europe and its mission.¹

The topic has been covered very well. Trim's book is clearly the fruit of digging deeply into available historical material, mostly comprised of official records, archives, and publications, representing both primary and secondary historical sources. His expertise, thoroughness, and meticulously sound judgement is obvious throughout. The book covers the designated historical period and is organized so as to follow different phases in this 90-year-old history. Each of those was coloured by specific organizational, administrative and missional challenges and decisions in which TED's leaders had also to respond to different external socio-political moments and movements, some being the greatest in history. Dr Trim has demonstrated a silver lining permeating everything the Church's leaders were doing, and that was a drive to advance the mission and organize everything else around it.

The author's viewpoint in this publication is one of a lover of the Church and of its mission. On the other hand, it is also that of a realist, refusing to "whitewash the unfortunate facts" (p. 10). There is no real benefit in a hagiographical treatment of the TED's history, so Trim offers a better solution, that of "acknowledging the struggles and setbacks, as well as celebrating the successes." Treating the subject as an historian, he nevertheless concludes in an appropriate way as a theologian and missiologist, with several lessons to be taken in "working towards a bright future" (p. 375). A few of them underline

¹ Trim, David J.B. *A Living Sacrifice: Unsung Heroes of Adventist Missions*. Nampa: Pacific Press, 2019; Trim, David J.B., and Daniel Heinz. *Pluralism, Parochialism and Contextualization: Challenges to Adventist Mission in Europe*. Oxford et al.: Peter Lang, 2010.

the importance of leadership nurturing real Christ-centred spirituality, “becoming as fluent in the cultural idioms of Europe,” and the necessity of all focusing “their energies on becoming European.”

Trim’s arguing is convincing, sound and to the point. It is convincing because the reconstruction of the TED’s history is founded on proper and thorough historical research. The conclusions are sound and clearly laid out, and selective, singling out those events and decisions that in hindsight proved to be critical and decisive. His points, conclusion and lessons are realistic and drawn so as to be useful to all with responsibility and passion to influence the life and direction of the Church in the present and future.

Book Outline

The book is organized in four sections, preceded by an introduction, and followed by a conclusion. Part one (“Origins”), brings to the fore some key information. When TED was organized (then named Northern European Division or NED) it was “supposed to direct church work in the whole of Europe, most of Africa, all the Middle East, most of Central Asia, and parts of North Asia” (p. 35). The reason for taking such a cross-continental responsibility was partly because of the colonial reality of the time. Several northern European countries had imperial links with these distant areas, that naturally spilled over to the orientation of those European countries to the same areas. More importantly, Trim notes that “the NED administrators regarded the challenge with enthusiasm.” Also, the historical facts tell about real missional sentiments that “resulted in real action.” They, Trim concludes, “preferred to err on the side of ambition rather than caution” (pp. 52–53).

Part Two spans the first forty years of the Division’s history, from 1929 to 1970. This section is then subdivided in chapters 4–6: “A Solemn Responsibility” (Depression and World War: 1929–1946), “A Passion to Win Men and Women for God” (The Refoundation: 1946–1950) and “Evangelism in Every Community” (Years of Stability: 1951–1970).

“Part Three: The Last Half Century” includes three chapters “Saying Goodbye with Heavy Hearts” (Separating from Sub-Saharan Africa: 1969–1980), “A Caring Community” (Unity and Diversity: 1976–1991), and “Organising for Mission” (1991–2015).

Part Four deals with “Institutions,” “Engaging with Society,” and “Adaptation and Innovation.” This last section focuses on the division’s only institution of higher education, Newbold College. However, Skodsborg Sanitarium has been put under spotlights, too, as one health care institution that loomed considerably larger than any others. Then, lastly, the Adventist Community Services and ADRA are highlighted, although only in a limited way. Still, even this cursory overview clearly confirmed that much of the impact of mission in the past was propelled by this kind of work, both in the TED and worldwide, and that this must be an important part of the TED’s mission in the present European secular, post-Christian culture(s).

The book is rich with figures, maps, photographs and tables. This appropriately supplements the text and greatly assists the reader both in understanding and in having a fuller impression of the subjects covered, from people to institutions to territories. The critical apparatus is impressive and reveals the work was exhaustive in that respect.

Evaluation

The book breaks new ground and makes important contributions to the Adventist world and cause. This reviewer is singling out only a few of them.

For a European believer to know and grow. To this reviewer’s knowledge, this is the first overview of the way the Adventist Church in the area of the TED developed, changed and faced challenges; or of its politics of mission. It is an important piece, especially for European Adventist readers. Our history is not known to members, older or new ones alike. That is a problem, especially at a time when strong convictions and the positive pride of being an Adventist in Europe are fading. A simple history lesson will do only that much to help but this book is more than that. It is written with the intent to inform and to give a sense of belonging to a body that thrives, but also to instruct and to inspire. All three are needed at this moment. And it succeeds.

An easy read. This book was meant for the widest audience, naturally mostly for Adventists but also anyone interested in this topic, members and non-members alike. Typically for a historical study, it is pregnant with historical references, names, places, and dates. But the content is easy to digest due to the style that makes it an easy and smooth read. It is important given that the primary need for this kind of book is in the pew, with pastors and church administrators.

Not a hagiography. Trim sets out to be a realist and not to “whitewash the unfortunate facts” from history (p. 10). He frankly points out when politics, albeit mission not partisan, was responsible for certain tensions, as in the post-War deliberations on what would happen with the Division after it was suspended and the headquarters moved to the United States (1950). But then he concludes that eventually all differences were overcome and decisions proved to be beneficial. Trim’s approach is a model to be more widely followed especially in popular expositions of the Adventist past. Nostalgia and romanticizing of the Adventist past are still dominating and this is a proper antidote. We need that kind of realistic approach of “acknowledging the struggles and setbacks, as well as celebrating the successes.”

Finally, I would like to point out one area where similar studies should do better. It must be said that Trim’s programme was to deal primarily with the TED’s leaders and the divisional politics of mission, not with individual unions and other levels of the Church’s life in the TED territory. Still, on several occasions he inevitably does delve into discussions on the level of union officials and institutions. This reviewer did notice that Dr Trim did not consult historical records and archives related to the Southern and Eastern part of the TED, namely the Balkans.² And the reason for this most likely does not have to do with the author of the book. The Church officials in that part of Europe simply did not do due diligence. They have had very poor practice and culture of keeping historical records and material in the last 90 years, or generally from the beginning of the Adventist work. This is a major omission that leaves this – and I assume other parts of the TED’s territory – as “black holes” to present and future researchers. This makes everybody a loser. We cannot learn about our past and how divine providence has led us, nor can we learn from our mistakes, and our future deliberations will be left less informed than they could have been. It is good that the leadership in SEEUC is investing in research to collect and save what can be saved from historical material, including the living witnesses. God has led this denomination and there is no reason to doubt that he intends to further lead it. The Adventist Church would

² For example, in the chapter on institutions, when talking about secondary school, the one in South East European Union was not mentioned at all. Also, the work of ADRA in the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was historically unique for its positive impact, was not even mentioned. To name only two.

Book Review

be a much better “dance” partner if she reminds herself of how that “dance” looked like in the past.

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Book Review

Hasel, Frank M., ed. *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*. Biblical Research Institute Studies in Hermeneutics. Vol. III. Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald Academic, 2020. 488 pp.

This book was born as an answer to an issue raised from the floor at the 2015 General Conference (GC) Session in San Antonio, Texas (pp. 2–4). The discussion of women’s ordination led to the observation that Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) are drawing different conclusions from the same Scriptures. In attempts to explain this reality, it was proposed that there coexist two different hermeneutics within the world church and that it would be necessary to address this confusion. Therefore, as the answer to the request, the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) has produced this book. The proclaimed goal of this work is to present an approved Adventist hermeneutic that could be accepted by the global church.

The book is a compendium of articles written by twelve Adventist scholars. It contains a general introduction, fourteen chapters, and an appendix where authors systematically cover various topics that are found to be the building blocks for this one hermeneutical approach. The topics include presuppositions of the interpreter, the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, the relationship between the Scriptures and culture, faith and science, Ellen G. White’s prophetic gift, various reformation principles of biblical interpretation such as *sola Scriptura*, *tota Scriptura*, *sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, clarity of the Scriptures, as well as divine inspiration, principles of prophetic interpretation such as interpretation of symbols and visions and the use of typology, to mention a few. There are two chapters that deal with case studies; chapter 10 deals with conditional prophecies about Israel, and chapter 11 deals with Genesis 1–3 as paradigmatic to the metaphysical framework for the interpretation of the entire Scriptures. The whole work ends with a review of hermeneutical principles that are acceptable within Adventism with a special accent on the hermeneutic used by William Miller (chapter 12) and another survey of all

other hermeneutical principles that are questionable from the Adventist perspective (chapter 14). The appendix is a reprint of the official SDA statement on “Methods of Bible Study” from the 1986 General Conference meeting.

In its essence, this work is apologetic, arguing against the historical-critical method and for the historical-grammatical method (termed “historical-biblical”) which is, in hermeneutical theory, associated with the *Sensus Literalis*. Here, the interpretation is literal *whenever possible*, for it recognizes different literary genres, makes a distinction between contexts, obvious figures of speech, irony, prophetic symbols, and takes into account the backgrounds of the original author, of the audience, and the historic context. As the solution to the perceived presence of two types of different hermeneutics within the Church, this volume proposes a biblical hermeneutic that upholds a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Throughout the book, the authors emphasise one single argument – that the biblical account of various historical events is *historically* accurate. This emphasis is so strong that the danger exists that faith is not seen as personal trust in God and his providence while acting in accordance to his will, but the act of faith is reduced to the level of acknowledging that the scenes described in the Scriptures are historical reality.¹ This comes as no surprise due to the apologetic nature of the work. Therefore, for the hermeneutical method proposed by these authors, two things are of utmost importance – linguistic aspects of the text, and historicity of the events depicted by the text.

There are several positive aspects of the proposed method. Firstly, the denunciation of historical criticism might be fully justified. Due to its detachment from the life of faith communities where the Bible and its authority are highly regarded, it has already been widely discredited and is surviving only in some parts of academia where the meaning of the biblical text does not carry existential consequences. Secondly, its main goal is to establish the literal meaning of the text, thus forming a foundation for all further theological thinking, and ruling out the plethora of farfetched, arbitrary interpretations.

¹ Nevertheless, there are places where the opposite is claimed, namely that the Bible is a book of faith, meaning that it describes people who not only believed that God exists, but who also acted on their faith (p. 101). Faith here is understood in a Lutheran sense, as trust. So, there is a certain degree of inconsistency throughout the book about this key concept.

Thirdly, when applied, the method creates a sense of biblical realism, and approaches the biblical events and characters without an attempt to deconstruct the “real history” behind the text. Finally, the method does not disintegrate the Scriptures into ever smaller, mutually disjointed components, but preserves its wholeness, thus making possible the task of biblical theology of discovering one overall biblical narrative. Therefore, the proposed method is helpful for the basic hermeneutical groundwork, to ascertain main points in a given biblical text and providing favourable conditions for further hermeneutical work.

However, in my view there are some important problems with this work. I will start with its major focal point. Firstly, in the context of the 21st century historical criticism is rather *passé* and therefore the apologetic attitude here is quite outdated. Secondly, the kind of biblical hermeneutic that is proposed here is a text-based hermeneutic that predates historical criticism. Therefore, the authors are not breaking any new ground but merely use well-known arguments of magisterial protestant scholarship of ages long gone, as well as giving a somewhat updated take on previously voted positions of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Therefore, it seems that the proposed solution to the problem of multiple understandings of the same Scriptures is to turn back the clock and pretend that the twentieth century never happened or that some serious questions about modernity and colonial imperialism have never been raised. Thirdly, this work suffers from the Nietzschean syndrome of becoming a dragon itself because of too long a fight against dragons. One of the main reasons why historical criticism is *passé* is that it is highly hypothetical, lifeless in its conclusions, and not capable of nurturing one’s faith. This is because the subject matter is the past, which naturally disconnects it from life in the present. The hermeneutic presented in this work has the same focus on the past. Whilst these two methodologies hail from completely different paradigms – one rooted in naturalism and the other one based on a theistic worldview – their common denominator is their focus on history and the consequent detachment of their conclusions from one’s life in the present. All the events that the historical-grammatical method deals with are either in the biblical past or in the eschatological future. The present is seen as suspect, it is labelled as “the culture” and chapter 5 is entirely devoted to explaining precisely that. At times, the task of discovering the relevance of biblical theology is assigned to the pastoral application, rendering

the proposed hermeneutical method in itself as lifeless and irrelevant as the historical-critical method. After all is said and done, the conclusions will still be about the past with little or no relevance to the issues of contemporary Adventism. This raises the question of its benefits. As the proposed method converses with the nonbelieving community, it is true that it can be helpful for beginners who have worldview issues. Moving beyond that, however, it is still basically a form of enhanced exegesis and, by itself, it cannot support the maturing faith of believers or the scholarship that does not pretend that modernity and imperialistic projects did not fail gravely and violently during the twentieth century precisely because of the way formational narratives have been interpreted and used.

This is mainly due to the second most common criticism presented in the collection – the criticism of any kind of reader-sensitive biblical hermeneutics. Namely, although chapter 1 deals with the interpreter and the role of his/her presuppositions in the hermeneutical process, later on in the work this element is constantly invalidated. This is very odd considering the enormous price that Adventists had to pay for William Miller’s unawareness regarding the subjectivity of his own hermeneutics. Gadamer’s famous hermeneutical principle of the two horizons, one of the past (biblical author) and the other of the present (contemporary interpreter) which need to be fused to achieve understanding, is seen as one of the major sources of multiple interpretations. The authors of chapter 5 have found that one of the main sources of multiple interpretations are “agenda-driven interpretations” (p. 148). It seems that the aim of this volume was to recommend a hermeneutical method in which the contemporary interpreter would be taken out of the equation in order to achieve the unadulterated, objective, ultimate meaning of the Scriptures (pp. 442–443).

The problem above arises when the makeup of the group of scholars that contributed to this volume is analysed. First, all of them are male. Second, the vast majority hold their Ph.D. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (AU; 8 out of 12), the vast majority of those AU graduates work for the BRI (7 out of 8) and five of them work for both institutions in some capacity. Third, almost all of them are white (11 out of 12). By quoting others (p. 148: fn. 58), this peculiar group of authors have bundled together a comprehensive list of diverse hermeneutics under a label of “identity hermeneutics.” What is evidently missing from this list is white,

male, Anglo-Saxon, imperialistic hermeneutics. Because of this major blind spot, the authors of this volume unconsciously propose their own identity hermeneutics to function as the ultimate benchmark for global hermeneutical unity. If the issue of women's ordination is taken into account as a context within which this volume has been commissioned, suddenly it cannot be denied that this important undertaking, which aspires to become normative for the world church, is executed by a very small and homogenous group of theorists of similar identity backgrounds driven by a well-defined agenda. Therefore, the authors have unintentionally highlighted the very thing they were trying to deny or avoid – the impossibility of taking the contemporary reader out of the hermeneutical equation and the subjective nature of every hermeneutical endeavour.

Their third criticism targets the literary and canonical approaches. The criticism of these approaches is much softer but adamant, nevertheless. On the one hand, canonical criticism is commended for taking the entire Bible as the norm, thus completely circumventing the historical-critical method with its source and redaction criticisms. On the other hand, however, the canonical approach is rejected because (1) it gives importance to the community of faith as the inspired agent from which the biblical canon has emerged and (2) it does not approach the text from the historical perspective. It is claimed that God deals with two agents, history and inspired individuals, not an inspired community (pp. 432–443). Criticism of literary approaches follows a similar path. On one hand, literary criticism is commended “for taking seriously the literary, rhetorical, and narrative dimensions of the biblical text” (p. 435) and for providing a proper response to historical criticism (p. 438), but on the other, it remains suspect for not being concerned with the historicity of the text (pp. 438–440). By doing this, in the minds of potential readers, the shadow of doubt has been cast on both literary and canonical approaches. This is rather confusing since one of the most profound works of Adventist scholarship in the 21st century has been produced by one of the major contributors to this very volume who used the combination of canonical and literary approaches.² In this work Davidson's approach is implicitly rendered as not Adventist

² See Davidson, Richard M. *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007: cf. especially pp. 2–3.

enough, while Miller's hermeneutic, which resulted in the Great Disappointment and which brought about transgenerational trauma to all Adventists ever since, has not been criticised and thus its use is implicitly encouraged.

Therefore, the hermeneutical tool offered here to the global SDA community as a tool for arriving at the same, ultimate meaning of a text is based on a rather one-sided approach. The Bible is presented as a tool by which God rules over people (p. 457), rather than a harbinger of divine liberation, a tool of personal growth, and a well of hope. There is also a fear that this hermeneutic might be accused of bibliolatry. However, by taking both the reader and the community out of the hermeneutical equation, this approach has rendered the Bible a lonely, fossilized literary relic, locked in the past. Its meaning can be unlocked only by a limited group of experts who operate within the school of thought which dictates hermeneutical uniformity by globally imposing a method that ignores contexts of the contemporary Adventist reader and the contemporary Adventist community. Therefore, the problem is far more serious than bibliolatry. Here, a specific hermeneutical tool is used as an instrument of the Bible-driven ecclesiocracy which is unaware of its colonial roots. The potential for the epistemological violence that can be done by this one-hermeneutic-fits-all approach is already confirmed in the case of Davidson's work, but only time will tell what other consequences it will have. In the light of these suggestions, I hope that the SDA denomination will continue to proceed without a magisterium that decides about the "ultimate meaning" of the Scriptures.

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Book Review

John C. Peckham. *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 322 pp.

Right from the outset, it has to be said, that *Divine Attributes* is a follow up volume to Peckham's *The Doctrine of God*, published last year, which was pitched at the level of an introductory textbook for the study of the doctrine of God.¹ His current volume takes the discussion further into constructive space and as such moves his overall project forward in a logical and perhaps expected direction. This will be very much welcomed by all readers of his previous book.

Divine Attributes is therefore not only a book that contains analyses of the contemporary debates relating to major questions surrounding the attributes of God, but truly attempts to make a distinctively Scriptural proposition called covenantal theism. Peckham defines his model as one which “affirms God’s aseity and self-sufficiency, qualified immutability and passibility, everlasting eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence and sovereign providence, covenantal action, omnibenevolence, and relational triunity” (p. 37). This condensed definition of covenantal theism then effectively offers the outline of the main themes and questions discussed in the remainder of the book.

John C. Peckham as Professor of Theology in the Department of Theology and Christian Philosophy at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, is a specialist in the subject of the doctrine of God and the current volume significantly advances not only his *The Doctrine of God*, but also his other books on the same theme.

Divine Attributes is organised into eight chapters. Chapters two to seven provide the main discussion including the promised reconstructive material which Peckham calls biblical warrant. Chapter eight is a summary chapter

¹ Cf. my book review of *The Doctrine of God: Introducing the Big Questions: Spes Christiana* 32.1, 2021, 173–181.

bringing together the propositions and effectively making a condensed argument in favour of covenantal theism. The book begins with an introductory chapter which introduces the anticipated theological model of a covenantal God of Scripture through ten major propositions. The introduction sets the scene for the rest of the book in a pedagogically deductive manner, which will be appreciated by students of theology who right away will get an overall grasp of what is coming their way in the book. Chapter one provides a transition from the overview in the introduction to chapter two. As such then, Peckham addresses the important questions of his methodology in this chapter.

In the following we will sum up the book's essential proposals. *Divine Attributes*, just like *The Doctrine of God*, is a dense place and one could easily lose her or his way through the many detailed questions, arguments and counter-arguments one will find on almost each page of the book. Thus, an analytical-reflective summary of the main aspects of the book will benefit most readers of this review.

In his introduction, Peckham quickly jumps into the main proposition of his book without long preliminary remarks. For him, Scripture portrays God as a covenantal God who "creates, sustains, and creates anew; speaks, hears, and responds; knows, plans, wills, calls and chooses but has unfulfilled desires; judges, acts justly, and mercifully and graciously forgives; loves compassionately, passionately, and steadfastly; grieves, suffers, laments, and relents; promises, covenants, and engages in covenant relationship; engages in court proceedings, and defeats evil; and dwells with us and makes holy" (pp. 1–2).

Each of these propositions for how Scripture depicts God are briefly introduced with some significant attention to biblical warrant aspect. Importantly, from Peckham's point of view, the analysis of divine attributes needs to be done in such a way that it accounts for "the unique normativity of Scripture" (p. 17). This attempt at providing Scriptural warrant for divine attributes in the midst of a raging storm surrounding the subject of God is the very essence of what the book is attempting to achieve.

Chapter one instinctively transitions into the methodological space. While Peckham does not discuss the details of his methodology here but refers readers to his other work (*Canonical Theology* [2016]), he nevertheless clarifies that his reading follows a canonical approach with "grammatical-historical procedures of exegesis in a way that affirms Scripture's dual authorship such that

the intention *in* the text is not reduced to human authorial intent but includes the effect of the divine author's intention." Furthermore, Peckham explains that: "I thus depart from any interactions of grammatical-historical method that foster atomism or are otherwise unduly influenced by modernistic biblical criticism, seeking instead to read the canon's parts in light of the whole canon (and vice versa) without injury to any part" (p. 30: footnote 52). Critically, the proposed approach by Peckham is one which maintains priority of Scripture even over dogmatic traditions of church fathers or the early ecumenical creeds – a view which he claims was not foreign to major Christian theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa or Augustine (pp. 30–32 and 259). Peckham's approach, as he clarifies further, also involves discussing "perennial philosophical and systematic issues concerning divine attributes" yet it will be done within the bounds of "keeping with the commitments of canonical theology" (p. 33). In the conclusion to chapter one, the author provides a helpful summary of his proposed canonical theism model. Once again, this serves as a transition to the next six chapters which will further scrutinise and elaborate on the following summary: "[The] God of love is indomitable, all-powerful, and utterly distinct from creatures but voluntarily changes in relationship, willingly suffers with us and for us in love, condescends to spend time with us as genuinely present in creation, knows us better than we know ourselves, and cares for all creation, exercises his infinite power for the best good of all while granting power to others for the sake of the flourishing of love, wills only good for all, meets and defeats evil – at inestimable cost to himself – and eternally enjoys loving fellowship as the Trinity of love, but freely created others to share in the fellowship of love" (pp. 37–38).

Chapters two to seven have a similar style. They open up the main questions under consideration and present the spectrum of major views regarding those questions. Furthermore, the chapters provide the biblical section in which the author offers his biblical warrant, and each concludes with a helpful concise summary of the chapter's argumentation. The chapters also discuss additional questions and implications to what was proposed, including divergent views or potential objections.

Chapter two discusses the question of the unchanging God who suffers for us. Here, topics of divine aseity, immutability and qualified passibility are explored and argued for biblically and philosophically. In terms of the summary of the analysed biblical data, Peckham argues that with regards to the topic at

hand, the following emerges as the biblical warrant: (1) God is the creator of all things and by his will they exist. (2) As Creator, God does not depend on anything for his existence but is the source of all things. God is thus self-existent or *a se*. (3) God needs nothing and cannot depend on anything to be essentially who he is. (4) God does not change morally. (5) God never lies but keeps his promises. God is gracious, exceedingly compassionate, abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness. (6) God changes in relation to creatures; God does new things, enters into back-and-forth covenant relationship, and responds to prayer. (7) God undergoes emotional change, such as “being moved to pity” or “provoked” to anger, made jealous/passionate, and others even describing himself as changing from one emotional state to another. (8) God sometimes “takes pleasure in his people” but also suffers and is sometimes caused to grieve. (9) God’s wrath is always the appropriate, holy response to evil, but God does not want to bring judgement and, being compassionate, often restrains his anger. (10) While God sometimes “regrets” and “relents” in response to creaturely actions, God does not relent *like a human*. God is holy, and his emotions should not be confused or conflated with human emotions (pp. 62–63). Through all these statements Peckham builds up a case for *divine aseity* – yet not pure aseity; *qualified immutability* – yet not strict immutability, and *qualified passibility* – yet not strict passibility. In his words: “[The] God of Scripture is self-existent (aseity) and needs nothing (self-sufficiency), changeless with respect to his essential nature and character (qualified immutability), but experiences relational changes, including emotions because he *freely* created the world and *voluntarily* engages in back-and-forth covenantal relationship with creatures. As such, God is passible in a qualified sense, meaning God is *voluntarily* passible in relation to the world; God *freely* created and *freely* opened himself up to being affected by this world in a way that does not diminish or collapse the Creator-creature distinction” (pp. 70–71).

Chapter three’s focus is on the God of the past, present and future, in other words on the questions of divine omnipresence and eternity. Peckham sums up his biblical model of God and time as follows: (1) Scripture repeatedly affirms that God is eternal; God has no beginning and no end. (2) There is a vast difference between a creature’s relation to time and God’s relation to time. God does not relate to time the way humans do. (3) Scripture represents God as having a history and performing successive actions, depicting God as an active and interactive covenantal God. (4) Numerous passages of Scripture

depict God as enduring in terms of temporal succession, existing from everlasting to everlasting. (5) The Son had glory with the Father before the world existed and the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world. Yet when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son in the incarnation to save the world, and in the future (eschaton) God will rejoice over his people (pp. 100–101). While arguing for the above biblical warrant, Peckham also acknowledges that numerous questions regarding God and time remain open notwithstanding because “Scripture does not articulate a developed philosophy of time.” Nevertheless, as he argues “it is important to affirm a minimal conception of God and time that is compatible with God actually doing the kinds of things that Scripture teaches God does” (p. 101). What this means for Peckham is that we should not think of time “as a container, as if time encompasses God. Rather time is minimally conceived in terms of succession in God’s life” (p. 105). Through various biblical and philosophical points, the chapter is essentially arguing for divine omnipresence, meaning God is eternal yet analogically also temporal – meaning capable of experiencing succession and responding to humans – but relates to time very differently from creatures (p. 110).

While chapters four and five are linked topically, they are also separate in terms of their focus. Chapter four explores the topic of the God who knows everything, i.e. questions of omniscience and foreknowledge, while chapter five investigates the related questions of omnipotence and providence. The common denominator in both chapters is the implication that divine omniscience and foreknowledge at one end and divine omnipotence and providence at the other have on the question of free will. Once again, Peckham’s previous book *The Doctrine of God* has explored these subjects in nuanced detail and hence the debate in these chapters is more measured. Peckham proposes that the God of Scripture is omniscient, and that omniscience includes exhaustive definite foreknowledge. Yet such foreknowledge is not contradictory, either logically or ontologically, to the libertarian free will of creatures. Indeed, for Peckham it is good news that God knows everything and that he “has certain knowledge of all future occurrences” (p. 140). To arrive to this conclusion, Peckham not only utilises biblical data, but also helpfully and importantly taps into the argumentation of Alvin Plantinga and William Lane Craig in order to address the logical fallacy of contradiction between God knowing the future and humans losing libertarian free will (pp. 127–128).

The question of divine omnipotence and related providence has at its core the question of whether God can do anything. "If God controls *everything*, can prayer actually make a difference?" (p. 142) Peckham frames the topic in terms of determinism and indeterminism as he reviews the biblical material and concludes that "biblical passages that emphasize divine sovereignty are consistent with indeterminism" (p. 156). As far as the biblical material is concerned it is important to recognise that creatures sometimes rebel against God and will do otherwise than God commands or desires. Essentially, Peckham's argument in chapter five comes down to suggesting that while God possesses the power to determine events, God also grants libertarian free will to his creation. This is because God is love, and a genuine love relationship requires *consequential* freedom – to act within some non-capricious limits (pp. 169 and 173–174).

Chapter six discusses the no less heavy question of the goodness of God and the problem of evil, or as Peckham suggests, the relationship of the topics of divine faithfulness and omnibenevolence. The questions of why does evil seem to reign in the world and how could God be entirely good and loving given the enormity of evil, are raised alongside the logical problem that evil in the world is inconsistent with the premise that God is omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent (p. 182). The focus in the chapter falls on the philosophical problem of divine goodness and love in the face of extensive evil in the world. Peckham initially offers a discussion on several propositions attempting to address the above contradiction such as Felix Culpa, Sceptical Theism and The Free Will Defence. Peckham criticises these positions as insufficient in explaining adequately divine actions particularly as they relate to the question of why God does not intervene against evil as he did in the past in similar instances. To this end, the author provides the framework of the Cosmic Conflict which serves as the basic biblical motif or warrant (pp. 189–204). At the core of his argument is the notion of God's love which drives divine actions against evil. God's responses to evil are however curtailed since there is a cosmic conflict which is primarily epistemic in nature – involving slanderous allegations against God's character and government in the universe. These allegations must be answered but cannot be defeated by sheer power. Importantly, Peckham argues that in this scenario God agrees to morally limit his actions relative to evil. "In this age, then, there are some evils that God *temporarily* cannot (morally) prevent because doing so would undermine free

will, contravene the rules of engagement, or result in greater evil. This provides a framework for understanding why the entirely good and loving God sometimes does not prevent horrendous evil while upholding divine omnipotence and omniscience and a robust conception of God's providence" (p. 207).

Chapter seven is the last one which explores a specific topic. Here the Trinity of love or divine triunity is discussed. The chapter offers a brief and constructive proposal which affirms the doctrine of the Trinity, understanding the triune God as the Trinity of love. Helpfully Peckham distinguishes between the *core doctrine of the Trinity* and other more speculative conceptions of Godhead which involve relational speculation of inner trinitarian existence. The biblical warrant thus provided in the chapter relates and is limited to the core Trinity doctrine. There are four main tenets which the book discusses biblically in this warrant: (1) There is one and only one God (pp. 212–214); (2) there is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (pp. 214–217); (3) the three persons of the Trinity are distinct from one another (pp. 217–219); and (4) the three persons of the Trinity are fully divine and thus coequal and coeternal (pp. 219–226). The chapter also addresses various views on the presented arguments, including specific textual contexts which may suggest different readings to the one Peckham provides. As the author sees it, his discussion is only providing minimal biblical warrant for creating conceptual coherence of the core Trinity doctrine. "This core Trinity doctrine affirms God's perfect oneness and triunity and the distinctness and (full) divinity of the three persons of the Trinity." According to Peckham, this "involves no contradiction because God is one and three in different respects. God transcends creaturely limitations." God is "the Trinity of love" (p. 247).

With the above statements, the book concludes its developed and nuanced deliberations on divine attributes in chapters two to seven and the last chapter of the book; the following chapter eight is effectively a summary and restatement of the core propositions and findings of the book. Importantly, and not only here, but throughout the whole book, Peckham argues for Scriptural warrant and systematic coherence when it comes to such a complex and conflicting subject as the theology of divine attributes. The task as Peckham sees it must start from Scriptural exploration which should be at the core of what becomes the warrant for the views we hold regarding God. The task must also

Book Review

include acute awareness of the historical, philosophical and theological complexity that is present in the discussion concerning divine nature and attributes. Peckham's final argument in the book becomes an appeal to worship the covenantal God of Scripture, because he is depicted in the biblical material as worthy of worshipping. "The God of Scripture is the most loving but also the most lovable ... [He] is uniquely worthy of worship and unceasing gratitude, obedience, and praise" (p. 267).

While *Divine Attributes* is a stand-alone book and provides a coherent and appropriately nuanced discussion concerning the raised subjects, reading it with *The Doctrine of God* will add to the value of *Divine Attributes* since they complement each other very well. In the current volume, Peckham is able to take the discussion into constructive space and offers a compelling presentation which not only will add a significant voice to the ongoing doctrine of God dialogue, but more importantly, Peckham's book will contribute to clarifying language and conceptual frameworks in Adventist discussions concerning God and his attributes. From the perspective of Adventist systematic theology, *Divine Attributes* is a significant contribution.

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