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Worship in the Book of Revelation

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Introduction

The book of Revelation contains 24 references in which the word “worship” appears, in most instances derived from the Greek *proskuneō*, which means to prostrate oneself to pay homage or obeisance. The root of the verb is *kunein*, the Greek term meaning “to kiss.” For the ancient Greeks worshipping chthonic deities, it involved stooping to kiss the earth.

The first reference to the concept of worship occurs in 1:17: “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last.’”¹ This encounter between John and the Lord sets the tone for the whole book. John’s act of humble devotion and submission is similar to that of Abraham and Daniel, and then God speaks.

It is important to note that John was in an attitude of worship when he received the visions and instructions from the Lord (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), when “in the Spirit” he saw and heard what others could not see and hear. This means that in the context of worship, people should expect to receive insight into the Gospel and the Christian life. In order for that to be possible, the focus in worship must be theocentric.

Theocentric Worship

The most profound and dramatic portrayal of theocentric worship is found in Revelation 4-5. All of the action, the symbols, and the sounds image the power and grace of God in the Gospel. The worshipers in chapter 4 gather around the throne of God. The focus of the liturgical action is on God the Creator. In chapter 5 the focus is on God the Redeemer. Father and Son are praised and glorified in what is,

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no doubt, the most sublime expression of theocentric worship ever to be performed. It provides the church of the last-days a stirring example, and demonstration, of the kind of theocentric worship so badly needed. When such worship is undertaken and experienced by the church, human needs will be met as the God worshiped reaches out in grace and mercy through the Word and touches the hearts and lives of those who seek Him.

Liturgy and Spontaneity. If, as the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* suggests, Revelation was written about A.D. 96 during the reign of Domitian, then it seems that the ritual approach to worship and the use of the *Sanctus* and *Doxology* found in Revelation 4-5, as well as other liturgical elements, reflect at least some of the common worship practice of the early Church.²

On the other hand, the worship depicted is characterized by spontaneity. The singing is spontaneous, brought forth by the environment of heavenly splendor and the presence of Deity. There is a spontaneous prostration by the twenty-four elders in response to the *Sanctus* sung by “the living creatures” (4:9). Such a spontaneous response occurs also in 5:8 when the Lamb takes the scroll from the Father's right hand. These acts are so significant they elicit an immediate spontaneous response from the celestial worshipers. While there is certainly liturgical order and progression, there is also a delightful spontaneity.

Lofty and Majestic Worship. In chapters 4-5 worship is shown in its most lofty form. The grand climax is reached when the whole universe worships God. The “Amen!” (5:14) indicates the great controversy is ended, the work of the Church is finished, and the universe is once again at peace and in harmony with its Creator. A most majestic doxology!

The key expression, “You are worthy,” is directed to the Creator in chapter 4 and to the Redeemer in chapter 5. (Such language was familiar to first century Christians, since “*vere dignus*” were the first words of solemn acclamation directed to an Emperor upon his entrance into a city.) In Revelation's majestic service all created beings surrender their crowns to Father and Son (4:10). Creation and redemption, heaven and earth, are bound together in this glorious act of worship. The centrality of Father and Son in worship is established for Christians forever.

Humble Posture. In 4:10 the 24 elders “fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship [*proskuneō*] him. . . .” In 5:14, following hymns of praise, the 24 elders “fell down and worshiped.” A literal translation would be “fell down and prostrated themselves.” (See also

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Rev 7:11; 11:16; 19:4.) Paul's statement, "He will fall down and worship God" (1 Cor 14:25), in the context of a lengthy discussion on worship, seems to indicate that *proskuneō* was probably part of the worship of the NT Church. Apparently the disciples worshiped the risen Christ in the same manner prior to His glorification, and there is no indication that He objected (Matt 14:33; Matt 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52). Why did the Lord's disciples respond to Him in this way?

They saw Him vested with the omnipotence of God. Overwhelmed by this proof of might, they fell down before him and carried out the proskyneses, exclaiming: 'Truly You are the son of God!' The adoration of the risen Lord has a similar background: Now the Lord stood before the disciples as the manifestly divine Lord. The disciples experienced Jesus' saving power. The revelation of the victor evoked the **PROSKYNESIS**.³

The central issue in the great controversy between God and Satan is crystallized in the question of "Who should we worship?" The Devil even sought the worship and adoration due only to Deity from Jesus: "All this I will give you . . . if you will bow down and worship [*proskuneō*] me" (Matt 4:9; Luke 4:7). After the seven plagues are over, "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent . . . they did not stop worshiping [*proskuneō*] demons, and idols . . ." (Rev 9:20), and "men worshiped [*proskuneō*] the dragon . . . and they also worshiped the beast . . ." (Rev 13:4). The second beast "made the earth and its inhabitants worship [*proskune*] the first beast . . ." (Rev 13:12).

Is not worship the ultimate gesture, sign, testimony acknowledging the dominion of Lord and Lamb? Does the posture reflect attitude and perception? This is spontaneity at its best. Such was Daniel's response when Christ appeared to him. He says, "I was terrified and fell prostrate . . . with my face to the ground" (Dan 8:17-18). What else does one do in the very presence of divinity but adopt an attitude of submissive praise?

Praise and Adoration. It is obvious that praise and submission are the most appropriate responses to the Gospel, the natural consequence of the Gospel. The Lord through Christ created us, and the Lord through the Lamb redeemed us, so we praise God, adore God, giving all glory to Him as we submit our lives to His lordship. Praise is offered by means of action and language. Revelation 4 and 5 portray a dynamic interplay of word, action, and material symbol.⁴ This interplay shapes the worshiper's perception, allowing for a creative and spontaneous response. At such a time action can be as spiritual as

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words. It was not enough for God to declare His love for us; it needed to be acted out in history to have credibility. Similarly, it is not enough for us to declare our love for Him; it must be demonstrated in the obedience of faith and in acts of praise if it, too, is to have credibility.

To enter the presence of the Lord and the Lamb in spoken or sung prayer means to adore Him verbally, to thank Him for who He is and what He does, to confess our sin and to repent in deep humility. Our confession of sin and our confession of faith in Christ give glory to God. The failure to confess sin inhibits praise, just as confessing faith unleashes praise. Such Christian prayer can be called the “supreme moral act.”⁵ In commenting on the mission of the Church to disciple the world, one author says:

The discipleship of the early Christians was evident when in their gatherings they extol their Leader, acknowledge before Him their failures, listen to His words, and seek to know His will for daily living as they challenge and invade the structures of this world.⁶

Praise is intrinsic to the quality of the relationship between the One worshiped and those worshipping. It involves recognition of God’s holiness, respect for His person, Word and will, and joy in His presence. Praise is “an attempt to cope with the abundance of God’s love.”⁷ To praise God is to want to praise Him again and again. Praise is completely voluntary and elicited by God’s love and grace.

Giving God glory is the most natural and proper response to His goodness. The One praised is intrinsically and demonstrably worthy. “The central thrust of the Jewish and Christian tradition is to take up the whole of life into praise of God, making Him central to everything and His glory the goal of the universe.”⁸ In the act of worship the believer joins his life with that of Lord and Lamb and together with other believers constructs a “cathedral of sound.”⁹

Worship Directed to the Deity. The glorified Church, whose worship is portrayed in Revelation 4-5, is enriched by another scene depicting the victorious end-time redeemed before the throne, “they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple . . .” (7:14-15). They are dressed in white robes, they stand “before the throne and in front of the Lamb” with palm branches in their hands, and they cry out “in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (7:9-10). They are the same people identified, while yet on earth, in Revelation 14:1-5.

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The words that are spoken, and the liturgical action, all take place in the presence of the Lord and the Lamb as Creator and Redeemer are praised and adored. The words and actions are not directed to humans, but to the Deity. They recount, recite, the mighty acts of Lord and Lamb in creating and redeeming the world. The entire focus is on the Deity, not on the worshipers.

Words are very often inadequate to express praise and adoration by themselves, as evidenced by the theocentric worship scene in Revelation 4-5. This prophetic scene suggests that “word and gesture belong together.”¹⁰ Authentic Christian worship “draws on the basic human capacities of speech, use of things, spontaneity and silence.”¹¹ Meditative silence is the corollary. When we are silent before the Lord we are able to listen and hear His voice. Some of the most profound and moving worship takes place in an atmosphere of silence.

The idea that worship is a ministry to God, that he loves to be worshipped, and that he made us to worship him dominates the worship of the ancient church. It is early Christian conviction drawn from Revelation 4 and 5. In these chapters, we see the heavenly host gathered around the throne in heaven, singing praises of the Triune God.¹²

Summary. We can only be impressed by the theocentric worship in Revelation. It is not man-centered and narcissistic. The Lord and Lamb are at the center, not human feelings, human experience, or human needs. The worshipers come to meet with Lord and Lamb, to hear them speak, and to respond in faith and obedience. In the contemporary approach it is often an energetic exercise to get people to smile Sabbath morning, to enforce a kind of compulsory friendliness, assuming success to be an indication that everything is spiritually all right. William Willimon perceptively observes:

When is the last time you were afraid on [Sabbath] morning? Our current backslapping conviviality and chumminess with God would seem strange to those who once stammered and shook before the divine, falling flat on their faces before God rather than shouting out a hearty ‘Good morning!’¹³

There are those who would say that contemporary faith is more mature than that of the ancients, when the opposite may actually be the case. We have managed to alter our conception of God from that of the Almighty in the heavens to the “good old boy,” not realizing how

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much we have contributed to the rotting of the religion of our times. A. W. Tozer stated emphatically:

It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.¹⁴

The response of the redeemed to Revelation 4 is keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, to Revelation 5 is living a transformed life. Both responses acknowledge divine dominion and are acted out in worship.

Central Issue in the Great Controversy

We get the clear impression John received everything in chapters 1-10 while lying prostrate before the Lord. Then in chapter 11 he is told to measure the Temple, its altar and its worshipers. This is a type of judgment or assessment of a situation or condition. It is a prelude to chapters 13-14, which constitute a warning concerning true and false worship. To measure the Church is to ascertain whether the life of the Church, its doctrines, work, and worship, are in harmony with the will and revelation of God found in both Old and New Testaments (the “two witnesses” of 11:3). We expect, in harmony with Scripture, not with sociology and/or culture. God’s true worshipers are those who trace their spiritual ancestry to the Bible-believing Christians of the early Church, to apostolic times, not pre-Reformation or Reformation times.

It is hard to imagine a more critical and decisive situation than that described in chapter 13, which sets the scene for the equally crucial and dramatic events described in chapter 14. A blasphemous religious system united with influential political power (in the guise of true religion) is preaching a false gospel that wins people throughout the world to worship a false god. Furthermore, it is a coercive ministry, because death is the consequence for refusing to worship the false god (13:15).

No greater travesty of the Christian religion could be conceived. It is so contradictory to the nature of God, so inhumane, so out of harmony with the biblical message of atonement, that it could have been conceived and executed only by “Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (12:9). Saddest of all is the realization that this devilish evangelism will be supported and fostered by those who should be on the side of the true God, alongside the true church, preaching the true Gospel and winning people to worship the true God.

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The Bible warns us of the Devil's desire, his perverted plan: "He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thess 2:4). The church is the temple of God (2 Cor 6:16). An unprecedented and extremely critical situation will develop on earth due to the enthusiastic evangelism of the Devil's disciples. It must be countered. God acts! Instantly! Rapidly! Revelation 14 provides us with the picture of God's response to the foreseen devastating and diabolical threat.

In contrast to Satan standing on the seashore waiting for the emergence of the church that would allow him to rule, the Lamb of God stands on Mt. Zion surrounded by His end-time faithful ones. He is in charge! All will be well! John the revelator hears the mighty chorus from the heavenly worshipers singing the new song of redemption (Rev 4-5), sung only by those who "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (14:4).

The true church is alive and well. Out of its celestial worship comes its evangelism. Swiftly the eternal Gospel comes forth to challenge the false gospel (14:6). The challenge is universal and comes with "a loud voice" (vs. 7). All people everywhere will hear it. The call is to "worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (vs. 7).

But there is more. The false church is exposed for what it is and is called "Babylon" the fallen. The word conjures up all the apostasy, all the corruption, all the paganism of that ancient kingdom and its diabolical king (vs. 8). Then comes the last word from the throne of God. A loud voice cries so that its message pierces the ears of a world gone deaf to the truth. The judgment of God is greater than the threats of Satan. "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark . . . he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath" (vss. 9-10).

There we have it—the fundamental issue in the age-old controversy between God and Satan: Who is to be ultimately worshiped by mankind and the universe? Seen in this light, worship is certainly not an irrelevant issue for the Seventh-day Adventist church. It is an issue we avoid only at our peril.

Furthermore, worship is not just a central issue in terms of theology, as though it were merely a subject to be discussed and provocatively analyzed. Worship is central for the life of the Adventist church primarily in terms of practice. In other words, the Seventh-day Adventist church, which we believe to be the ecclesiastical manifestation of the last-day church in our time, must be a worshipping church. Worship must be central to its life, for out of worship comes evangelism.

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Worshippers Identified

Between Revelation 13 and the call to worship in Revelation 14:6-12, there is a vivid description of the true worshipers of God (Rev 14:1-5). The call to worship in chapter 14 is given to the world through a specific people. Revelation 14:1-5 identifies and describes them. They are gathered on Mt. Zion, which is a “symbol of rejoicing and security”¹⁵ as well as a place of revelation.¹⁶ God’s people can only stand firm on the rock of faithfulness and endurance. They are with the Lamb, which indicates “triumph over the beast and its image.”¹⁷ They are identified as God’s people, the redeemed and faithful remnant who have His name written on their foreheads.

In contrast to the blasphemy of the beast (13:5-6), a heavenly voice comes from the 144,000.¹⁸ In contrast to Revelation 13 it is a most welcome sound. They sing a new song (vs. 3)! A song of praise, triumph and victory. That which is “new” about it are the events of sacred history directly related to the life and ministry of Christ: His birth, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, High Priestly ministry, and promise to return. The beast makes an image speak (13:15), but only the redeemed can sing the new song. They have been released, by knowledge of the truth and by grace, from slavery to the beast(s) (Rev 13:1, 11). The sound of praise they make is “like that of harpists,” the harp being an instrument uniquely adapted to the praise of God (Ps 149:3; 150:3).

The new song is sung to God, not to humanity. It is not amusement or entertainment. It rejoices in God and in new life, not in life itself. It rejoices in redemption by grace, newness and transformation. The song is reminiscent of the one sung by the Israelites rejoicing in deliverance from Egypt (Exod 15:1-18; Ps 33:3; 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 99:9, Isa 42:10).

Newness of life is indicated by the fact that the singers are pure and undefiled (vs. 4). They have not committed spiritual fornication/ adultery with “the great prostitute” (Rev 17:1), identified as “Babylon the great” (Rev 17:5; 18:2ff). They have cast off adultery and refuse to adore or follow “the beasts” (Rev 13:2, 11). Spiritual virgins keep aloof from Babylon, do not yield to the temptation of spiritual sensuality, and are “offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb” (14:4). Those who yield to falsehood will not stand on Mt. Zion.

The redeemed themselves are the ultimate offering to God. The supreme act of worship is the complete surrender of being and life to God. This is not an offering of self to humanity but to God, to be used redemptively in the world. Tangibly, this means obeying the commandments of God and remaining faithful to Jesus Christ (vs. 12).

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To be “offered as firstfruits” may mean willingness to pay the ultimate price for adherence to the truth—sacrificial people in the final sense.

“No lie was found in their mouths” (vs. 5). Because they serve God, they will not blur distinctions between good and evil, right and wrong, which would only mislead humanity. They speak no false prophecies, but are people of the truth.

They live and speak the truth because they are “blameless” (*amōmos* unblemished), uncontaminated by false ideas and ways of life. They allow God’s commandments (His revealed will) and the eternal gospel to establish beliefs and lifestyle. The followers of the Lamb are distinguished by their possession of the truth, which is the absence, not just the opposite, of falsehood. They will have nothing to do with falsehood, not even a mixture of truth and falsehood.¹⁹ All idolatry is considered spiritual fornication and/or adultery.²⁰ C. Mervyn Maxwell reminds us that

the remnant was promised that their sins would all be forgiven (Jer 50:20), they would be found without iniquity (Jer 50:20; Is 4:2-5), and free from all lies (Zeph 3:13). They would stand on Mount Zion (Mic 4:7; Is 4:2-5; Ob 17; Joel 2:32) in the presence of God and of the Lamb, participating in the glorious singing.²¹

Revelation 14:1-5 identifies and characterizes the people to whom and through whom the call to worship God comes in a crisis time. They are in the position and condition to receive and proclaim the message to worship God and the Lamb. They are not common humanity or those looking for the sacred in the secular. They are the redeemed who have been transformed by the power of grace and love the sacred for its own sake.

The Primary Activity of the Church

The end-time call to worship is given to the church and world by the “first” angel (Rev 14:6-7). The call is addressed to a humanity idolatrous and superstitious, seduced by the beast and the false prophet (13:3-8, 11-17). The call to worship God is seen in contrast to worship of the beast and its image, the ultimate transgression of God’s commandments.

The message of the first angel involves more than an announcement that “the hour of his judgment has come.” It declares what the whole world, and especially the Church, should be doing in light of the present judgment: “Fear God and give him glory.” Only to acknowledge we are indeed in the time of judgment is in itself an incomplete response to this message. The outcome of proclaiming the

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“eternal gospel” increases the numbers of those who worship God, but the ultimate goal of evangelism is to make true worshipers. Thus, evangelism “is the extension of the Church’s worship life into the world.”²²

Therefore, the primary activity of the remnant Church, and its most distinguishing mark, is worship. Seventh-day Adventists are people of submission and of praise. They are a people called out to “proclaim my glory among the nations” (Isa 66:19).

Roy Allen Anderson points out that the eternal Gospel (Rev 14:6) has past and future dimensions: the good news of salvation from sin because of Calvary, and the good news of the imminent return of Christ.²³ This last, of course, not only because of Calvary but because of the High Priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

However, verse 7 provides additional and specific content of that Gospel as it impinges upon the ministry of the last day Church and upon the world at the time that Church ministers. The eternal Gospel to be preached by the last day Church is a specific call and invitation to “fear” God, to give “glory” to God, and to “worship” God, precisely because the hour of His “judgment” is at hand.²⁴

The two fundamental expressions of worship are “fear” God, and give “glory” to God. The first has ethical/moral overtones and obligations involving obedience as the evidence of faith. The second has liturgical overtones involving the act of worship itself—for individuals and for the corporate body of believers already identified and known as the “remnant.” In this last connection it is important to note the Bible does not recognize a remnant *person*, only a remnant *people*. The remnant is a corporate concept. For example, the Lord’s Prayer was not given for individuals but for the corporate worship of a people. It is addressed to “*Our* Father” (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2). The primary concern of those who pray “after this manner” (KJV) is not for themselves, but for the rule of God in the world and in their corporate lives. In the context of the preadvent judgment, to “fear” God has individual consequences in terms of salvation: to give “glory” to God has corporate consequences in terms of the Church’s mission to the world.

Theocentric Worship. This call to worship is a purely theocentric call. There is no trace of anthropocentricity. It is God who is to be feared, not man. It is God to whom glory is to be given, not man. It is God who is to be worshiped, not man. The worship service is primarily an occasion for God to speak, which is reflected liturgically in that He speaks first, and then His people respond.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not escaped the shift from theocentric to anthropocentric worship taking place within Protestantism. However, Seventh-day Adventists must recognize this

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shift is out of harmony with, and contradictory to, Revelation 14:6-7. Instead of following the pressures of culture our Church must remain faithful to biblical norms. Worship informed and inspired by the Word of God is the answer to the anthropocentric shift.

The Great Controversy and Worship. Nowhere is the great controversy between God and Satan, between Christ and Antichrist, more manifest, more dramatized, than in the worship of the last day Church. This is because the Church will be at times in direct contrast, indeed conflict, with earthly states and/or apostate ecclesiastical organizations and their officials. This is precisely why the worship of Christians and any form of totalitarianism, religious or secular, are incompatible. Worship is a political as well as religious act, in the sense that it challenges all who would usurp the authority of God. Faithful Sabbath-keeping is a part of this challenge. God alone is entitled to the acclamation and adoration of His people.

This worship by God's people is not just a statement that impacts life on the earth. Its impact is cosmic in that ultimately all powers and principalities will bow and confess the Lordship of Christ (Phil 2:9-11). As Peter Brunner says,

When the congregation in worship professes the dominion of God the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the Spirit, it does something that reaches far beyond this earthly time. With this profession, the congregation anticipates what all created beings will do either voluntarily or involuntarily at the end of all things (Phil.2:10). The worship of the congregation opens the door to admit the last things, and already participates, in its infirmity and stammering imperfection, in what will one day take place, and is already taking place, before the throne of God. This is a 'final' word that we are here trying to express on worship. The entire way of salvation, which God has traversed with man since creation, reaches its goal here. In the realm of the earthly creature, God again finds a mirror here which catches and reflects His glory.²⁵

New Song. A Christian congregation's worship is a participation with all the saints in the singing of the new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb. When the Church worships Lord and Lamb on earth it enters, as it were, the heavenly sanctuary to join the heavenly host in the singing of the new song. The Church's acclamation in praise is the "medium of perfect communion between God and creature"; it is the "last word (*logos*) with which the church speaks about God (*Theos*)."²⁶ It anticipates a perfect relationship in which both the human struggle against sin and resistance to the work of the Spirit is ended because of the victory of Christ (Gal 5:13-25). Nothing is there to hinder the

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expression of that relationship in worship. No longer are human needs foremost in the worshiper's mind. The worshiper is able to concentrate fully and completely upon offering Lord and Lamb the praise due to them for the victory They have made possible. There is nothing more to do except to glorify Lord and Lamb who have done all, whose work has been finished on earth and has produced the fruit of full salvation and restoration.

In the Church's proclamation to the world, and in its profession of faith, the end-time struggle is evident. However, as Brunner says, the hymn of praise stands "at the end of all struggle. It is basically a hymn of victory."²⁷

In this final word which the creature may say about God, the creature exists only for God, without design, without purpose, undividedly, fulfilling its own essence by the fact that it is no longer, and needs no longer to be, anything but the perfect mirror of God's glory. Thus the hymn of praise is an end-time sign, indicating that God will one day be all in all.²⁸

It is no wonder that so much worship and praise is found in the Bible's last book (Rev 1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:4; 19:1, 7). It is obvious—given the end-time message and mission—the end-time Church responds fully to the first angel's message and gives glory to Lord and Lamb in worship.

Distinction between Babylon and End-time Remnant. In order to worship God fully and freely, in order to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), God's people must recognize Babylon's (apostate Christianity's) fallenness and "come out of her" (Rev 18:4) so they will not "share in her sins." The major sin is the proclamation of "a false god winning people to worship him by means of a false message preached by a false church to the whole world . . . Heaven sees the situation as a divine opportunity and as a prelude to the return of the Lord to earth."²⁹ In addition, the message of Revelation 14:9-11 is a dire warning to those who continue to worship the false god.

Verse 12 further identifies the true worshipers of God, indicating the situation described in the previous verses calls for the kind of commitment referred to as "patient [steadfast] endurance" like that of an Olympic athlete. There is to be no yielding in the time of crisis, rather a stubborn, single-minded purpose will prevail. Such endurance in the face of spiritual adultery and militant religious apostasy must be accepted even unto death (vs. 13). These are the people spoken of as "blessed" dead, admonished to "be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

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Distinctions between Revelation 13 and 14 are clear and unambiguous. They call for decisive action, for clear-cut decisions based upon revealed truth, not upon the ideas of men which often blur distinctions and make accommodation which is the “characteristic vice of all idolatry and worldliness.”³⁰ The book of Revelation calls for the kind of mature religious faith that is willing to pay the price of such distinction.

Grand Climax

We cannot act on the basis of ambiguous and uncertain religious beliefs. Only the Church with a certain and unambiguous message has the right, the authority, the audacity, to call people to decision and action. This is especially relevant and critical when judgment is imminent. In the context of a cosmic conflict the world is being called unequivocally to worship, expressed by total loyalty to God and His revealed truth no matter what the cost.

The consciousness of the time of the preadvent judgment moves believers to fear, glorify, and worship God. To lose that consciousness is to lose the sense of urgency for worship and mission on the part of the very Church to which, and through which, the call is made. The “hour of his judgment” (Rev 14:7) impacts the life of that Church. While it is identified as the New Testament Church in terms of origin and belief, it must bear witness in the final *krisis* (judgment) time of history. Its heritage needs constantly to be assessed and repeated in the ceremonies of worship during the last phase of the Church’s life and witness. The consciousness of the hour of the preadvent judgment ought to accomplish for the Church what all the years of formation and reformation did only partially—a complete spiritual surrender to—Lord and Lamb, demonstrated in consistent individual and corporate worship and living.

There can be no compromise with evil on the part of the eschatological Church. No truce with the Devil. The Christian community has been charged by its Lord “to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3). The Church was always intended to be an invasion force, permeating culture and its institutions.

The Church does this primarily by its confession concerning Jesus. He is Lord (Phil 2:11; 1 Cor 12:3); He is the Christ, the Messiah (1 John 5:1); He is the Son of God (1 John 4:15). Such confession angers the nations (Rev 11:18), and enrages the “dragon” who makes war against “those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17). In the affirmation “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3) is bound up the content of the Church’s confession, proclamation, and

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motivation for its worship and mission. It is the supreme challenge to any other deity or authority.

The response of God's people in this hour is to worship Him more fervently in dedicated obedience and joyful praise. In the "hour of his judgment" the opinions and philosophies of men do not stand the test of reliability. The Church rests its case on the surety of the Word of God.

To be sure, the Christian gives glory to God by an obedient life, but there is more than an ethical/moral dimension to this call to worship. In view of Revelation 4-5 and 14:6-7, Tozer is right in his observation: "The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him—and of her."³¹ God would have a people who acknowledge the dominion and authority and rule of Lord and Lamb. In its corporate worship the remnant Church enters by faith into the heavenly sanctuary and joins the worship of the angelic beings in anticipation of the great marriage supper of the Lamb at the end of the age (Rev19:7-9).

To say of worship, "It doesn't meet my needs!" or "I don't get anything out of it!" suggests the center of worship is the worshiper. No wonder we miss God! No wonder little of real value seldom happens! No wonder church-going becomes a bore! No wonder God's Word is often buried beneath the rubbish of human self-elevation! Worship is in grave danger of becoming just another entree in the smorgasbord of activities planned to meet every possible human need, and usually failing to do so, failing because the real need is to draw near to God.

If in genuine worship of God a human need is met, it is a by-product, because "the main gift we receive is God."³² In the context of the judgment age in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church lives and ministers, an extremely self-centered and humanistic age, the radicality of worship is indicated by Revelation 14:6-7. When it comes to the planning and leading of worship, "The true prophet is more intent on interpreting the nature and working of God than on fulfilling the needs and wishes of the people."³³ A renewed theocentric experience of acclaiming Lord and Lamb would result in a renewal of both worship and evangelism.

Without a perspective of sacred history, reenacted, illustrated, demonstrated in its corporate worship, the Advent movement will become imprisoned within present culture, perhaps even within its own subculture. The present moment in history becomes the norm. The roots of Adventist worship are not in the 16th or 19th centuries, but in the Old Testament and early Church practices, particularly as represented by the book of Revelation.

HOLMES: WORSHIP IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The sound of the seventh trumpet signals the approaching end of the controversy and announces the final day of deliverance (Rev 11:15). Heavenly voices declare, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." In response to the resounding declaration of the ultimate victory, the twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth (Rev 11:16-19).

Worship is a sacred drama and as such is both the proclamation and the acting out of the Gospel story that interprets and provides meaning to human existence. "Human life on this earth began with God in worship, and it is to end with God in worship."³⁴ Just as two Sabbaths are like two hands enclosing something special, so between the first worship on earth and the last is the whole history of God's people.

The fundamental need of the contemporary Adventist worshiper is to be enabled to live faithfully, courageously, and obediently during the final events of the great controversy and in the midst of a corrupt world system. Adventist worship will meet this spiritual need only when the Lord and the Lamb are its primary focus, when They are glorified, praised, as the only reliable and dependable Source of overcoming power and grace. As Lind says,

The radical nature of the biblical faith is evident precisely at the point of worship: the affirmation that community is founded upon and maintained by Yahweh's act of grace to which the community responds by corporate acts of praise (faith) and surrender, the acts of worship.³⁵

Perhaps the reason why we do not give glory to God as we should is because, "God's grace is no longer a gift to us" as Willimon says, "it is so utterly expected. It is our right, our privilege, our achievement. This is the blasphemy against which the prophets spoke."³⁶ The struggle of the last-day Church is the same as that of ancient Israel and the early Church: externally with the "Babylon" influence (Rev 14:8; 18:2-5), the forces of evil and apostasy as represented by the beast in Revelation 13, and internally with the preservation of the faith in the face of doubt and skepticism.

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The tragic “Fallen! Fallen!” (Rev 18:2) spoken by the angel about the apostate church, and the “Woe! Woe!” (18:10, 16, 19) cried by those on earth who witness her sad demise, are followed by the joyous and triumphant “Hallelujah!” (19:1,3,4,5,6) from heaven. With a roar like thunder the great hymn is shouted in heaven by the redeemed:

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants (19:1-2).

Again they shout! “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever” (19:3). A voice then comes from the throne bidding the heavenly worshippers to “Praise our God.” The shouted response returns, an immense roaring chorus:

Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear (19:6-8).

Could it be that a vital element in the loud cry of Adventist missions is the remnant community’s acclaiming its adoration of Lord and Lamb? Could it be that the most effective way to combat the forces arrayed against the faith and against the faithful is to meet them with the choir (cf. 2 Chron 20:21-22)? The Christian religion is not just about morality and character, it is about proclamation and acclamation. Righteousness, peace, and “joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17) are qualities of the kingdom of God. Joy in the Lord is a primary fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).

Ellen G. White comments on the significance of praise for Seventh-day Adventist worshippers in the context of the great controversy and in light of the grand climax:

we shall praise far more than complain. . . .The language of the heart will not be selfish murmuring and repining. Praise, like clear-flowing streams, will come from God’s truly believing ones.³⁷

The temple of God is opened in heaven, and the threshold is flushed with the glory which is for every church that will love God and keep His commandments. . . .We shall catch the themes of song and thanksgiving of the heavenly choir round about the throne. When Zion shall arise and shine, her light will be most penetrating, and precious songs of praise and thanksgiving will be heard in the assemblies of the saints. Murmuring and complaining over little disappointments will cease. As we apply the golden eyesalve we shall see the glories beyond. Faith will cut through the heavy shadow of Satan, and we shall see our Advocate offering up the incense of His own merits in our behalf.³⁸

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The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. . . . Oh, that we could all realize the nearness of heaven to earth! . . . Let us remember that our praises are supplemented by the choirs of the angelic host above.³⁹

Notes

- 1 All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 Such a development of liturgical practice of itself does not necessarily represent a drift toward apostasy. That which constitutes apostasy is false theology.
- 3 Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 211-212.
- 4 C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1984), pp. 18-19.
- 5 Millard C. Lind, *Biblical Foundations for Christian Worship* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), p. 40.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 7 Daniel W. Hardy and David F. Ford, *Praising and Knowing God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), p. 1.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
- 10 Brunner, *Worship*, p. 212.
- 11 Hardy/Ford, p. 1.
- 12 Robert E. Webber, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 40.
- 13 William H. Willimon, *The Bible: A Sustaining Presence in Worship* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1981), p. 89.
- 14 A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), pp. 9-10. While Tozer's observation was made in 1961, the current state of affairs indicates an even worsening situation at the end of the twentieth century.
- 15 J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1975), p. 233.
- 16 Compare Hebrews 12:1-29, especially vs. 22: "But you have come to Mt. Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly . . ."
- 17 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980), p. 825.
- 18 The 144,000 is an allusion to the OT remnant which has been redeemed and protected by God to reestablish the nation and deliver her from all enemies preparatory to the day of wrath. See Obad 16-17; Joel 3-4; Jer 2:2-3, 23; Zeph 3:12-13.
- 19 See Zeph 3:9-14.
- 20 See Jer 2:26-28; 3:6-10.
- 21 C. Mervyn Maxwell, "The Remnant in Adventist History." (Unpublished manuscript, 1989), p. 8.
- 22 Holmes, p. 141.

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23 Roy Allen Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1953), p. 150.

24 See William Altink, "1 Chronicles 16:8-36 as Literary Source for Revelation 14:6-7," *AUSS*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 1984, pp. 187-196, and "Theological Motives for the Use of 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 as Background for Revelation 14:6-7," *AUSS*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Autumn 1986, pp. 211-221, for a discussion of these four terms. Whether 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 was actually and consciously used by the writer of Revelation as a literary source or background may be debatable, but the parallels are striking, and we are indebted to Altink for calling them to our attention.

25 Brunner, p. 207.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 Holmes, p. 40.

30 *The Interpreters Bible*, Vol. XII, 12 vols, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 592.

31 Tozer, p. 12.

32 Willimon, p. 34.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

34 Holmes, p. 30.

35 Lind, p. 56.

36 Willimon, pp. 78-79.

37 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, 9 Vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), p. 367.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 366-367.

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The Remnant Church

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On October 22, 1844, thousands of eager Christians in the United States waited for the second Advent of Christ. They were disappointed, because they had misunderstood what Daniel 8:14 teaches about the judgment. But out of this disappointment came the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the first few years, the group-identity of our spiritual forefathers centred around five doctrinal pillars, all of them beginning with an “S”: the Sabbath, the second coming, the sanctuary, the Spirit of Prophecy and the state of the dead.

The Sabbath, the second coming, and the state of the dead are generally not questioned within the church. However, 150 years after the beginnings of our church, the sanctuary and the Spirit of prophecy are very much under scrutiny; and there are Seventh-day Adventists today who deny these two pillars, or who modify them to such an extent that they are hardly recognizable. The result is an identity crisis in our church. Who are we? Why are we here? Some of our people are no longer sure that we are, in fact, God’s remnant church.

The Witness of Scripture

As far back as Martin Luther, Christians have recognized that God has an invisible church which consists of members from all Christian churches, because there are faithful members in all communions, including that of Rome. They have accepted Christ as their personal Savior, and they are counted as His people. Therefore, in Revelation 18:4, in the time of the end, the call is made, “Come out of her [Babylon] my people.” Many of God’s people are still in Babylon; they belong to God’s invisible church. At the time of the “loud cry” of Revelation 18:4, they will come out and join God’s visible remnant church.

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That God has a visible remnant church in the time of the end is clearly taught in Revelation 12. “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and to His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand and sixty days” (vss. 1-6, NKJV).

Adventist historicists believe that the woman is a symbol of the church (see Isa 54:5,6; 2 Cor 11:2); the dragon is Satan (vs. 9); the man child is Christ (cf. Rev 19:15); and the 1,260 prophetic days refer to the period of papal supremacy from the sixth to the end of the eighteenth century (538-1798).

In verses 7-12 we have an interlude explaining where Satan came from. The story continues in verse 13: “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring [the remnant of her seed, KJV], who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Verses 13-15 describe in symbolic terms the persecution of the Christian church, first by the Roman empire and later by the apostate Roman church. In verse 16, the earth (personified) helps the church by providing a safe haven on the newly discovered continent of America, thereby symbolically swallowing up the persecuting armies (see Rev 17:15).

In verse 17, we are now in the time after the 1,260 day period, that is, in the nineteenth century. Satan, seeing that he has been unable to wipe out God’s faithful people, is angry with a particular group of people called “the rest of her offspring.” The symbolism in verse 17 is

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changed; no longer is the focus on the woman—symbol of God’s people, the invisible church, throughout the ages—but on a particular group, “the rest of her offspring,” the visible remnant church. The invisible church (the woman) does not cease to exist at the end of the 1,260 years. There are still many of God’s people in all Christian churches, but the focus is now on the visible remnant church of God.

Only twice in this chapter is an offspring of the woman mentioned. The first one is the male child in verse 5, the Messiah; the second, “the rest of her offspring,” the remnant church. Both times the offspring of the woman is clearly identified, supporting the view that “the rest of her offspring” is the visible, not the invisible, remnant church.

Identifying Marks. Two identifying marks, or signs, are given of this remnant church: (1) They keep the commandments of God, and (2) they have the testimony of Jesus.

Whatever commandments we may want to include in the first mark, we must certainly include the Ten Commandments. Thus, the first identifying sign of the remnant church is their loyalty to God’s commandments, all His commandments, including the fourth, the Sabbath commandment. God, in Revelation 12:17, says, “At the end of time I will have a visible church—the remnant church—which will be recognized by the fact that they keep the commandments as I have given them in the beginning, including the Sabbath commandment.”

In the time of the apostles and the early church this would not have been a special sign, because they all kept the Sabbath; but today, when most Christians keep Sunday, the Sabbath has indeed become a distinguishing mark.

The second identifying mark is “the testimony of Jesus.” But what does this phrase mean? The expression “testimony of Jesus” (*marturia Iesou*) occurs six times in the book of Revelation (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10 [twice]; 20:4). Two grammatically possible explanations concerning its meaning have been put forward. The first view takes *marturia Iēsou* as an objective genitive and interprets it as man’s witness to Christ.¹ Thus, the war mentioned in 12:17 refers to the “persecutions against all individuals of the church who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus.”² The second view takes *marturia Iesou* as a subjective genitive and understands the testimony of Jesus as the self-revelation of Jesus—His own testimony.³

A study of the word *marturia* in the Johannine literature, where it occurs twenty-one times, indicates that it is used fourteen times in a genitive construction that is clearly subjective: for example, John 1:19; 3:11, 32, 33; 5:31; etc. The objective idea of “witness about” or “witness to” in John’s writings is consistently expressed by the preposition *peri* (about, concerning) with the verb *martureō* “to witness, testify.” He

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never uses the noun *marturia* (testimony, witness) with an objective genitive construction by itself. For example, John 1:7, “To bear witness to the light” [*martureō + peri*]; 5:31, “If I bear witness to myself” [*martureō + peri*]; 1 John 5:9, “He has borne witness to his Son” [*martureō + peri*].⁴

Revelation 1:1, 2. The introduction to the book of Revelation sets forth the source and general content of the book (the revelation of Jesus Christ). Verse 2 states that John bore witness to “the Word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus.”

“The Word of God” is commonly understood to refer to what God says; therefore, the expression “the testimony of Jesus” (in parallel to “the Word of God”) must mean the testimony which Jesus Himself gives. How did Jesus testify of Himself? While here on earth, He testified in person to the people in Palestine. After His ascension, He spoke through His prophets.

Revelation 1:9, 10. Before speaking in detail about his first vision, John introduces himself. He identifies who he is: John, “your brother”; where he is: on Patmos; why he is there: on account of “the Word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus”; and when he received the vision: “on the Lord’s day.”

The parallelism between “the Word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus” is again clearly discernible. “The Word of God” in John’s time referred to the Old Testament, and “the testimony of Jesus” to what Jesus had said in the gospels and through His prophets, like Peter and Paul. Thus, both genitives can be taken as subjective genitives. They describe the content of John’s preaching, for which he was banished. Therefore, in Revelation 19:10 we read the explanation, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

However, what is “the spirit of prophecy?” This phrase occurs only once in the Bible, only in this text. The closest parallel to it in the Bible is found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. There Paul refers to the Holy Spirit, who, among other charismata, gives the gift of prophecy; and the person who receives this gift is called a prophet (cf. 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11).

Now, just as in 1 Corinthians 12:28, those who have the gift of prophecy (vs. 10) are called prophets, so in Revelation 22:8,9, those who have the spirit of prophecy (in Rev 19:10) are called prophets.

Please note the parallelism between Revelation 19:10 and 22:8, 9:

19:10

And I fell at his feet
to worship him.

22:8,9

I fell down to worship before the feet
of the angel who showed me these things.

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But he said to me,
“See that you do not do that!
I am your fellow servant, and
of your brethren who have
the testimony of Jesus.
Worship God! For the testi-
mony of Jesus is the spirit
of prophecy.”

Then he said to me,
“See that you do not do that
For I am your fellow servant,
and of your brethren the prophets,
and of those who keep the words
of this book. Worship God.”

The situation in both passages is the same. John falls at the feet of the angel to worship. The words of the angel’s response are almost identical, yet the difference is significant. In 19:10, the brethren are identified by the phrase, “Who have [hold] the testimony of Jesus.” In 22:9, the brethren are simply called “prophets.”

If the Protestant principle of interpreting scripture by scripture means anything, this comparison must lead to the conclusion that “the spirit of prophecy” in 19:10 is not the possession of all church members in general, but only of those who have been called by God to be prophets.

That this is not purely an Adventist interpretation can be seen from the writings of other scholars. The Lutheran scholar Hermann Strathmann, for example, says:

According to the parallel 22:9 the brothers referred to are not believers in general, but the prophets. Here, too, they are characterised as such. This is the point of verse 10c. If they have the *marturia Iesou*, they have the spirit of prophecy, i.e., they are prophets, like the angel, who simply stands in the service of *marturia Iesou*.⁵

Similarly, James Moffat explains:

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” This prose marginal comment specifically defines the brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus as possessors of prophetic inspiration. The testimony of Jesus is practically equivalent to Jesus testifying.⁶

The Witness of the Targumim

The Jewish readers in John’s day knew what was meant by the expression “Spirit of prophecy.” They would have understood the expression as a reference to the Holy Spirit, who imparts the prophetic gift to man.

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Rabbinic Judaism equated the OT expressions “Holy Spirit,” “Spirit of God,” or “Spirit of Yahweh” with “the Spirit of prophecy,” as can be seen in the frequent occurrence of this term in the Targums (written translations of the OT in Aramaic):

And Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of prophecy from the Lord? (Gen. 41:38).

In what will it be known that I have found mercy before Thee but in the converse of Thy Shekinah with us, that distinguishing signs may be wrought for us, in the withholdment of the Spirit of prophecy from the nations, and by Thy speaking by the Holy Spirit to me and to Thy people, that we may be distinguished from all the peoples upon the face of the earth? (Ex.33:16).

And the Lord said to Mosheh, Take to thee Jehoshua bar Nun, a man upon whom abideth the Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord (Num. 27:18).⁷

Sometimes the term “Spirit of prophecy” refers simply to the Holy Spirit, but in many cases it refers to the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit, as is made clear by the context of the Masoretic text.

Commenting on this expression in the Targums, J.P. Schäfer says:

Thence first of all it proves that the term “Spirit of prophecy” is closer to the MT than the term “Holy Spirit.” Moreover an examination of the verses where TO uses the term “Spirit of prophecy” shows that in almost all cases there is a direct relationship to the prophecy in the biblical context. The translation “Spirit of prophecy,” although not in the strictest sense literal, is almost always stipulated through the MT (Gen. 41:38 - Joseph had the “Spirit of prophecy” because he was able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream; Num. 11:25 - The Spirit that settled on the 70 Elders, according to the MT, brought about “prophesying”; Num. 24:2 - Balaam prophesied concerning Israel). In other words, the term “Spirit of prophecy” describes a clearly delineated situation, namely, the Holy Spirit sent from God who imparts the prophetic gift to man.⁸

F.F. Bruce comes to the same conclusion and says:

The expression “the Spirit of prophecy” is current in post-biblical Judaism: it is used, for example, in a Targumic circumlocution for the Spirit of Yahweh which comes upon this or that prophet. Thus the Targum of Jonathan renders the opening words of Isaiah 61:1 as “The Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord God is upon me.” The thought expressed in Revelation 19:10 is not dissimilar to that already quoted from 1. Peter 1:11 where “the Spirit of Christ” is said to have borne advanced testimony in the Old Testament prophets. There too Jesus

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is the theme of the witness borne by the prophetic Spirit; the prophets did not know who the person or what the time would be, but at last the secret is out: the person is Jesus; the time is now.

In Revelation 19:10, however, it is through Christian prophets that the Spirit of prophecy bears witness. What the prophets of pre-Christian days foretold is proclaimed as an accomplished fact by the prophets of the new age, among whom John occupies a leading place.⁹

Summary Of Revelation 12:17

Turning now to Revelation 12:17, we can say that “the rest of her offspring . . . keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which is the Spirit of prophecy, or the prophetic gift.

This interpretation is strengthened by a study of the Greek word *echo*, meaning “to have.” This word indicates possession. The remnant have a gift from God—the prophetic gift. If the testimony of Jesus were our testimony about Jesus, John would have written something like this: “They keep the commandments of God and testify about Jesus,” or, “they bear testimony to Jesus.” But the Greek word *echo* is never used in the sense “to bear a witness.”¹⁰

In summary we can say that the visible remnant church, which according to prophecy exists after the 1,260 day period (after 1798), has two specific identifying marks:

1. They keep the commandments of God, including the Sabbath command as God has given it.
2. They have the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy, or the prophetic gift in their midst.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its very inception in 1863, has always claimed these identifying signs for itself. As Adventists we proclaim the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath; and we believe that as a church we have the testimony of Jesus, that is, that God manifested Himself in the life and work of Ellen G. White.

Thus, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a church prophetically foreseen, not just one church among many. God has called this church into existence for a very specific purpose: to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages (Rev 14:6-13).

Our pioneers were quite certain that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Revelation 12:17. G.I. Butler, General Conference president from 1871 to 1888, wrote in an article entitled “Visions and Dreams”:

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Is there then no people in whom these conditions combine in these last days? We believe they truly do in Seventh-day Adventists. They have everywhere claimed to be the “remnant” church for the last 25 years . . .

Do they keep the commandments of God? Every one knowing anything about this people can answer that this is the most important part of their faith . . .

In regard to the Spirit of prophecy, it is a remarkable fact that from the first of their existence as a people, Seventh-day Adventists have claimed that it has been in active exercise among them.¹¹

Ellen White firmly believed that Seventh-day Adventists were God’s remnant church and that Revelation 12:17 applied to them. Seventh-day Adventists “are God’s representatives upon the earth.”¹² “We have the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy.”¹³ And she counselled, “Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days.”¹⁴

And we still believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the visible remnant church and that the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks.

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.¹⁵

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are members of God’s remnant church. However, this identification with the remnant church does not accord us an exclusive status with God. Salvation is not guaranteed through church membership in any church. We are saved as individuals, not as a church. But being a part of God’s remnant church means that we participate in proclaiming God’s special end-time message—the three angels’ messages—to the world.

The prophetic origin of the Adventist movement and God’s gracious guidance through the prophetic gift of Ellen White should make us more aware of the responsibility we as the remnant church have, and it should spur us on to finish the work God has given us to do.

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Notes

¹ M. E. Osterhaven, "Testimony," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1975), 5:682; see also John J. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London, 1966), p. 41; Petros Vassiliades, "The Translation of *Marturia Iesou* in Revelation," *BT* 36 (1985): 129-134.

² Ray F. Robbins, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, (Nashville, 1975), p. 154; see also G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible (London, 1974), p. 206.

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Revelation's Throne Scenes

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Introduction

The word “throne” (Gr. *thronos*) occurs fifty-four times in the NT. Forty-four of these occurrences are in the book of Revelation. By my analysis there are seven throne-room scenes, related to the heavenly sanctuary, in the book of Revelation (Rev 4-5; 8:2-6; 11:19; 15; 16:17-17:3; 19:1-10; 21:5-11). A general introduction about the world view and structure of the book of Revelation is in order before we examine these scenes.

World View of Revelation (Rev 12). It is vital to grasp the world view of Revelation. It deals with the cosmic controversy between God and Satan. Everything in the book has something to do with this controversy. In its literary structure chapter 12 forms the apex of the book, providing an overview of the cosmic controversy in just seventeen verses. The woman represents those who follow God (cf. Jer 6:2, Matt 25: 1); the dragon represents Satan (Rev 12:9); Michael refers to Christ in His pre-incarnate state (cf. Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1, Jude 9). The controversy erupted in heaven. “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven” (Rev 12:7-8, NIV). Satan was originally a covering cherub in heaven. Subsequent to his expulsion, he took the guise of a serpent and tempted Eve in Eden (see Gen 3:1-7; Ezek 28:11-16), bringing sin into the newly created earth.

While Revelation 12:7 alludes to Satan's initial expulsion, the passage emphasizes a later fall of Satan. “The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (vs. 9). When was that? The answer follows. “Then I heard a loud

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voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb . . . ’” (vss. 10-11). This moral fall took place at the death of Christ. Calvary forever hurled Satan down. Here is the climax of the cosmic controversy. Satan was decisively defeated. Nothing he does in subsequent time can change that fact. Satan’s defeat is irreversible.

Calvary is also “deliverance day” for Christ’s followers. He died for them so that they could be saved. Hence, the basis for a double judgment took place at Calvary: (1) the defeat of Satan and the enemies of God’s people, and (2) the deliverance of God’s people. This double destiny, decided in Christ’s death, s people. This double destiny, decided in Christ’s death, determines all human history, and is being worked out in that history and in the eschatology of the book of Revelation. The Calvary-judgment moves toward the end-time deliverance of the saints and the destruction of all their enemies. Some of the throne-room scenes introduce the implementation of judgments that issue from the judgment day at Calvary.

Foundational Literary Structures. Richard M. Davidson¹ and Jon Paulien² have convincingly demonstrated two inherent literary structures in the book of Revelation: the Hebrew sanctuary and its festival year. Both are found to compliment the other, showing an unfolding of the plan of salvation on a linear line (as one reads through the prophecies; see my article, “Revelation 4-5: Inauguration or Judgment?” in this volume).

Two important points should be noted. First, these two structures (sanctuary and festivals) show the prophecy unfolding across the Christian era to the earth made new. Both, thereby, indicate a historicist viewpoint. Second, both structures agree with the dividing line between the historical and eschatological sections of the book, as follows:

History	Eschatology
Sanctuary sequence; lampstand, altar of incense.	Ark of the covenant (11:19).
Festival structure: Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets.	Day of Atonement (13-20; 8-11).

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A Real Temple/Sanctuary in Heaven. The seven throne-room scenes take place in the heavenly sanctuary. I concur with Davidson that there is a correspondence of literal reality between the earthly sanctuary type and the heavenly temple/sanctuary antitype, because the heavenly is “the *original, preexistent prototype*” of the earthly (Exod 25:40; cf. Heb 8:5).³

Demythologization of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary is no better than Bultmann’s work of demythologizing divine metaphysics and miracles. As Davidson rightly concludes, “the heavenly sanctuary is not a metaphor for heaven, but a place *in heaven*.”⁴ Although there is a necessary intensification of the earthly type in the heavenly temple/sanctuary antitype, it is a real place in heaven, just as the earthly sanctuary/temples were real places on earth. There is a necessary “literal reality” in the correspondence between the heavenly original and the earthly copy. There is a spatiotemporal correspondence. The heavenly temple/sanctuary is no more to be identified with the entirety of heaven than is the earthly sanctuary to be identified with planet earth (cf. the NIV translation of Heb 9:24). The heavenly temple/sanctuary is as real as the daily and yearly ministries of Christ.

The heavenly temple mentioned in Hebrews is not rooted in Platonic dualism (with its belief in the timelessness of God) but in the OT sanctuary/temple types. Greek dualism speaks of the supra temporal as the real (*kosmos noetos*) and the temporal as a mere shadow (*kosmos aisthetos*). In Scripture the sanctuary/temple types are never considered a shadow of the heavenly reality, but a model, or miniature copy, of the heavenly reality, even though a small representation of that vastly escalated original (Exod 25:40). The distinction between the heavenly temple reality and the earthly types is never one of literal/symbolic, but one of literal/literal correspondence.

Throne-Room Scenes

Against this background we now wish to consider the throne-room scenes of Revelation. Some of the scenes are depicted in the historical division of the prophecy, and some are placed in the eschatological division. They have to do with Christ in His post-resurrection ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, both with His intercessory and judicial roles. All the scenes relate to the working out of the deliverance/destruction accomplishments of Calvary.

The throne-room scenes introduce seven sections of the book. The first two have to do with historic time; the third introduces an

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overview of cosmic history. The next three introduce eschatological events, and the last one introduces eternity in the new earth. In this way, the reader moves from history to eschatology to eternity as the prophecy is read in sequence. I suggest the following units:

1. Introduction to the seven seals (Rev 4-5).
2. Introduction to the seven trumpets (Rev 8:2-6).
3. Introduction to the cosmic controversy chapter (Rev 11:19).
4. Introduction to the seven plagues (Rev 15).
5. Introduction to the fall of Babylon (Rev 16:17-17:3a).
6. Introduction to the Second Advent (Rev 19:1-10).
7. Introduction to the new earth (Rev 21:5-11a).

Kenneth Strand includes Revelation 1:10b-20, and sees the book composed of four historical-era visions and four eschatological-era visions.⁵ I choose to omit Revelation 1:10b-20 as it seems to pertain to earth, rather than to the heavenly sanctuary. This is seen by the fact that the seven golden lampstands are detached from each other and do not form the single sanctuary menorah, and serve to represent the seven churches on earth (Rev 1:13, 20). Strand is right, though, to see in these introductory throne-room scenes the theme of victory.

First Throne Room Scene (Rev 4:2; 5:1). As my previously mentioned article deals with this first throne-room scene, I will only say here that it sets the stage for all the others. It introduces Christ as the King/Priest, inaugurated on His Father's throne as a coregent to oversee human history, to intercede and empower His church, to defend the saints in the pre-advent judgment, and to deliver them and destroy their enemies in the Second Advent. It is this King/Priest who is revealed throughout the rest of Revelation. The Lamb, because of His victory at Calvary, is enthroned by God before He opens the seven seals.

Second Throne-Room Scene (Rev 8:2-6). The second throne scene is depicted before the seven trumpets series proceed. Again, before events on earth are given, a view of events in heaven are presented. An angel offers the prayers of the saints at the altar of incense in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary (vss.3-4). The prayers of His saints are important to Christ. They are apparently prayers for help in this troubled world where Christians suffer persecution. The vision shows how responsive to God's people are those who work in His temple.

The angel then took a censer, filled it with fiery coals from the altar, and hurled it onto the earth, "and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake" (vs. 5). These are

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judgments sent to earth on behalf of the saints during the historical period. The throne-room scenes show that angels are active in helping humans on earth, answering their prayers for help with judgments on their enemies. This seems to be a proleptic insight into the final Armageddon judgments (16:12-21).

Excursus: Role of Angels in Revelation. Angels are mentioned sixty-eight times in the book of Revelation. Each of the seven churches is said to have an angel (2:1-3:22). Christ gave the contents of Revelation to John through an angel (1:1; 22:6,16). There are particular messages pointed out as angel messages, perhaps to emphasize their importance (14:6-13; 18:1-8). Angels hold back coming winds of strife for a time until the saints are sealed (7:1-3). Seven angels with seven trumpets send judgments on the planet (8:2-9:21; 11:15-18), as do the seven plague angels (15:6-16:21). In the second coming of Christ angels do God's bidding in the final Armageddon destruction of all those who oppose His people (14:19-20; 19:14-21). At the outset of the Millennium, an angel will bind Satan (20:1-3).

Throughout Revelation angels are shown to be mighty messengers sent from the heavenly temple/sanctuary to give hope, help, and deliverance to Christ's followers. By contrast they send judgments of destruction upon their enemies. All angels work out from the heavenly sanctuary, and on the basis of the work of Christ being conducted there. They help to implement in human history the victory of Calvary.

Third Throne-Room Scene (Rev 11:19). "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of the covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm"(11:19). These judgments seem the same as those mentioned in the second throne-room scene. Here is a sneak preview into the ark of the covenant situated in the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary type (Heb 9:3-4). This introduces the reader to the second phase of Christ's heavenly ministry. To His intercession will now be added the pre-advent judgment. The process of judging (*krisis*) will end in an act of judgment (*krima*). Perhaps the mention of "a great hailstorm" is pointing to the seventh eschatological plague, when one hundred pound hailstones will plunge into the planet (16:21). Again, this seems to be a proleptic insight into the Armageddon-final-judgment.

Fourth Throne-Room Scene (Rev 15). Revelation 14 and 15 have much in common. In Revelation 14 the 144,000 stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1), which is the heavenly New Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-23). In the OT Mount Zion was always the place of deliverance—the sanctuary in the old city of Jerusalem (cf., Isa 11:9-12;

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Joel 2:32; Mic 4:6-8). In this NT throne-room scene, the heavenly temple/sanctuary is the place of deliverance (Rev 14:3; cf. Dan 12:1). In Revelation 15 John sees those “who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass” (15:2, RSV; cf. 4:6). These are the same end-time saints as the 144,000 named in chapter 14. The power they have withstood is mentioned in Revelation 13:11-17.

Excursus: The Song of Moses; the Song of the Lamb. The song sung by the 144,000 no one else can sing, because they alone have gone through the final events and have been translated (14:3). In Revelation 15:3 it is described as the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song rings out, “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (15:3-4).

This song reminds us of the one sung in the first throne-room scene. It is a song about the Lamb. In Revelation 5 it was a song about His sacrifice. Now it is a song about his mighty acts in the plagues. It is echoed in Revelation 16:5. “You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged” (Rev 16:5). The slain Lamb has the right to judge, because He was judged for all mankind in bearing their sins on Calvary (Isa 53:1-12; John 3:16; 2 Cor 5:21).

These seven plagues are spoken of as “God’s wrath” (15:1). While the plagues pound the planet, “the temple [is] filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed” (15:8). All judgments from God during the Christian era come from the temple/sanctuary in heaven, and it is there that the pre-advent judgment session convenes. The final verdict simply issues from that session, as indicated in Daniel 7.

Why is the song of the Lamb also called the song of Moses? (15:3). God’s end-time people will face a world against them (13:3, 11-17), just as Israel faced the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. “They were terrified and cried out to the Lord” (Exod 14:10). “Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.’” (Exod 14:13-14).

The utter destruction of the Egyptians and the total deliverance of God’s people is a type of what will happen in the eschatological global judgments (Rev 16-19). Here we have the twofold judgment,

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“destruction/deliverance,” that took place at Calvary and will be repeated in the eschatological climax of the cosmic controversy during the Armageddon judgment.

The song of Moses exclaimed, “I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation” (Exod 15:1-2). So the songs of Exodus 15 and Revelation 15 tell about the great judgments of Christ and His mighty deliverance of His people against overwhelming odds. There is no murmur about the awful ordeal the saints are to go through. The throne-room scenes lift the saints above the challenges of history to see the Lamb who was slain, the Lamb who delivered in the Exodus, and the Lamb who will deliver His people out of the greatest time of trouble ever to impact the planet in the end-time (Dan 12:1). They are Christ-centered and not crisis-centered believers.

Fifth Throne-Room Scene (Rev 16:17-17:30). In the previous section we noted that seven angels, with the seven last plagues, deliver to planet-earth the completion of God’s wrath (Rev 15:1, NIV). This is where the next throne-room scene begins. “The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘It is done.’ (16:17). Here God declares it is over. Then comes the eschatological earthquake, like none before it. Islands and mountains are affected. One hundred pound hailstones pound the planet (16:18-21). This is the judgment on Babylon the Great, the power that opposed God and His saints in the end-time. This is the Armageddon judgment.

Then, one of the plague angels says, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries” (17:1-2). This woman is “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (17:6). The punishment of Babylon is further given in Revelation 17-18. The picture of this judgment on the persecutors of God’s end-time saints is to give them courage to face the final events. Just as God overthrew the Egyptians who wanted to destroy His people at the Red Sea, so God will destroy those who pass a death decree on His end-time people (13:15).

Sixth Throne-Room Scene (Rev 19:1-10). By the sixth throne-room scene the singing has given way to shouting. A great multitude cry out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants” (19:1-2). As it said in the previous

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chapter, “God has judged her for the way she treated you” (18:20). Here the multitude rejoice in the judgment acts of God on the enemies of His end-time saints.

The 24 elders respond to the shout of the vast multitude and cry, “Amen, Hallelujah!” (19:4). And, “Then a voice from the throne” says “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!” (19:5). Then the “great multitude” shouts out, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (19:6-7).

The Lamb is the Bridegroom. And “the wedding supper of the Lamb” is about to take place (19:9). This worship of Christ for His judgments on the enemies of His saints is the focus given in the throne-room scene before the Second Advent is portrayed in the following verses (19:11-21). This suggests that the final persecutions of the saints take place during the *wedding day*. I believe this *wedding day* (not the suppers) is concurrent with the Day of Atonement. Atonement means “at-one-ment.” It is during the wedding day that the two (Christ and His followers) are becoming one. During the final times of trouble, the bride ever more fully rests in the Bridegroom. At the Second Advent the Bridegroom whisks His bride from planet earth and takes her to heaven to the wedding supper of the Lamb (1 Thess 4:16-18). What an encouraging scene for end-time saints facing persecution! (Dan 12:1, cf. Matt 24:9-12; Rev 13:15-17; 20:4-5).

The wedding of the Lamb at the throne is an important contribution to the question of where the millennium takes place. It takes place in heaven (Rev 21:9-10, cf. Dan 7:13-14; Luke 12:35-40). Thus, Christ “is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him” (Rev 1:7, cf. Matt 24:30). His saints meet Christ in the air at His return (1 Thess 4:16-18), and not on the ground (Matt 24:23-25). Jesus promised that He was going to prepare places for His saints in heaven when He ascended, and that He would come again to take them to where He lives in heaven (John 14:1-3). This rendezvous in heaven and the great hallelujahs ringing throughout heaven are the focus of the sixth throne-room scene.

Seventh Throne-Room Scene (Rev 21:5-11a). Babylon and the New Jerusalem are literal cities, but they seem to have a symbolic meaning, too. Babylon represents those opposed to God’s people; the New Jerusalem represents God’s people. Babylon is “the mother of prostitutes” (17:5). She unites with the kings of the world (17:2). By contrast, Christ’s followers unite with the King of kings.

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One of the plague angels says, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” Then he shows John the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth (21:9-10). The phrases “wedding of the Lamb” (sixth throne-room scene) and the “wife of the Lamb” (seventh throne-room scene) indicate the intimate relationship between Christ and His people, compared with those who seek after political powers for support. Here’s a message for God’s people. What bridegroom worth his salt wouldn’t stand up for his bride, especially on his wedding day? So these throne-room scenes show that Christ will have the last word in eschatological time. He will stand up for His bride, His wife—just as He did at Calvary. Her enemies will be destroyed. She will be delivered—for the Lamb has already accomplished this in His death. It’s only a matter of time until Calvary is subjectively realized.

The final throne room scene also introduces the new earth. “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” (21:5). Then He said, “‘It is done’” (21:6). These are the same words said in the fifth throne-room scene (16:17). Now the judgments are over. Here the new earth is present. Christ says He is the Alpha and Omega and offers the water of life to His people (21:6), saying, “He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (21:7).

Here the throne-room scene is on earth. For “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (21:3). Hitherto, the throne room scenes are in heaven, and show that God is in control of human history. Now the throne-room scene shows that God is with His people in the earth made new. That is the ultimate future ahead—not the persecutions that will engulf them in final events on planet earth.

Excursus: God’s Judgments. Judgments of God are a part of each of the throne-room scenes, except the first, which has to do with Christ’s inauguration as King/Priest in the heavenly temple/ sanctuary (4-5). This combined focus on judgments (historical and eschatological divisions of the book) reveal the acts of the King/Priest that follow His enthronement in the first throne-room scene. He stands up for His saints against their enemies. The same Christ who died for them also defends them.

Judgments come to implement the judgment of Calvary. Properly understood, Calvary provides our King/Priest the authority not only to intercede in behalf of repentant sinners, but also to pass judgment on the rejecters of divine mercy. The two sides in the cosmic controversy meet at Calvary. Human beings either accept or reject what Christ accomplished there for them. This is what is worked out

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in all subsequent history, throughout the book of Revelation, for it is the Crucified One who administers the deliverance/destruction components of Calvary. This is the ultimate work He does as King/Priest.

Saints on Thrones

Apart from the throne-room scenes that introduce segments of the prophecy, a couple references are made to redeemed persons sitting on thrones. During the Millennium in heaven, John says, "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge" (20:4). "They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years" (20:6). Like the 24 elders during the Christian age (4:4), the redeemed after the Second Advent, during the Millennium, will be seated on thrones as judges. They will be given opportunity to see why the wicked are not in heaven.

There are three sequential phases of the final judgment: the pre-advent phase (Dan 7:9-10, 13-14), the millennial phase (Rev 20:4; 1 Cor 6:2-3); and the post-millennial phase (Rev 20:11-15; Matt 25:31-46). Through these three phases of final judgment all created beings will have opportunity to see that God is just in His judgments, and that in the light of the judgment for all made at Calvary, nothing more could have been done to save mankind. The pre-advent judgment is for the benefit of all unfallen beings, the millennial for all the redeemed, and the post-millennial for all the lost.

Then, in agreement with Nels Ferre,⁶ G. C. Berkouwer,⁷ William Barclay,⁸ Edward W. Fudge,⁹ Hans Kung,¹⁰ John Stott¹¹ and Clark H. Pinnock,¹² I believe Scripture teaches the annihilation of the wicked. The cosmic controversy does have a resolution. The last pronouncement from the throne is "I am making everything new" (Rev 21:5). This could not be possible if hell burned in some corner of the universe, or on some part of the planet. Malachi said, "'Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,' says the Lord Almighty. 'Not a root or a branch will be left to them'" (Mal 4:1). Peter said Sodom and Gomorrah became "ashes" as "an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (2 Pet 2:6).

The last mention of God's throne is given in the final chapter. "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them

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light. And they will reign for ever and ever” (Rev 22:3-5). The redeemed will not only be the wife of the Lamb, but will reign with Him forever. What a future!

Significance of the Throne-room Scenes

If we step back, as it were, and reflect on the theological importance of these throne scenes, we may infer the following guidelines:

1. We should focus on Christ rather than on the crisis.
2. We should look to Christ rather than the passing events.
3. We should see the future as the vantage point from which to interpret the present.
4. We should see that Christ is in control of human history on the basis of His victory at the cross. He reigns as the new Davidic King/Priest with the whole world under His jurisdiction. At Calvary Christ’s death determined the destruction of the enemies of His people and determined the deliverance of His people.
5. We should see (because of the Calvary judgment) it is only a matter of time until the destruction of God’s enemies and the deliverance of the saints will take place.
6. We should see that while Babylon is in an adulterous union with the kings of the earth, God’s people are the bride of the King of Kings.
7. We should see that while the enemies of God’s people rule the world in final events, it is the saints who will rule with Christ forever as His bride, and will be seated on His throne for eternity.

These seven insights put eschatological events in their proper perspective. They focus on the good news of the final events on planet earth. They give courage to end-time saints as we face the greatest time of trouble ever to impact the planet (Dan 12:1).

Notes

* Biblical citations are from the KJV, unless otherwise noted.

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10 Hans Küng, *Eternal Life*, p. 136.

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¹¹ David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), pp. 312-319.

¹² Clark H. Pinnock, "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent," *Criswell Theological Review*, Vol. 4 (1990), pp. 246-247; 250-254; *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), p. 195.

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Jesus Christ in the Midst of His People: A Study of Revelation 1:9–22

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Our objective in this study is to observe the relationship that emerges between Jesus Christ and His people in the opening vision and prophecy of the seven letters to the churches. We wish to understand the revelation about Jesus, the way He is pictured, His claims, requirements, expectations, and decisions. The titles attributed to Jesus will shed light on the purpose of the vision connected to the seven letters. If the reality of judgment is involved, we will find out the nature of this judgment, and the implications for the church of this generation.

The Great Issues of the Apocalypse

All the issues presented in Revelation are intended to motivate God's people. God is described by impressive titles so as to awaken the consciousness of His followers and of humankind in general. The invitation to faithfulness, the urge to persevere, the call to conversion, the promises and warnings, the description of covenant curses, all fit under the umbrella of historical and eschatological arousing/alerting of God's people. There are several reasons for this emphasis. We list the following:

Persecution/deception. Facing the persecution and the deception by forces hostile to God's kingdom, His subjects are exhorted to be patient and persevere. This aspect is illustrated by the apostle John's testimony:

I, John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev 1:9, NASB).

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Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rev 2:10).

The emphasis is clearly on endurance, steadfastly maintaining hope.

Lukewarmness. Another objective is to revive and to restore the consciousness of the lukewarm. They are urged to evaluate their true condition and the issues at stake and to render unconditional faithfulness to their Resurrected Lord.¹

Time and again appeals are made to straying believers for their conversion and also appeals to those who are unaware of God and who ignore His plans.² This is the missionary aspect of the writing. Moving declarations of love testify to His passion for His people as He explains the way of salvation and how to maintain it. He displays in His Word His plan of teaching, reproof, of correction and training in righteousness, for the vindication of His people and of His name.

Judgments. Warnings and judgments, whether investigative or executive, remind us of the book of Hosea. God is pictured in that prophecy as a loving husband attempting various ways to draw His unfaithful spouse back, at the same time displaying the hurt and jealousy of a husband deceived and abandoned by his wife.

Cosmic Controversy. Since Revelation portrays the cosmic controversy, it is important to notice the various opponents that God and His people face. On the one hand there are internal opponents (inside the church) whose dispositions, words and attitudes favor compromise, lethargy, indifference and forgetfulness of the church and its mission. On the other hand there are Satan and his allies, all the powers hostile to the reign of God. These try to inhibit God's plan concerning the whole of humankind. Satan opposes everything that testifies that God is Lord and the Author of life. Satan seduces and then accuses the penitent, which in essence is an attempt to deprive the believer of the acquittal and forgiveness God graciously offers.³

His allies are the two beasts that appear to imitate God, the Lamb, and even the Holy Spirit. These powers counterfeit the Trinity in an attempt to usurp God's prerogatives to be worshiped and to receive exclusive allegiance. All their display of prestige, visions, signs and images are lies. What Satan could not be in the heavenly sphere, He tries to be on earth. The strategy of Satan and his allies consist mainly in usurping the worship that only God the Creator deserves. This is the issue in the central chapters 12-14.

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Revelation also shows that death, an enemy of another kind, will ultimately be destroyed, along with all the harmful effects sin has caused.

The Vision

Structure of the Passage. The following sections briefly outline this initial vision of the book of Revelation:

1. Introduction: the place, time, and circumstances (1:9-11).
2. Appearance of “one like a son of man” (1:12-20).
 - a. Description (1:13-16).
 - b. Self-presentation (1:17-20).
3. Addresses to the seven churches (2:1-3:22).

Between the description and the speaking of “the one like a son of man” (vs. 17), John falls before Him “as a dead man,” overwhelmed by the incomparable Christ, described in a unique manner by means of apocalyptic symbols.

The description of Christ’s person is arranged in the form of a literary chiasm:

- A Head; white hair (white wool, snow)
- B Eyes (flames of fire)
- C Feet (burnished bronze)
- D Voice (sound of many waters)
- C’ Hand (held seven stars)
- B’ Mouth (sharp two-edged sword)
- A’ Face (like the sun)

The numbering of the seven parts of the body in sequence reveals a correspondence between A and A’, B and B’, and C and C’. The center of the chiasm (D) emphasizes the voice, or the spoken word of the Christ. What John hears and what he sees is also in the form of a chiasm: Audition (vss. 10,11) - Observation (vss. 12-16) Audition (vss. 17-20).

Verse 20 is an interpretation of the symbols (the stars and the menorah) provided by Christ Himself. In verse 17b, He presented Himself to enable John to identify the Person speaking to him. This confirms the two aspects of the opening expression of the book: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Its sense is both objective (a message about Him) and subjective (a message from Him.).

Author. John presents himself as “your brother and fellow- partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus” (vs. 9). These themes occur throughout the book. From the beginning the tone of solidarity is set. John brings an awareness and a

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reinforcement of the ties that bind God's children together as members of the family of the heavenly Father and His kingdom.

It is remarkable that John does not identify himself according to a lineage, a name, race, or by splendid titles inherited or acquired. He places himself in relation to God and His service; the references he calls upon are the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He lives for Someone else; he is a witness, a servant.

The Theophany

The terms John uses to introduce the central personage in the vision clearly indicate a genuine theophany—a visible manifestation of deity. The unusual expression “I turned to see the voice” (vs. 12) reminds the reader of God's appearance at Mt. Sinai and the reading of the Greek Septuagint that “all the people saw the voice” (Exod 20:18).

The evocation of the trumpet that sounded at Sinai (Exod 20:18; Rev 1:10) is also a literary device to announce a theophany.⁵ The reaction of John to the vision likewise indicates a supernatural manifestation. “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man” (vs. 17, cf. Ezek 1:28; Dan10:8).

John's reaction was due to the awe-inspiring vision of the majesty, the transcendence, the supernatural and divine manifestation of the glorified Christ. The Saviour's compassionate gesture expressed a divine act; He put his hand on John and uttered comforting words to give him confidence.⁶ He presents Himself and gives for the second time the commission to write what He is about to reveal to His servant.

The Lampstands. When John turned to see who addressed him, he first saw seven golden lampstands. These symbols collectively highlight the ecclesiological perspective of the encounter. Four passages are generally cited as the OT cultic background to this NT designation of the church (see Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-20; 1 Kgs 7:49; Zech 4:2, 11).

John is not shown a reproduction of these earlier models. The lampstands in Revelation differ in various features from these. The seven golden lampstands of the initial vision are not supported by one shaft as described in Exodus 25. They also differ from the ten aligned menorah of the Solomonic temple both in number and position. Zechariah's vision of a golden lampstand with its bowl and seven lamps would seem closest to what is described in the book of Revelation; however, a different meaning is given them. In that context the lamps represent the eyes of the Lord which inspect the earth. Even though the cultic seven-branched lampstand is alluded to, John's vision is unique. His focus is on the position and activity of the Son of man in His relation to the church, the ecclesiological sanctuary.

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Of all the functions a symbolic lampstand might suggest, that of shining is the most probable. This function has already been attributed to the apostolic congregation (see Matt 5:14-16). However, because the focus of the vision is on the High Priest, Jesus Christ, we cannot overlook the fact He is the one who ought to take care of the menorah so that it fulfills its function.

To apply sanctuary typology to the earthly church does not nullify its application to the heavenly sanctuary in its proper context. Richard Davidson has observed the following:

We noted . . . that in the time of the church the earthly antitypes in the spiritual kingdom of grace find a *spiritual* (nonliteral), partial (nonfinal), and universal (nongeographical/ethnic) fulfillment, since they are spiritually (but not literally) related to Christ in the heavens. Thus, we should expect that when sanctuary/temple imagery in Revelation is applied to an *earthly* setting in the time of the church, there will be a *spiritual* and not literal interpretation, since the temple is a spiritual one here on earth.

In harmony with this hermeneutical principle, the antitypical lampstands *on earth* in Revelation 1 are not literal but spiritual. The church living between “the already and the not yet” is portrayed elsewhere in Scripture as the antitypical ecclesiological temple. Revelation is consistent with this in utilizing the sanctuary terminology of the lampstands to apply to the spiritual body of the earthly church. Jesus (through His Spirit) is spiritually present with His church on earth.⁷

In the first covenant God expressed His desire to dwell among His people (Exod 25) so that the attention of all Israel would center on Him, their Lord and Guide. In this initial vision of Revelation the Son of Man is in the midst of His people, not as in a dwelling, but to judge and prepare them to meet His requirements. The investigative aspect of the function of the Son of Man has been compared to a Jewish household’s search for leaven before Passover.⁸

One Like a Son of Man. The expression “son of man” occurs in the book of Ezekiel 90 times to designate the prophet himself. There are three instances in the apocalyptic literature where the expression “son of man” is used without the article (Dan 7:13; Rev 1:13; 14:14). These latter usages appear in a vision setting. This personage is not only a mysterious being, eschatological executor of a divine judgment, and holder of royal authority, but he also takes on further dimensions.

In the gospels Jesus designates Himself as “the son of man” (with the article). Oscar Cullman draws our attention to the fact that “one must distinguish two aspects of the words of Jesus: those with which he designates himself thinking about his eschatological work which will be

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accomplished in the future, and those which he applied to himself, thinking about his mission on earth.”⁹ We find the first aspect in the book of Daniel and the second, with the idea of an incarnation, as an original revelation of the New Testament. The one like a Son of Man in the opening vision in Revelation occupies a unique position. There is no description of the “son of man” in Daniel, nor elsewhere in the NT. In the book of Revelation, He is disclosed through the veil of a symbolic description.

Priestly Clothing. The first item in the description of the son of man concerns His garment. The Greek word, *podērēs*, is used only here in the NT and indicates “a robe reaching to the feet.” It is used in the LXX (Septuagint) to translate four different Hebrew words that may at times pertain to priestly attire (*hōsān*, Exod 25:7; 35:9); *me’īl*, Exod 28:4, 31; 29:5); (*mahalāsāh*, Zech 3:4); (*baddīm*, Ezek 9:3).

The title of High Priest is not explicitly expressed in this passage, nor is it among the titles attributed to Christ in the book. However, the allusion to His costume in a context using sanctuary imagery favors the view that our resurrected Lord is functioning as the antitypical High Priest. Some disagree and limit the clothing to a symbol of a royal or divine dignity.¹⁰ The argument is also advanced that if Christ is associated with God to receive adoration, He is not a called priest, for a priest is the one who worships. Though interesting, this reasoning is not relevant. The association of Christ with the concept of sacrifice forbids the taking of this perspective into account (Rev 5:6, 9, 12).

Within the context of the biblical canon the garment of the high priest relates to his function. According to Jacques Doukhan, the distinctive function of the high priest occurs during his ministry on the day of atonement.¹¹ The expression “Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10) can also refer to this day; however, the immediate context gives the clues as to what aspects of priestly activity are envisaged.

John does not merely repeat the content of words that he borrows from the Hebrew Scriptures. We should be alert to the new aspects or dimensions the figures may carry because of the Christ event. Moreover, the symbolism that John uses in this initial vision is not isolated from the letters to the seven churches. They belong to the same literary section.¹² William Shea’s demonstration of the covenant formulae of the letters to the seven churches has added further evidence to the link between “the son of man” and the letters.¹³

The second item of clothing mentioned is a golden girdle “girded across His breast,” which most likely emphasizes the royal dignity of the priest.¹⁴

Physical Features. Anthropomorphic language is used to describe the eminence of the Son of Man. The expressions were employed to

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speak about God in the Hebrew Bible. However, many elements of the description are best understood in the immediate context of the messages to the churches.

1. “His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow.” John sees God’s prerogatives—drawn from the description of the “Ancient of Days” (Dan 7:8)—applied to the resurrected Christ. The Son of Man is not only a human being, He is Deity. The application of the whiteness of the hair to the Son of Man is also reminiscent of the judgment background of Daniel 7. A discussion reported in the Talmud shares this view.

One verse says: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool and [elsewhere] it is written his locks are curled and black as raven. There is no contradiction. One verse [refers to God in session], and the other in war. For a master said: in session none is more fitting than an old man and in war none is more fitting than a young man.¹⁵

2. “His eyes were like a flame of fire.” This expression is used in Revelation 2:18 in a judgment setting, indicating to the church of Thyatira that the “Son of Man”—now designated “the Son of God”—is He who searches the minds of humankind. The immediate context, therefore, leads us to interpret this expression as evoking the omniscience of the resurrected Christ’s all powerful ability to penetrate everything that is hidden. This feature is obviously related to the investigative aspect of the biblical judgment.

3. “His feet were like burnished bronze.” The same expression is coupled with the preceding one in the letter to Thyatira in the self- presentation of Christ. It conveys the idea of stability and reliability.

4. “His voice was like the sound of many waters.” At the center of the descriptive chiasm (Rev 1:14-16), the voice of the Son of Man is emphasized. He is not only to be contemplated, but also to be obeyed. His voice is described in exactly the same terms as the voice of God in Ezekiel 43:2, in a sanctuary setting.¹⁶

5. “In His right hand He held seven stars.” The verb “held” in this sentence is a participle form of the Greek verb *echō*. However, when John restates this description (Rev 2:1), he employs the participle form of the Greek verb *krateō* which in its noun form shades off into the concepts of power and sovereignty. The description thus indicates the total control of the Son of man over the destiny of His church, and is in full harmony with Christ’s comforting words: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand (John 10:27-28). This prerogative of Christ is reassuring. No

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matter what the attack against His people, the Church is safe in His hands.

6. "Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword." The immediate context of the letters and of the book indicate that the sword is a symbolic and metaphorical instrument of judgment. With the sword Christ declares the truth, fights heresy and unfaithfulness, and finally overcomes all powers hostile to God.

7. "His face was like the sun shining in its strength." John underlines the transcendence of the Son of Man by comparing the radiance of His face with the brightness of the sun.

The overall impression of the vision is a sudden splash of radiant light. The vision begins with the blaze of the lampstands, passing to the brilliance of the golden girdle, the intense whiteness of the hair like wool, like snow, the flashing eyes like flames of fire. His feet glow like burnished bronze, adding a yellow tone, and the stars twinkle in His hands. Finally the whole description climaxes in the dazzling light of His face, as blinding as the noonday sun.

The vision was so overwhelming that John himself, the beloved disciple, could not bear it. As he said, "I fell at His feet as a dead man."

The description we have reviewed discloses the divine dignity and eminence of the resurrected Christ. He is at the acme of what can be described. We can only speak about Him by means of comparison. This does not make Him less real. On the contrary, He is the One who defines reality. E. B. Allo has correctly noticed that "In all the passages where John introduces God or the Christ in vision, (Ch 1; 4; 5; 12; 14; 22), he avoids naming them directly. An awe, a mysterious respect distinguishes them from all other persons. Especially, he is careful not to call the 'Son of Man' an angel. He has clearly indicated throughout the book the divine transcendence of the Messiah to avoid any confusion."¹⁷

The Son of Man's Self-Presentation. Christ's words to John at this point in the vision put the symbolic description of His person in the historical perspective of His victorious death and resurrection.

1. "I am the first and the last." The same phraseology is used in Revelation 2:8; 21:6 with the variant Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and in 22:13, which reiterates all the terminology used.

In the OT this expression describes an attribute of God. In Isaiah 44:6 God uses it in a context of salvation. Likewise, in Isaiah 48:12-13, the expression focuses on God as the omniscient Creator whose right hand spread out the heavens. Parallel to the words of Isaiah 44:2, Christ uses the words "Do not be afraid" (Rev 1:17) when he speaks to John. These previous occurrences in which God acted bestow on Christ's use of such expressions a divine authority to speak the way He

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does to the churches. This observation fits the hypothesis of William Shea concerning the description of a suzerain in the preamble of the covenant formulae which he sees reflected in the messages to the seven churches.¹⁸

The words “the first and the last” are limits of duration, but reference points extremely distant one from the other. They indicate the One so described cannot be limited to a temporal category. In other words, the words “the first and the last” do not delimit the subject; instead they delimit one another. As a direct consequence of this, the text does not allow the reader to say that Jesus Christ has a beginning or an end.

2. “The living One.” This expression is one of God’s titles in the OT (Josh 3:10; Ps 42:3). In Revelation 1:18 the phrase, “the living One”, is associated with the affirmation of the death and the resurrection of Christ. The whole sentence is a proclamation of the victory of Christ over death. His possession of the keys of death and hades indicates Christ’s exclusive divine prerogative. This is how the power over these keys is interpreted in the Targumic literature.¹⁹

The possession of the keys indicates that the Son of Man is not only the all-powerful Judge, but also the Giver of eternal life, the One on whom the destiny of mankind depends. He is the eternal living One who has the eschatological power to resurrect the dead and to give eternal life. This is the reason why He can encourage the church and promise: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

The Letters

Literary Structure. A. Vanhoye,²⁰ following the earlier proposition of Nils Wilhelm Lund, argues for a concentric structure of the seven letters.²¹ According to this view the letters are organized around the letter to Thyatira which is the central part of the chiasm. It is the longest and contains features of all the other letters. In its first section (2:18-23), the structure is similar to the first and the third letters in terms of Christ’s praise and the rebuke; whereas, in its second section (2:24-28), the letter is closer to the second and the sixth letters which contain no warning of covenant curses. These observations favor an overall homogeneity of the seven letters.

Moreover, the beginning and the end of the letters add evidence to this fact. The Son of Man introduces himself by means of the expression “says this” (*tade legei*), which we find only eight times in the NT, seven of those appearing at the beginning of the letters (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). This expression joins the prophetic mode of the OT prophets who, in order to emphasize the trustworthiness and authority of God’s

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word, began with a “Thus says the Lord” (*tade legei kasios*, Amos 1:6). In the context of the letter the expression is followed by Christ’s message to the specified church.

Five letters refer to features or prerogatives of the Son of Man drawn from John’s description of Him. This fact also attests to the unity of the letters with the first section of the vision. The literary construction is common to all the letters, except that the first three letters present the appeal to listen to the Spirit followed by the Promise to the overcomer; whereas the last four reverse the order of these two items.

The letters extend promises to those who overcome. The promises indicate that despite deviations of all kinds in the churches, an unconditional attachment to the Lord Jesus is possible. It is for the purpose of detecting these deviations and to show His people the way back to a covenant relationship, to victory, that the Son of man comes to judge. This judgment aims to correct the servants of God and to encourage them to hold firm to their allegiance.

Building on the study of G. E. Mendenhall,²² William Shea has pointed out that the letters appear to be patterned (with slight differences) after an Israelite covenant formula which is very similar to the ancient Hittite suzerain treaty.²³

In the seven letters we may identify the following recurring sections: a pre-ample, an historical prologue, stipulations, blessings and or curses according to the situation of the church, and finally a witness. Labeled differently we may express it thus:

- I. An Introduction
 - A. The Name of the Church
 - B. The Presentation of Christ
- II. The Body of the Letter
 - A. Diagnosis
 - B. Praises, Rebukes, Encouragement, or Warnings
- III. Conclusion
 - A. The Words of Christ Attributed to the Spirit
 - B. Promises to the Overcomer

Content. There is a passage from the writing to the message. The writing is addressed to the angel; the message to the church (Rev 2:1, etc.). The descriptive self-presentation of the Son of Man (Rev 1:10-18) is related to the situation of each church, which shows that He is not only the judge but also the remedy, the solution. His diagnosis is the first step to freedom from confusion, blindness or alienation from the covenant. The churches face several kinds of dangers. Opponents sap the vitality of its faithfulness. These dangers are unmasked in order to

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give the servants of God the opportunity to resist and to maintain a genuine covenant relationship with the Creator and Redeemer.

1. Christ's Coming. An important element in the vision of Christ and the seven churches is His coming. The expression "Son of Man" is linked to the idea of coming drawn from Daniel 7, where He is referred to as coming for His enthronement subsequent to a heavenly judgment. In the setting of the letters to the churches, all the declarations are situated in the perspective of the coming of God. There are, however, two aspects involved regarding the reality of this coming.

A. A conditional coming. The expression which insists on the manner rather than on the event. For example, in Revelation 2:5; 2:16; 3:3, the tone is "repent or else I will come to you." This coming is like the visit of God in the OT to judge His people.

B. An unconditional coming. This aspect is found not only within the context of the letters (2:25; 3:11), but also as a theme to the whole book. The opening lines of the Revelation refer to it (Rev 1:7). The center of the book, if one adopts the chiasmic structure proposed by Kenneth Strand, pictures the coming of the Son of man sitting on a white cloud. The last emphatic promise of Jesus in the book is "Yes, I am coming quickly" (Rev 22:20).

2. Features and Issues. We accept the historicist perspective of interpretation which sees a historical chronology in the succession of the churches from the beginning of the Christian era to the end of this world. However, in this study we will center on the issues dealt with in each letter in order to discover how Jesus Christ is revealed.

The letters reveal to those addressed the Lord whom they serve, their own spiritual condition, and what they should be or do to remain in the covenant in order to benefit from its present and future blessings. In each letter Jesus, the Son of Man, is described in such a way as to provide fitting answers to the problems raised by the circumstances and the need of the particular church addressed.

Analysis of the Churches

Ephesus. This church combines several features that cause her to appear as a genuine example of an ideal Christian community. She has doctrinal clear-sightedness that equips her to detect errors. Concerning her ethics, she seems irreproachable. She looks at the behavior of the Nicolaitans with contempt. With respect to several visible issues, she seems conformed to Jesus Christ, except for the link of perfection: "You have left your first love" (Rev 2:4).

We learn that a congregation may have good doctrines and at the same time practices caustic criticism and severe judgments that do not

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glorify the Lord Jesus. If love, which is supposed to motivate and inspire all our actions, is reduced to only a sense of duty, then vitality turns into routine. Love does not exclude sound doctrine. Actually, love fades because of iniquity. Jesus made that plain (Matt 24:12). Love faded because of a detective mentality which prevailed in the church.

The NT description of the historical situation at Ephesus during apostolic times indicates this church was warned by the apostle Paul: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert. . .” (Acts 20:29-30). Testing evil persons and those claiming apostleship and authority (Rev 2:2), the Ephesians went to the extreme in this direction, so much so that their love was overcome by a “detective mentality.”

Love is at the foundation of the church, given that the most wonderful characteristic of the God who founded it is love and that He did it out of love. The moving away from love, which in the text is compared to a fall (vs. 5), is an alienation from light. The covenant curse, the removal of the lampstand (vs. 5), is significant in this respect.

The eye is not sufficient; we must include the heart. A heart moved by Christ’s love (Rev 1:5) must permeate our thoughts and actions. The remedy for the problem prophesied in the letter to Ephesus is to adopt the mind-set of Jesus (Phil 2:5, KJV). This is indicated by the call to repentance (*metanoē*) which is literally the changing of the mind. It is not enough to suffer in the name of the Lord; the worshiping servant is invited to think like Him.

Smyrna. The issue in this letter concerns the unconditional attachment to the Lord Jesus, whatever circumstances the believer faces. Loyalty to Jesus is the way to a total and a definitive liberation. Christ is presented as the One who tasted death and who rose to life, victorious over the grave (Rev 2:8). His power is not limited by the enemy death. He has the keys of death and the grave (Rev 1:18). Because of His prerogatives, nothing can ultimately prevail over the believer who clings to Him. No shutting up, whether by the tongue (blasphemy), or prison, or even death can overcome him, because of Christ who guarantees the removal of “the second death” (Rev 2:11). This letter is very comforting. It fills those who face persecution with courage and determination, even to the point of possible martyrdom. Whatever may be the tribulation, there are limits beyond which the persecutor cannot go.

Those who suffer may be tempted to give themselves up to revolt, rebellion, or despair. All these emotions tend to cause their victims to become prey to rancor, anger, or self-pity. The temptation is to lose the

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nobility of their dependence on God, an Adventist attitude, waiting on God under all circumstances while awaiting His advent, instead of taking one's destiny into one's own hands for the sake of self-preservation. Another way to express this loss of all things through clinging to Christ is the use of the term "poverty."

The awareness the believer is called to maintain is a lively consciousness of participating in the life, in the passion, and in the resurrection of Christ, and the conviction of being a "fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance" of God's servants, like John himself (Rev 1:9). Although the Christian may be bound, be limited by various obstacles, he has the possibility to go through them all because of "the first and the last," Jesus Himself. Nothing has absolute power to mask the vision of his Lord. His destination is the freedom of eternal life. The dynamic of the relationship between the antitypical High Priest and the people He cares for is essential to grasp, especially for the eschatological people of God who will face persecution, as we read in the letter to Philadelphia (Rev 2:10).

Pergamum. Jesus is described as a warrior who fights by means of a sharp two edged-sword against those who are opposed to faithfulness to His name and who spread false doctrines (the teaching of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans).

The Christian is urged to overcome two kinds of obstacles. The first, persecution, an external danger, can separate the Christian from Jesus and from His testimony (Rev 2:13). A second, idolatry and immorality, can separate the believer from God and from His word (Rev 2:14-15). Concerning the place, even though it is where Satan's throne is, the church is not advised to move away, but rather to be faithful like Antipas, even unto death. Because of the spread of false doctrines, there is a call to repentance, which in the context consists of giving them up (Rev 2:16).

The blessing symbolized by the gift of the manna indicates that genuine communion with the Lord cannot include a consumption of things offered to idols, or being involved in acts of immorality. These practices lead to alienation and are a corruption of the legitimate covenant relationship with God. Outside the covenant there is nothing but regression. When the faithful remain in the covenant, they are placed in a position of receptivity. They are granted some of the hidden manna—that is, life—and a new I.D. that lasts forever—that is, a new name written on the stone.

Thyatira. In this letter, Christ presents himself as the omniscient Judge. The issue is that the authority of the Word of God has been usurped and an illegitimate use made of it. There is a perversion of true prophecy and of true teaching in the claims of Jezebel. Instead of

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leading to God, she leads God's servants away from His covenant, "so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:20).

There is a usurpation of the prerogative of the Spirit in order to cover practices opposed to the plan of God. These practices, such as knowing "the deep things of Satan," call for judgment. And if the children of Jezebel are put to death, it is for the purpose of stopping the propagation and influence of the false teaching (Rev 2:23, 24).

The Christian is invited to hold on to the Word of God until the coming of Jesus (Rev 2:25). The disciple is urged not to replace it by any other foundation. No wonder authority is given to the remnant who keep Jesus' "deeds" (Rev 2:26). If we take into account the Hebrew concept of *dābār* (word/acts), then the expression, "My deeds" are a way of referring to the record of His deeds in the Scripture. True knowledge can only be obtained through the One who is "the bright morning star" (Rev 2:28; 22:16).

Sardis. Jesus is described as performing an intercessory ministry in favor of those who manifest a repentant attitude, so they may escape the lethargy that has taken hold of them. He also has the privilege of keeping the believer listed in the book of life (Rev 3:5).

In this letter we observe Christians who stagnate in their pilgrimage and do not allow their commitment to reach maturity. The church has "received," "heard," but her awareness has become feeble. The verb tenses lead us to formulate the hypothesis that part of this church has kept the letter of the Scriptures but has deprived herself of the hearing which is vital ("what you have received," is a Greek perfect which means "what you have received and still have"; then we have "heard," a Greek aorist, implying that you continue to hear but have not kept or obeyed or fully acted on that hearing). When the living Word of Christ is no longer at the center, when it is no more His invigorating Spirit who inspires and supports the achievements of the church, then routine takes over, leading inevitably to death unless something radical happens. A superficial evaluation of the condition of the church could make it look healthy and alive, but the investigation of the Son of Man results in a different diagnosis.

The good news in this letter is that Christ has redeemed us and we are listed in the book of life; however, we are invited to countersign personally, receiving the grace to be faithful to His living word. Christ is not only the Savior, He is also the Lord who should be obeyed through the hearing and the doing of His will, as revealed in the Scriptures.

The remedy to the situation of this church is to "remember," to go back to its source, to listen, to hear God through His Word made alive

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by His Spirit (Rev 3:3). To those who give heed to the invitation, the ultimate covenant blessing of being Jesus' companions is granted (Rev 3:4).

Philadelphia. In the letter Christ attributes to Himself the title of "saint" (*ho hagios*, the holy one). This is the only place in the book of Revelation where the title is applied to Him. Elsewhere, this title is God's prerogative (Rev 4:8; 6:10). This shows the high Christology of the book. Jesus Christ is also designated as the "True One." It is also His prerogative to have "the key of David," and the authority associated with it (Rev 3:7). This latter expression points to his messianic identity.

The letter to Sardis emphasized the relationship of Jesus to the Spirit of life. In the letter to Philadelphia it is the intimate and unique link between Jesus and the Father that is highlighted (vs. 12 alone refers four times to "My God").

In the letter to Smyrna, Christ gives the persecuted Christians the assurance of liberation from all chains, whether poverty, slander, prison, or death. In the letter to Philadelphia (the literary parallel to the Smyrna church), He presents Himself as the One who gives access to communion with God and who establishes an indestructible relationship with His people (Rev 3:7-8).

This church is attached to the Lord Jesus (there is no covenant curse or warning). Unlike the church at Sardis, she has kept His word and did not deny the name of the Lord. She is persevering in the covenant, although she has little strength (Rev 3:8).

This last aspect is a tremendous message and example for any generation of Christian tempted to look at its weakness and thereby refrain from doing evangelism. What is fundamental is to be unconditionally attached to the Lord Jesus and to rely totally on Him. The rich cultic sanctuary vocabulary of this letter points to the worship issue and indicates that the purpose of mission is to bring nonbelievers to worship a loving and just God.

Laodicea. There is no better way to end these messages than for Jesus Christ to introduce Himself as "the Amen," the "Yes," the climax of all the blessings of God (Rev 3:14; cf. 2 Cor 1:20).

The lawsuit tone is evident in the letter to Laodicea. Warnings and covenant curses follow a hard but realistic diagnosis concerning the condition of the church. Nevertheless, this is not the whole picture. Even when Jesus threatens the wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked church of Laodicea, He indicates the solution to the problems. Far from rejecting the object of His love, He judges her in order to heal her, in order to raise her up and to promote her to sharing His kingship (Rev 3:19).

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This letter underscores the passion of Jesus for His church. He is like an ousted king, useless in the sight of His people (she says: “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” Rev 3:17). This church deceives herself concerning her true condition. She has fallen into the trap of self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction, just like Ephraim of old before the fall of the Northern Kingdom (Hos 12:8).

The remedy for this Church is to respond to the invitation to forge a vital relationship with Jesus. After the speech about the solution (securing from Christ refined gold in order to be rich, white garments in order to be clothed, and eye-salve in order to see), the narration shows the process leading to the desired relationship. Motivated by love, Jesus judges by reproof and by disciplining His people. He also presents Himself as begging for intimacy, knocking at the door of the heart. This indicates the intensity of His desire and the love flowing from Him. After the relational configuration, the text moves to the enthronement.

Several figures are used to describe the Son of man as He is portrayed in this message:

1. The recipient of all the blessings of God (the Amen) and the One by whom they reach humankind.
2. The supreme reference for the meaning of the life of humankind (the faithful Witness).
3. A disgusted consumer.
4. A threatening judge.
5. A physician who diagnoses the condition of His patient.
6. A provider of remedies.
7. A source of healing.
8. A clothier who restores the dignity of His people with proper clothing to prevent their shame.
9. An educator (A teacher who would teach His wayward disciple).
10. A suitor, pleading for a relationship with His beloved.
11. One who desires deep and genuine fellowship (although the church needs Him more).
12. A king who promises to share His prerogatives with His subjects.
13. The elect of God who transforms the homelessness of His church into a homecoming enthronement, who turns the disenfranchised into princely heirs.

Thus, an observation of the whole passage displays an itinerary which moves from total degeneration to shared kingship. This is absolutely amazing and unheard of. The Creator and King, the only genuine reference point for humankind, ignored and even crucified by His subjects, not only dreams about and plans a possible restored relationship, but more than that, wishes to restore the object of His love

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to the status and dignity of kings. He desires no less than to share His kingship. I assume from this revelation that the redeemed will spend eternity showing their deepest gratitude to the all loving Trinity.

Conclusion

To the historical and eschatological church, facing both persecution and deception, Jesus is revealed as the antitypical High Priest who judges His people. His function in this vision is unique. It surpasses that of the high priests of the old covenant. He is not just the bearer of the sins of His people, or the performer of cultic laws, or even the intercessor. In this setting, He is the one who warns and awakes His people from their lethargy. He prescribes a solution to each problem the church faces, whether from without or within.

Jesus has come and has lived among humankind (incarnation); He died for our sins and arose a conqueror over death. Many Christian communities appropriately teach this good news; but if nothing more is emphasized, a vital part of the biblical revelation about Jesus is lacking. Jesus ascended to heaven and intercedes as our *paraklētōs* (helper, intercessor) before the Father and before the angels (1 John 2:1; Heb 8:1,2; 9:24). The letter to the Hebrews has already revealed this truth. The book of Revelation, though reminding us of this aspect, also points to the ministry of Jesus as the eschatological Judge. This judgment involves the implications of the cross in the lives of His people. The issue is whether His disciples will follow in His steps and be faithful to Him, even if they should face death. In other words, does the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ at the cross for sinners create such a spirit of gratitude in the heart of Christians that they will live exclusively for Him?

The purpose of Christ's investigation of the churches is to make it possible for Him to dictate the appropriate remedy so that the servants and congregation of the antitypical High Priest may be conformed to the requirements of the truth and holiness of His Father.

Jesus examines His church and enters into judgment with her in the form of a lawsuit. He comes, however, to encourage His people, to reveal to them that He is the supreme treasure. All the covenant blessings are linked to their union in Him. But if His people fail to remain in the covenant, that is, if they abandon Him, the covenant curses will be their lot. In Revelation 22:12 Jesus declares: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me, to render every man according to what he has done."

The judgment Christ expresses in the seven letters verifies our gratitude or ingratitude toward our divine High Priest who died for us,

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and who presently stands for us during this Laodicean era, confessing the names of all who belong to Him before the Father and the angels. He expects nothing less than to see His people standing for Him and confessing His name, no matter what the cost.

This analysis of the churches serves as a preparation for God's people, so that they may be ready when the Son of man returns in glory and majesty. The reader of the Scriptures is informed that "God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Thus, before the coming of "the day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18) for them, that is, before the tragic events of the end of the northern and southern kingdoms, in 722 and 586 BC, respectively, God sent prophets like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Ezekiel. These prophets were sent as God's representatives in a covenant lawsuit against His people.

Likewise, before the coming of the eschatological "day of the Lord" (2 Pet 3:10), Jesus Himself (described in the book of Revelation as being in the midst of His people) assumes this prophetic office of warning and preparing them for His return.

Notes

* Scripture citations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

1 See the letter to Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22 and the letter to Sardis 3:1-6.

2 See the appeals to conversion in Rev 2-3 the series of trumpets, Rev 8-11; and the three angels' messages, Rev 14.

3 Rev 12:10, 11.

4 Death would have played a decisive role against God's sovereignty if fear of it prevented the servants of God from bearing witness to their unconditional attachment to Jesus.

5 See D. A. Foxvog, A. D. Kilmer, "Music," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 439-440.

6 The gesture of the Son of Man and the following words "fear not" are used in the Scriptures by God or by angels commissioned by Him.

7 Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," *Symposium on Revelation - Bk1*. Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, Frank B. Holbrook, Ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 6:109.

8 Jon Paulien. *Intertextuality, the Hebrew Cultus and the Plot of the Apocalypse*. A paper read at the Literary Criticism and the Apocalypse Consultation, SBL Annual Meeting, New Orleans, November 18, 1990, p. 15.

9 Oscar Cullman, *Christologie du Nouveau Testament* (Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1958), p. 134.

10 Ignace de la Poterie, "La tunique sans couture, symbole du Christ grand prêtre?" *Bib* 60 (1979): 255-269.

11 Jacques Doukhan, *Aux portes de l'espérance* (Dammaris les lys: Vie et santé, 1983), p. 103.

12 Kenneth A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the book of Revelation," *AUSS* 21 (1983):251-264.

13 William Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 71-84.

14 F. F. Bruce, "Revelation," *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, ed. F. F. Bruce, Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 1599.

15 *The Babylonian Talmud: Sefer Hagidah*. Translated into English with notes, glossary and indexes by Rabbi Prof. I. Abrahams (London: The Soncino Press, 1938), p. 83.

16 See also Ezekiel 1:24 and Daniel 10:6

17 E. B. Allo, *Saint Jean L'Apocalypse* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1933).

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18 Shea, pp. 71-84.

19 Targum Jer on Gen 30:22; mentioned by R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920), p. 30.

20 Albert Vanhoye, *Le Message de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, Cahiers Evangile, 19 (Paris: Editions du Cert, 1977), pp. 32, 33.

21 Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament. A Study in Formgeschichte* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 331, wrote: "The seven letters do not constitute an heterogeneous assemblage composed by chance, but rather an intentional construction, which purpose is to present a panorama of several situations found in the Christian congregations."

22 G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, PA: 1955).

23 Shea, pp. 71-84.

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Revelation 4 and 5: Judgment or Inauguration?

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Is the throne room scene, of Revelation 4-5, the inauguration of Christ after His ascension or the judgment ministry of Christ near the close of His work in the heavenly sanctuary? Seventh-day Adventist scholars are divided on this question. For example, Richard Davidson¹ Jon Paulien² and Ranko Stefanovic³ believe the inauguration of Christ is presented, while R. Dean Davis⁴ Alberto R. Treiyer⁵ and Mario Veloso⁶ believe the pre-advent judgment of Christ is portrayed.⁷

Revelation 4-5 present the first throne-room scene in the Book of Revelation. Reading the account in English Bibles finds God the Father on the throne with a scroll in His right hand, and Christ is presented as the only one worthy to open the seals of the scroll. What is this scroll? Does it contain human records? Is it the basis of the pre-advent judgment? Or does this receiving of the scroll have some other meaning, such as the inauguration of Christ as King/Priest in His heavenly sanctuary ministry? In other words, does Revelation 4-5 have to do with inaugurated eschatology or with consummated eschatology?⁸

Procedure

If one assumes this passage is the inauguration of Christ and attempts to prove this from the text, or if one assumes that the passage is the pre-advent judgment, and attempts to prove this from the text, the method is flawed. Assumptions must be checked by the evidence, and not the other way round.

This leads us to some hermeneutical principles. (1) No idea of either inauguration or judgment must be superimposed on the passage. (2)

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The decision for either inauguration or judgment must be found within the passage. (3) The conclusion about inauguration or judgment must be in harmony with the overall structure of the Book. (4) The conclusion about inauguration or judgment must also agree with the Hebrew cultus, for the heavenly sanctuary and its ministries have a necessary correspondence with the earthly sanctuary types. These four principles agree with the *sola scriptura* hermeneutic, where the Bible interprets the Bible. Finally, (5) Does Ellen G. White add any insights that confirm the conclusion reached from Scripture?

The idea that those espousing the inauguration view are preterists and those espousing the preadvent view are futurists apparently overlooks the fact that the inauguration is not an event that has no meaning beyond its happening. The inauguration of the king/Priest was not an end in itself. Rather, it was an inauguration of a process that continues until the end of the pre-advent judgment. So the inauguration of the King/Priest was an inauguration into His Kingly/Priestly work that includes the *tamid* intercession and the *yom kippur* pre-advent judgment. It was precisely for both that Christ was inaugurated. This fact does justice to the three-dimensional nature of eschatology as past, present, and future.

In his *Andrews University Seminary Studies* article, Jon Paulien says of Revelation 4-5, "No passage in Revelation contains a larger quantity or a wider variety of allusions to the Hebrew cultus than the introductory scene of Revelation 4 and 5. Such a variety of references could only come from an occasion in which the entire temple/sanctuary was involved. Only two such occasions appear in the Hebrew cultus: the Day of Atonement and the service of inauguration (Exod 40; cf. 1 Kings 6-8)."⁹ Thus, Seventh-day Adventist scholars are at present viewing Rev 4- 5 as either the Day of Atonement pre-advent judgment or the inauguration of Christ right after His ascension. It is obvious that Revelation 4-5 cannot be both of these occasions, separated as they are by nearly two millennia. Rather than analyze the two views as presented by Adventist scholars, as I did in the first draft of this article, I wish to limit my presentation to evidence for Revelation 4-5 as Christ's inauguration rather than His pre-advent judgment.

Evidence that Revelation 4-5 is not the Pre-Advent Judgment

Those who think Revelation 4-5 depict the pre-advent judgment, think these chapters parallel Daniel 7. But there are striking differences.

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Jubilation rather than Judgment. The very atmosphere of jubilant worship and praise dominates Revelation 4-5 in a way not present in the pre-advent judgment scene of Daniel 7.

Evidence against a Judgment scene. Daniel says, “As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. . . .The court was seated, and the books were open” (Dan 7:9-10). This is clearly a judgment scene, with the court ready for its session, and the open books before it. Note there is more than one book, and they are open. This directly contrasts with Revelation 5 where the scroll is only one, and is sealed, and the word “judgment” is not found. But there is more to it than the absence of the word “judgment.” There is also the absence of Greek words necessary if the scene is a pre-advent judgment scene. The absence of these linguistic codes are an important part of the contextual data that helps determine what scene is being conveyed in Revelation 4-5.

As Jon Paulien notes, these linguistic codes that are associated with the most holy place, where the pre-advent judgment is in session (as described in Daniel 7), are missing in Revelation 4-5. Thus, the Greek nouns *naos* (most holy place) and *kibotos* (ark of the covenant), both associated with the pre-advent judgment, are not present in Revelation 4-5. Nor is the language of judgment found in Revelation 4-5, though the Greek terms *krino* (to judge), *krisis* (process of judging), and *krima* (result of judging) appear often in the book of Revelation after the inner *naos* is brought to view in Revelation 11:19.¹⁰ It is important to realize that “the crisis of chapter 5 is resolved not by judgment, but by the death of the Lamb.”¹¹

Christ Comes to the Father. In Revelation 5 the Lamb comes to the One seated on the throne to receive a sealed Scroll. What does Christ do in Daniel 7? Daniel says, “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14). This “coming on the clouds of heaven” is not the second advent (Rev 14:14-20). It is a prior coming to the Father. Christ comes to the Father to receive the verdict of the court session. He is given everlasting dominion.

What this means is further spelled out in the chapter. Thus, “The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18). Again, “As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints

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of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (Dan 7:21-22). Daniel is shown that the little horn “will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. The sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him” (Dan 7:25-27).

These two comings of Christ to the Father are different. In Revelation 4-5 He comes to receive a sealed scroll. In Daniel 7 He comes to receive an everlasting Kingdom.

In Revelation 4-5 Christ comes to begin His heavenly ministry. In Daniel He comes at the end of His heavenly ministry.

The Question of Authority. There is another distinct difference between Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-5. In Daniel 7 the Father gives authority to Christ. “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all people, nations and men of every language worshiped him” (Dan 7:14). In Revelation 5 the Father does not give authority to Christ. He already has authority because of Calvary. No one else has this authority to give. Not even God the Father. Thus, only Christ is worthy to open the sealed scroll because of Who He is and what He did at the cross. “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12). So the focus is very different in these two passages. In Revelation 4-5 the focus is on the verdict of the Calvary judgment, whereas in Daniel 7 the focus is on the verdict of the pre-advent judgment.

Creaturely Response to the Cosmic Controversy. Revelation 4-5 needs to be seen in the light of the issue in the cosmic controversy. In Revelation 5 the 24 elders sing a new song, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). They declare that Christ can begin His heavenly sanctuary ministry, open the Scroll, because as High Priest He has a sacrifice to offer. His death qualifies Him. This is the launching of His work in heaven’s sanctuary. The 24 elders continue, “You have made them (human beings) to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10). Here is an insight into the future. So the song of the 24 elders reaches from the

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inauguration of Christ's ministry in heaven to the ministry of the redeemed in the new earth. This gives us the extent of the rejoicing.

"Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!' (Rev 5:13). This is the time when all creatures are alive again, which points to the post-millennial resurrection. The great white throne is on earth, and the judgment takes place (Rev 20:11-15). Revelation 20 deals with the judgment of all the wicked. Revelation 5 presents their response (as well as all others). So Revelation 5 has a song that is sung at a judgment scene, but it is the post-millennial judgment and not the pre-advent judgment.

Relation of the Scroll to Judgment. What is the Scroll that Christ allegedly takes from the right hand of the Father? Clues are found in the unsealing of the seven seals. White, red, black and pale horses come to view when the first four seals are broken (Rev 6:1-8). These represent the unfolding of historical events. It is significant that in coming to the fifth seal, martyrs cry out, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood" (Rev 6:10). Clearly the judgment has not convened even after five of the seven seals are broken, and this agrees with the conclusion that Revelation 4-5 is not a judgment scene, for none of the seals are opened in Rev 4-5. The sixth seal is opened just before the second advent (Rev 6:12-16). That's when major convulsions of nature occur in connection with the second advent of Christ. When the seventh seal is opened, there is silence in heaven (Rev 8:1).

The opening of the seals seems to involve history throughout the Christian era, from Christ's ascension until His second advent. Yet the martyrs under the altar, in the fifth seal, are not said to be limited to the Christian era (Rev 6:9-10). In fact Ellen G. White, speaks of the wickedness of the world before the first coming of Christ, and says, "the earth was filled with transgression. The voices of those who had been sacrificed to human envy and hatred were crying beneath the altar of retribution."¹² Ellen G. White broadens the content of the Scroll to include history back to the beginning. She says, after commenting on

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Revelation 5:1-3, “There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God’s providence, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth’s history to its close.”¹³ By contrast the pre-advent judgment books only concern those who have professed to be on God’s side of the cosmic controversy, for in Daniel 7 the only ones judged are the little horn and God’s saints (Dan 7:21-22; 25-27). There is no mention of the rest of mankind.¹⁴

This suggests that the Scroll contains all history in the past and all history in the future. The Scroll is a record of the cosmic controversy. Two specific events in the Scroll received comment by Ellen G. White.¹⁵ (1). She says, “The light we have received upon the third angel’s message is the true light. The mark of the beast is exactly what it has been proclaimed to be. Not all in regard to this matter is yet understood, nor will it be understood until the unrolling of the scroll; but a most solemn work is to be accomplished in our world.”¹⁶ (2). The second statement speaks about the Jews decision to reject Christ. “Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”¹⁷ This will be when those Jews live again, either at the second advent (Rev 1:7) or at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:11-14).

These statements show that the eschatological “mark of the beast” (Rev 13:17) will not be understood until the Scroll is “unrolled,” and that the vindictiveness of the Jews decision will not be known until the Scroll (book) is “unsealed.” These statements suggest that the Scroll continues to be unsealed, and hence understood, until the great controversy is ended. In other words, its use is not limited to a pre-advent judgment.

Evidence that Revelation 4-5 is the Inauguration of the King/Priest

Having examined evidence that Revelation 4-5 is not the pre-advent judgment, we now turn to consider evidence that Revelation 4-5 is the inauguration of Christ as King/Priest after His ascension.

Overall Structure of Revelation. Kenneth A. Strand notes the historical (1:12-14:20) and eschatological (15:1-22:5) divisions of the

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book.¹⁸ C. Mervyn Maxwell follows the same division.¹⁹ These follow the chiasmic structure of the book. Although I agree with this two-fold division, and the chiasmic matching of the corresponding subsections, it seems from looking at the content of the text that there is also a different dividing line between the historical and eschatological divisions. The last verse of chapter 11 (Rev 11:19) peers into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. This marks a transition from the first apartment. The first apartment ministry is during historical time. The second apartment ministry is during eschatological time.²⁰

This transition from the first to the second apartment in Revelation 11:19 is supported by the fact that Revelation 13 clearly deals with eschatological events. For example, Revelation 13:3 speaks of all the world wondering after the Papacy, and verses 12-16 speak of America forcing the whole world to worship the Papacy and passing a death decree. Revelation 14 gives the end-time messages of the three angels (Rev 14:6-13), the second advent (Rev 14:14-20) and the view of the 144,000 with Christ in heaven and beyond (Rev 14:1-5). I see the historical division as going up to chapter 11, and the eschatological division from chapter 13 to the end of the book. If this division is correct, then I believe chapter 12 forms an apex that joins the two divisions. This is appropriate as it covers the four major battles of the cosmic controversy that span both historical and eschatological time. This is where the content, more than the chiasm, seems to determine the divisions.

It is significant that the approximate middle verse of Revelation is in chapter 12, and has to do with Calvary (12:11). If we consider the book to be in the form of a triangle, with the left side as historical, and the right side as eschatological, then both meet in the apex of chapter 12, with the cross placed on the top of the apex. The cross is the fulcrum on which both the historical and eschatological divisions turn. Or, the cross is the decisive, determining influence in both divisions.

Sanctuary Structure. The type/antitype correspondence between the earthly/heavenly sanctuaries is fundamental to those who see Christ in the most holy place in Revelation 4-5. They rightly point out that the throne was always located in the most holy place in the earthly sanctuary. They conclude that the vision at the throne in Revelation 4-5 must therefore take place in the most holy place of heaven's sanctuary. They further suggest that the vision of Christ among the seven golden lampstands in Revelation 1 portrays Christ in the holy place of heaven's sanctuary, so that the words "after this" John saw "a door standing open in heaven" (Rev 4:1) must refer to the door into the most holy place. Furthermore, it is the trumpet-like voice of Christ (Rev 1:10-11) that invites John to come through the open door into the throne room (Rev 4:1-2). They say John simply moves through the open door

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separating the two apartments, and hence moves from the holy to the most holy place.

But there are other factors that need to be considered. We have already referred to Rev 11:19, where one gets a peek into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Up to this point (Rev 11:19) the throne room scenes are all in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. This is determined by the furniture mentioned. The two pieces of furniture singled out in Revelation 1-8 are found in the first apartment—the seven lampstands in Revelation 4:5, and the altar of incense in Revelation 8:3-4. Not until we get to Revelation 11:19 do we find mention of the ark of the covenant, the throne of God in the most holy place. Furthermore, the seven golden lampstands of Revelation 1 represent the seven churches (Rev 1:12,20) and not the sanctuary menorah, which doesn't come into view until John enters the open door and sees the seven blazing lamps (Rev 4:5). This strongly suggests that the open door is into the holy place and not into the most holy place.

This means that a throne room scene does not have to be in the most holy place if the sanctuary furniture, like the menorah and altar of incense, clearly designate it as in the holy place. What do we do, then, with a strict type/antitype analogy that disallows the throne in the holy place? Put another way, how can we explain the presence of holy place furniture in the throne room scenes of Revelation 5 and 8?

Here we must be careful to understand the type/antitype correspondence. The exactitude of this correspondence is only as good as the limitations of the type. For example, if Scripture gives evidence of a moveable throne, then this is a fact about the original throne which can never be grasped by the typical throne. We are dealing with escalation or intensification of the antitype over the type. An example of this escalation of the antitype over the type is found in the lamb type for Jesus, the Lamb of God (Rev 5:6). This is a horizontal escalation. The lamb type only represents Christ's death, and has nothing to say about His other functions as Prophet, Priest and King. It says nothing about His inauguration and role in the pre-advent judgment. It says nothing about His eternal existence, His incarnational life, and His eternal reign. Nor can it possibly do justice even to His death. Yet, it is still a genuine type, even though it utterly fails to represent all that Jesus is and does.

Likewise, the placement of the throne in the most holy place in the type is only one aspect of the throne. What the type fails to convey is the fact that the throne is a moveable throne, and can enter the holy place too. Whereas the Lamb of God/lamb (antitype/type) is a horizontal escalation, the throne of God/ark of the covenant (antitype/type) is a

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vertical escalation. It is significant that even during the Hebrew cultus God's presence was not confined to the most holy place in the earthly sanctuary/temple (Exod 29:42-43; 33:9-10; Ezek 9:3; 10:4). Here was a horizontal escalation between God's movement and the ark's fixed position. Hence, even in the Old Testament God's presence is not confined to the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. Then, why should it be in the heavenly antitype--the original?

Scripture speaks of a moveable throne in Ezekiel and Daniel. Ezekiel, in chapter 1, speaks of four cherubims (Ezek 1:4-11) moving wherever the Spirit of God moved (Ezek 1:12). "Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man" (Ezek 1:26). Wheels are mentioned in connection with this moveable throne (Ezek 1:15-17). Again God's throne, with wheels, is moving in Ezekiel 10:1-22. The same is true in Daniel. He looked and "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river was flowing, coming out from before him" (Dan 7:9-10). So the fact that the throne is present does not necessarily mean that the scene is in the most holy place in a judgment setting.

In Revelation 4-5 the throne appears opposite the seven golden candlesticks (Rev 4:5).²¹ The throne in the holy place in heaven's sanctuary is considered the "table throne" by C. Mervyn Maxwell,²² and the table of shewbread, placed opposite the candlesticks, was called "bread of the Presence" (Exod 25:30) seemingly signifying the presence of God. It seems to me that the fact that the throne is moveable is sufficient reason for finding the throne in the holy place.

Richard M. Davidson²³ and Jon Paulien²⁴ have convincingly shown the importance of the sanctuary structure in the book of Revelation. There is a definite progression from the first apartment service (the daily, *tamid*) to the second apartment service (the yearly, *yom kippur*). There is thus an unfolding of the plan of salvation, within the sanctuary, as one moves through the Book of Revelation. Revelation 4-5 is within the daily, and not the yearly, presentation.

Jewish Festival Year Structure. We have seen that the first apartment ministry is followed by the second apartment ministry in heaven's sanctuary as one goes through the book of Revelation. It is the historical section that finds Christ in the first apartment, and it is the eschatological section that finds Christ in the second apartment. As one reads through the book, one goes from the holy place into the most holy place.

The second structural feature of the book is the Jewish festival year.²⁵ As one reads through the book, one passes through the Jewish

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festival year. The Jewish festival year included five major feasts—Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles. These follow the unfolding of the plan of salvation, just as the two apartments follow the unfolding of Christ's High Priestly ministry in heaven's sanctuary. In other words, both these structures have to do with Christ's saving work. Passover represents Calvary, Pentecost is when His sacrifice was accepted in heaven, Trumpets came ten days before the Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles represents the fact that God will tabernacle, or be with, humankind forever in the new earth.

Passover, or Calvary is the first event mentioned (Rev 1:5) after the introduction (Rev 1:1-4). And reference to it is repeated (Rev 1:17-18). Pentecost (Rev 4-5) comes before Trumpets (Rev 8-11), which come before the Day of Atonement (Rev 13-20) which precedes Tabernacles (Rev 21). The important fact is the placement of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. In the Jewish cultus the Feast of Trumpets always came ten days before the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:24-27). Trumpets always announced the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the day of judgment, the time when the High Priest ministered in the most holy place (Lev 16:1-34). So Passover, Pentecost and Trumpets were feasts during the time when the priests ministered in the holy place.

Note that the Trumpets end in Revelation 11, just as Revelation 11:19 is the first view of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. This means that both the Sanctuary furniture and the Jewish feasts point to the fact that Revelation 1-11 are during the *tamid* ministry of Christ in the holy place (and hence historical), and Revelation 13-20 are during the *Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur* Judgment ministry of Christ in the most holy place, (and hence eschatological). Thus, the sanctuary and festival structures support the historical/eschatological divisions (1-11/13-22) presented in this article.

The fact that Revelation 4-5 is solidly in the historical first apartment ministry of the heavenly sanctuary, as seen in the above structural considerations, shows that they do not belong to the eschatological (Day of Atonement/Pre-advent judgment) context.

Contribution of Revelation 1 and 3. Building on this contextual structural data, what do we find in the immediate context preceding Revelation 4-5?

Seven Lampstands. First a word about Revelation 1. Those believing Revelation 4-5 is a judgment scene suggest that Revelation 1 is a view of the first apartment followed by the second apartment in Revelation 4-5. They suggest that the lampstands (Rev 1:12) are the lights in the holy place. But the record says "the seven lampstands are

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the seven churches” (Rev 1:20). The purpose of the vision is for John to write to the seven churches, telling them about Christ, who stands among them. A part of this vision is found in the first six churches (Rev 2:1, 8, 12,18; 3:1,7). Then the seventh message ends with a reference to Christ’s ascension. “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev 3:21). This is the logical contextual background for what follows in Revelation 4-5.²⁶

After the ascension, a door is open in heaven. Christ speaks (Rev 1:10-20; 3:1) saying, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this” (Rev 4:2). “Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God” (Rev. 4:5). We have presented the Biblical evidence why this scene is in the first apartment. It is, therefore, of interest to read Ellen G. White’s comment on these seven lamps. She says, “As in vision the apostle John was granted a view of the temple of God in heaven, he beheld there ‘seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.’ Revelation 4:5. He saw an angel ‘having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense upon the golden altar which was before the throne.’ Revelation 8:3. Here the prophet was permitted to behold the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven; and he saw there the ‘seven lamps of fire’ and ‘the golden altar,’ represented by the golden candlestick and the altar of incense in the sanctuary on earth. Again, ‘the temple of God was opened’ (Revelation 11:19), and he looked within the inner veil, upon the holy of holies. Here he beheld ‘the ark of His testament,’ represented by the sacred chest constructed by Moses to contain the law of God.”²⁷

This statement corroborates our conclusions about the sanctuary furniture. Here Ellen White also agrees that in Revelation 1 to 11:18 we are in the first apartment, with its seven candlesticks and altar of incense; and that Revelation 11:19 brings the second apartment into view, with the ark of the testament. This agrees with our historical/eschatological divisions. This is powerful confirmation that Revelation 4-5 take place in the first apartment, and hence are not the judgment that takes place in the second apartment.

Revelation 3:21. Revelation 3:21 says, “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Two things should be noted: (1) Christ is presented as already seated on the Father’s throne, and (2) overcoming saints are promised a seat with Christ on His throne. Let’s consider both. The fact of Christ being seated on the Father’s throne is interpreted by some as evidence that the enthronement has already taken place, and by others this statement follows the literary device in Revelation where a future event is given prior to what leads up to it,

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just as in Revelation 14:1-5 the redeemed are presented in heaven prior to the second advent that makes this possible (Rev 14:14-20). Because of the structural matters already considered, that place Revelation 4-5 in the first apartment, then Revelation 4-5 cannot be a second apartment scene that follows an enthronement verse (Rev 3:21). It seems, therefore, that the second option is the more likely one.

Let's explore the significance of Christ being seated on His Father's throne, as it impacts the enthronement scene of Revelation 5. Clearly Christ is seated with His Father on his throne, and not on His own throne. If Christ is on His Father's throne in this verse, when does He get to sit on His own throne? In Daniel 7, after the pre-advent judgment is concluded, Christ comes to the Father to receive His throne. "He was given authority, glory and sovereign power: all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Dan 7:14).

Although Christ is given the Kingdom before the second advent, and although He comes as King of kings in the second advent (Rev 19:16), Christ speaks of that coming as the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Mighty One, (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62), or sitting on the right hand of the mighty God (Luke 22:69).²⁸ The second advent will cause the wicked to cry out, "hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Rev 6:16).

It would seem that the second advent is the time Christ receives His kingdom. He comes to receive the redeemed and to destroy their enemies. Not until after the post-millennial judgment, on the great white throne, will the wicked of all generations be destroyed (Rev 20:11-15). Only then will the double verdict of Calvary (deliverance/destruction) be fully realized. But Christ does not need to wait until all the wicked are destroyed until He receives His kingdom, for the receiving of the kingdom is the receiving of the redeemed at the second advent. This is why end-time martyrs reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev 20:4-6). Then, in the new earth, "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city" (Rev 22:3). All these events are eschatological. They are in the future. It is true that Christ reigns in the lives of His victorious saints in the kingdom of grace throughout the Christian age. But He does this while seated on the throne of His Father, which means that He reigns together with Him as a co-regent.

Centrality of the Throne in Revelation 4. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, Ranko Stefanovic brings out many important insights. The word throne (*thronos*) occurs 54 times in the New Testament, of

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which 44 are found in the book of Revelation. In fact the word throne is found in 16 of the 22 chapters of Revelation. Nearly half these occurrences are found in Revelation 4 and 5. It is used 14 times in Revelation 4, and 5 times in Revelation 5, for a total of 19 occurrences.²⁹ Truly the scene of Revelation 4-5 is a throne-room scene.

Immediately, upon entering heaven, the reader is introduced to the throne in Revelation 4. It says someone was sitting on it (Rev 4:2). Notice that the throne, rather than its occupant, is the first focus in the chapter. Then the gaze moves to what is happening around the throne. Four living creatures cry out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8). Who is this God being praised? These are the same words sung to God the Father on his throne by seraphs back in Isaiah’s day. They sing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:1-3). This praise is said to be “day and night, non stop (Rev 4:8). Evidently this praise has been offered non-stop since Isaiah’s day (and no doubt before). Clearly the someone sitting on the throne is the same God the Father who sat on the throne in Isaiah’s day.

The 24 elders worship God the Father, saying, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev 4:11). Here God the Father is praised for being the Creator of the universe (Heb 1:1-2). This is why He is worthy to sit on the throne because He made every one of His subjects. He has the right to reign on the basis of being the Creator of all created beings. This scene is a backdrop to Revelation 5, just like Revelation 3:21. Both prepare the way for the central act in Revelation 5. Just as God is declared worthy to reign in Revelation 4, so Christ is declared worthy to reign in Revelation 5. This parallelism should not be overlooked.

Centrality of the Scroll and its Placement in Revelation 5. In English translations, the Scroll (Gr. *biblion*) is said to be *in* the right hand of the one seated on the throne (e.g., KJV, NIV, Phillips), or “lying *in* the right hand of him who was seated on the throne” (Goodspeed). This is not what it says in the original Greek of Revelation 5:1. It says literally, “I saw on the right of the (One) sitting on the throne” (*kai idon epi tnv dexion tou kathemenou epi tou thronou*). The key word is *epe* (upon, or on) rather than *en* (in). The Greek particle for “in” is absent in the text. The Scroll lay on God’s right side, or lay on the right side of the throne.

In English translations, Revelation 5:7 has Christ coming to take the Scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. But not so in the Greek, which literally says, He “took the scroll out of the right of the (One) sitting on the throne (*eilephe to biblion ek tns dexias tou*

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kathemenou epi tou thronou). When you put these two moments together, Christ comes to take the Scroll that lay to the right of God on His throne. One gets the picture that the book was laying on the throne itself rather than being held by God. Ranko Stefanovic points this out and penetrates to the significance of this fact.³⁰

Importance of the Right hand. We have already noted that Christ is seated on the throne of God rather than on His own throne (Rev 3:21). Although the Old Testament can speak of the Father and Son sitting on each other's right hand" (Psa 110:1,5), the ascended Christ is said to be "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:32-33), sitting on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Rom 8:34; Ephes 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 10:12) or "sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One" (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62), or "seated at the right hand of the mighty God" (Luke 22:69). The right hand is the place of co-regency, where a king who co-reigns with another, is said to be placed. This suggests that Christ occupies the throne as a co-regent with the Father since His ascension.

What is the Scroll? The word scroll/book (Gr. *biblion*) is found 23 times in Revelation. It has five different meanings. 1. The book of prophecy, or Revelation itself (Rev 1:11; 22:7-10; 18-19), 2. the book sealed with seven seals (Rev 5), the little book (Gr. *biblaridion*) which John had to eat (Rev 10), 4. the book of life (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27) and 5. the books (plural. Gr. *biblia*) used in the postmillennial judgment (Rev 20:12).³¹

As Ranko Stefanovic's shows so well, throughout the history of interpretation there have been many different ideas about this book. Here are some of them. 1. The Old Testament remained sealed until Christ unsealed it (Victorinus of Petau d.c. 304). 2. The Old Testament prophecies about Christ were sealed from the Jews (Eusebius of Caesarea c. 260-c. 340). 3. The Old and New Testaments (Tyconius d. c. 400). 4. The Book of Judgment (Paulus Orosius early 5th cent.) 5. Things that lay in the future after Christ's ascension (Alexander of Hales d. 1271). 6. The book unsealed means the revelation of the course of church history (Nicholas de Lyra, c. 1270-1340). 7. The book contains the book of Revelation (Cornelius a Lapide, 1567-1637). 8. The contents of the sealed book were given in Revelation 6-11 (Ludovicus Alcasar (1554-1614). 9. The book contains God decrees against the persecuting Jews (Hugo Grotius, 1583-1645). 10. It was not a book of destiny (Friedrich Schleiermacher, 1768-1834). 11. The book was book of prophecy of the divine decrees and judgments in the end-time (Robert H. Charles, 1855-1931). 12. The book represents the fixed decrees and counsels of God which will dominate end-time events (Abraham Kuyper, 1837-1920).³²

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The many different interpretations of the scroll of Revelation 5 share one thing in common. None of them penetrate to the Old Testament roots that lie behind the scene of Revelation 5. The scroll has a function in this scene that is not grasped by these various views.

Function of the Scroll. What is the function of the scroll in Revelation 5? Is it merely a scroll with contents relating to future history? Is it a record of human deeds for judgment purposes? Or does it also have a broader significance that only the Old Testament roots can convey? Ranko Stefanovic penetrates to the contribution made by Deuteronomy 17:18-20, 2 Kings 11:12 and the LXX version (Greek translation) of Zechariah 6:12-13 as the Old Testament roots to the scene of Revelation 5.

These Old Testament root passages are about the enthronement of a king. Here's what they say. "When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that the may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees, and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel" (Deut 17:18-20).

In Kings it says, "Jehoida brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king'" (2 Kings 11:12; cf. 2 Chron 23:11). These two passages speak about a scroll, or a book of the covenant, that plays a significant part in an enthronement scene. This is the scroll that contains the covenant that God made with Israel, and reminds the king that he is only a servant of God, who is the King of kings. As it were, the human king rules as a co-regent with the heavenly King, as long as he is true to the covenant as outlined in the scroll. This Book of the Covenant, or the Book of Deuteronomy, was to guide the king in his reign. King Josiah read from this book (2 Kings 23:1-2). Here is the Book of the Covenant, the book of Deuteronomy, that was received by a king at his enthronement. So the book does represent God's eternal covenant with mankind, and thus involves Scripture, the book of Revelation, and the judgment. But in Revelation 5, its function, rather than its contents, is the focus.

In a sense, the scroll's contents may reveal not only the covenant but the working out or fulfillment of the covenant between God and His people. God has promised to protect and save His people. He has promised a new earth and a city made by God. He has promised to wipe

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away all tears. He has promised to give His people new hearts. He has promised descendants uncountable as stars and blessings for all the earth. Who is worthy to open the scroll, allowing or revealing this fulfillment? Only the slain Lamb, whose death has made possible the fulfillment of the covenant made to Abraham and his descendants, whether physical or spiritual. Thus, many of the commentators listed earlier are approximately correct—the future may be revealed in the scroll—yet have missed the Christocentric message the scroll’s Old Testament antecedents communicate, that because of the Lamb slain the covenant promises can at last be fulfilled.

Revelation 4-5 is a powerful scene. The heavenly King is seated on the throne, surrounded by other thrones and other beings. The living creatures forever sing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8). To which others join in and sing, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev 4:11). Here is a majestic scene of a holy, immortal God who created everything. Here is God on His throne as the pre-eminently worthy one.

Then a book is seen laying on the throne, to the right of God. Who is worthy to open this book? No one responds. John weeps. But an elder tells him, “Don’t weep. Look at the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David—He is able to open the book” (see Rev 5:5). Then Christ is seen as a Lamb. He takes the scroll from where it lay on the right hand of God, the King, and then all heaven breaks forth into tumultuous acclamation, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God.” (Rev 5:9). “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12). Here He is said to be worthy to receive power, or to begin to reign. “Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them, singing, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Rev 5:14).

Here the Lamb shares in the praise and honor equally with the King who sits on the throne. Here is a picture of a both Father and Son seated on the throne together. This is the same picture seen in the second advent when the wicked call to the rocks to “hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” (Rev 6:16). The scene changes in its focus as one goes from Revelation 4 to 5. The scene begins with the Father alone seated on the throne. He is honored as Creator and said to be

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worthy. He occupies the reader's attention in chapter 4. Then as one comes to chapter 5 a scroll takes over as the focal point for the first part. This scroll is purposely placed at the center of attention, because it is a scroll that a King gives to a co-regent at the time of His installation. But it is a scroll that no one is worthy to take. Then Christ comes into focus, the only One worthy to receive the scroll. With the taking of the scroll from the throne comes the moment when Christ is installed as co-regent along with His Father.

It should be noted that it is a sealed scroll, that no one can open, except Christ. Yet, chapter 5 says nothing about Christ opening the seals. The taking of the scroll is the only activity focused on. This scroll taking suggests that the moment of inauguration has arrived. This scroll taking suggests that Christ ascends the throne. The final view of Christ and the Father together on the throne suggests the moment of inauguration before His reign as co-regent. His opening of the seals are subsequent acts of His reign. The fact that no crown is used is unimportant. He has no crown in Revelation 1, but has a crown in Revelation 14:14, and multiple crowns in Revelation 19:12. The fact of receiving the scroll and then taking His seat at the Father's right hand on the Father's throne is sufficient to suggest His inauguration as King/Priest, and hence His coronation.

The Book of Hebrews agrees with the scene given above. Of Christ it says, "After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Heb 1:3; cf. Psa 109:31; 110:1, Matt 26:64). God anointed Christ (Heb 1:9), and He was "crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death" (Heb 2:9), and the Father says to Him, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Heb 1:13). The Father says, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (Heb 1:5), for "you are a priest forever" (Heb 5:5-6). Here is Christ's inauguration as King/Priest. He reigns at His Father's side as co-regent. His enemies will ultimately be under His feet at the post-millennial judgment (Rev 20:11-15). That will be the "great white throne," for it is the final judgment throne (Rev 20:11). But, now in the heavenly sanctuary since His ascension, Christ is seated at the right hand of His Father on "the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16). Glorious and wondrous is the fact that the co-regency of the Father and Son is from the throne of grace, to which we are invited to approach with confidence!

The New David.³³ Christ is called the "Root of David" in Revelation 5:5. He is "a shoot" that comes up "from the stump of Jesse" (Isa 11:1), "the Branch" that is a "high priest" (Zech 3:8), the coming "Lord Our Righteousness" (Jer 23:5-6), the "Branch" to "sprout from David's line" (Jer 33:15-16). "The nations will rally to him," and this will be His reign (Isa 11:10). So Christ, as the new David, is to be much more than David ever was, just as an antitype is greatly escalated over

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the type. David will be a King/Priest over nations, rather than only king over one nation.

In Zechariah 6:12-13, LXX version (Greek translation), it reads, “Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall spring up from his stem, and build the house of the Lord. And he shall receive power, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and there shall be a priest on his right hand, and a peaceable counsel shall be between *them* both.”

We said, above, that Christ will ascend His throne as the new David after He brings forth the redeemed at the second advent. But, even before that event, as co-regent, He acts as the Branch, or the new David. Thus in Isaiah 4 it says, “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious.” “Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain” (Isa 4:2,5-6). Ellen G. White comments that this is “to represent God’s care for His people in the great final struggle with the world of evil.”³⁴

The kings of David came to an end. No one occupied the throne for hundreds of years before Christ’s first advent. No legitimate King David can occupy the throne until Jesus, the new David, takes over His kingdom at the second advent. In the meantime, as the new David, He rules as the co-regent from the throne of His Father. The fact that the phrase “root of David” is mentioned in Revelation 5, is added evidence about His status as King/Priest now. The new David has entered into the eschatological tension of the New Testament, between the “already” and the “not yet.” He already is the New David as a co-regent on His Father’s throne. In the eschatological future He will be fully vested as the New David on His own throne forever.

The new David comes to fulfill the Davidic covenant--an eternal Davidic reign (2 Sam 7:12-16). Two of the royal psalms speak of Christ’s inauguration (Psa 2, 110). The Father says of Christ, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill” (Psa 2:6). God says, “The Lord says to my Lord; sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet” (Psa 110:1). The writer of Hebrews says, “After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (Heb 1:3). And seated there by His right side, the Father promised, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom” (Heb 1:8).

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In Revelation 5:5, this “Root of David” is also called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” The Lion is the king of beasts. Here are two phrases that point to the position of Christ as a King.

Christ’s Public Ascension. On Resurrection day Christ privately ascended to the Father (John 20:17).³⁵ His later public ascension was in the presence of the disciples. The exuberant heavenly welcome attending it had forty days of pent up energy and preparation following the private ascension. That welcome was predicted in Psa 24:7-10. It is informative to follow the description of Ellen G. White.

All heaven was waiting to welcome the Savior to the celestial courts. As He ascended, He led the way, and the multitude of captives set free at His resurrection followed. The heavenly host, with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, attended the joyous train.

As they drew near to the city of God, the challenge is given by the escorting angels, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; And the King of glory shall come in.”

Joyfully the waiting sentinels respond, “Who is the King of glory?” This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise, “The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates; Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; And the King of glory shall come in.” Again is heard the challenge, “Who is this King of glory?” for the angels never weary of hearing His name exalted. The escorting angels make reply, “The Lord of hosts; He is the King of glory” Ps. 24:7-10.

Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the angelic throng sweep through the gates amid the burst of rapturous music.

There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commander of the angel hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds, are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion, - all are there to welcome the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.

But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. . . .

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The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. . . The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" Heb. 1:6.

With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing." Rev. 5:12."³⁶

Note that this shout of praise comes from Revelation 5. It comes immediately after the ascension. All waited to sing the words, but it was Christ who held them back with His request to speak with the Father. There is no doubt in the minds of the welcoming angels and created beings. They had already repeated the question many times, "Who is this King of glory?" They did not ask to find out, but to give opportunity to praise Him. It is my conviction that, the question, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" (Rev 5:2) is not a pre-advent investigation of the worthiness of Christ. It is the same kind of question as, "Who is this King of glory?" Neither of these questions are to investigate, or discover something unknown. Rather, they are an excuse to praise the One well known as worthy of praise and worship as Redeemer of mankind. These parallel questions come from those who love to ask in order to give the answer in the form of adoration and worship.

Calvary was the reason Christ alone was/is worthy. This did not come as a surprise to those created beings who escorted Him in the ascension. This did not surprise the angels who sang praise to Him for being mighty in battle at the cross. He was mighty in battle at Calvary and in His resurrection. All those singing His praise knew He alone had defeated Satan.

They watched and wondered. The universe watched as floggings ripped Christ's back, as soldiers forced a thorny crown into his head, garbed him in purple robe, mocked Him—"Hail King of the Jews!" and smote his head over and over again with a wooden weapon, plunging the thorny crown deeper into His skull (Matt 27:27-31). They watched as hardened soldiers lunged into His body, splattering spit over Him, yanking out parts of His beard, and cursed Him. They watched as demon-possessed mockers fell to their knees in ridicule (Mark 15:15-20). They watched as they blindfolded and beat Him (Luke 22:63-65). Some lunged into Him with clenched fists (Matt 26:67-68).

They watched as the heavy cross fell on his raw red gaping lacerated back, and saw Him crumble beneath the load. They watched

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as devil driven soldiers drove spikes into His body, and dropped the cross in a hole tearing His flesh and causing excruciating agony. They saw His utter anguish as the bearer of the total sins of mankind (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). They watched as He moaned, “Father forgive them,” and marveled at such intercession. They watched His fierce struggle, heaving on the cross, gasping for air, gauging His back. They watched as He cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46). They watched the Father weep.

“And as Christ in His expiring agony upon the cross cried out, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself. The great contest that had been so long in progress in this world was now decided, and Christ was conqueror.”³⁷ It was precisely this shout of victory that was taken up by angels in the ascension praise of Christ as One mighty in battle. Hence, the victory of Calvary was already celebrated in Christ’s expiring breath, and along the ascension route. Arriving at the throne, and asking “Who is worthy to open the scroll” was raised by those who had sung the answer for some time, and who then broke out in thunderous, tumultuous praise of the slain Lamb.

Conclusion

Because (1) Rev 4-5 is solidly in the historical section of Revelation, while Christ is in the holy place, and not in the eschatological section in the most holy place where the pre-advent judgment takes place; and because (2) the scroll in its placement at the right hand of God and in its function to install a co-regent when received, strongly implies the Father’s reception of Christ to His throne; and because (3) the atmosphere is one of tumultuous praise of Christ as the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the root of David, terms indicating His right to rule; and because (4) the scroll focus is on its reception, and not upon its opening, appropriate for a reception of a co-regent and not an investigating of its contents; and because (5) there is no judgment language or judgment setting in the chapters; and because (6) there is no mention of *naos* (most holy place) or *kibotos* (ark of the covenant) until later in Revelation; it seems that Revelation 4-5 is the inauguration of Christ as the King/Priest co-regent on the Father’s throne, which is a necessary pre-requisite before His King/Priest ministry in heaven’s sanctuary, which occupies most of the remaining chapters of Revelation.

Thus Revelation 4-5 introduces the reader to the King/Priest installed at the Father’s throne, before going on to view human history from the perspective of the following six throne-room scenes

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(Rev 8:2-6; 11:19; 1:1-8; 16:17-17:3; 19:1-10; 21:5-11). Thus Revelation 4-5 is the logical preface to the rest of the Book. It clearly shows why Christ has the right to guide the affairs of human history, the destiny of His church, and to summon pre-advent, millennial and post-millennial judgments. It is the key that unlocks the rest of the book. That key is the slain Lamb, the crucified One. Not just from the throne, but from Calvary—this is the ultimate vantage place from which all human history is unfolded throughout Revelation, and from where it can best be understood.

Notes

¹Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), pp. 112-126. The two Books comprising the *Symposium in Revelation* have been very helpful in my study of Revelation. Richard M Davidson, Jon Paulien and Kenneth A. Strand have contributed to my thinking on the topic of this article.

²John Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), pp. 183-198; "The Seven Seals," *Ibid*, pp. 199-229; and "Ellen G. White and Revelation 4-6," *Ibid*, pp. 363-373; "The Role of the Hebrews Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 1995, Vol. 33, # 2, pp. 245-264.

³Ranko Stefanovic, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995.

⁴Robert Dean Davis, *The Heavenly Court Judgment of Revelation 4-5* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992).

⁵Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment: From the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs, AR: Creation Enterprises International, 1992).

⁶Mario Veloso, "The Doctrine of the Sanctuary and the Atonement as Reflected in the Book of Revelation," in *The Sanctuary and The Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies*, eds., A.V. Wallenkampf and W. R. Leshar (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), p.407.

⁷Kenneth Strand believes Revelation 4-5 is in the holy place, "'Victorious-Introduction' Scenes," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), p. 55.

⁸Alberto R. Treiyer suggests that those who believe in the inaugural view are preterists, in answer to the view that his pre-advent view is considered futurist (see Alberto R. Treiyer, "The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation." A Review of Ranko Stefanovic's dissertation by that name, unpublished manuscript, September, 1996, p. 2, fn. 4.

⁹Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and the Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 1995, Vol. 33, # 2, p. 251.

¹⁰Jon Paulien, *AUSS*, 1995, Vol. 33, #2, pp. 251-252.

¹¹Jon Paulien, "The Seven Seals," *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, p. 211.

¹²Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 17, 1900, *Ellen G. White Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles*, Vol. 4, p. 201.

¹³Ellen G. White, Letter 65, 1898, in *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring: MD, E. G. White Estate, 1990), p. 7.

¹⁴For evidence on this see Norman R. Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), pp. 410-426.

¹⁵These Ellen G. White insights and others are found in Jon Paulien, "Ellen G. White and Revelation 4-6," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, pp. 363-373.

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1948), Vol. 6, p. 17.

¹⁷Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941), p. 294.

¹⁸Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor, 1976), p. 51. "Foundational Principles of Interpretation," and "The Eight Basic Visions," and "'Victorious Introduction' Scenes," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, ed., Frank B. Holbrook, pp. 28-53.

¹⁹C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID: Pacific, 1985), Vol. 2, pp. 60-61.

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²⁰After I had taught for years that the two halves of Revelation meet in Revelation 11:19, it was gratifying to find Jon Paulien's comment about Revelation 11:18 as "the hinge around which the two halves of Revelation are structured." *What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), p. 108.

²¹Compare Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 414-415.

²²C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, Vol. 2, pp. 165, 171.

²³Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, pp. 100-130.

²⁴John Paulien, *AUSS*, Autumn 1995, Vol 33, #2, pp. 245-264.

²⁵This has been noted by Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, pp. 120-126; Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions," in *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, pp. 190-192.

²⁶Jon Paulien, "The Seven Seals." In *Symposium on Revelation, Book 1: Introductory and Exegetical Studies* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), pp 192-243. Ranko Stefanovic, *The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1996), pp 206-208

²⁷Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1950), pp. 414-415.

²⁸Alberto R. Treiyer believes Christ comes "upon the throne of His glory" in the second advent, *The Day of Atonement and Heavenly Judgment*, p. 564, fn. 427.

²⁹Ranko Stefanovic, *The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, pp. 157, 163, 165.

³⁰Ranko Stefanovic, *The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, pp. 228-312. I am indebted to him for the ideas in this section.

³¹Ranko Stefanovic, *The Backgrounds and Meanings of the Sealed Book of Revelation*, p. 120.

³²Ranko Stefanovic, *The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, pp. 8-117.

³³This section reflects an important contribution made by Ranko Stefanovic in, *The Backgrounds and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, pp. 181-195.

³⁴Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 91.

³⁵Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Takoma Park, Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1957), Vol. 5, p. 1150.

³⁶Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1940), pp. 833-834.

³⁷Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 69.

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The Trumpets In Their Contexts

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Introduction

The fundamental problem the futuristic interpreters have with the book of Revelation is their *assumption* that John describes the end-time events with photographic accuracy and absolute literalness. The Apocalypse, however, portrays what God has “*signified*” through an angel to John (Rev 1:1, NKJV). To take John’s images of future events in absolute literalness is, therefore, to misunderstand at the outset the basic intent of the prophecy. Such a procedure can only lead to speculation.

John presents the future in a complex imagery and symbolism. A key to understanding John’s literary style is His pattern of anticipation and amplification. For instance, Christ’s promises to the conquerors in chapters 2-3 are fulfilled in chapters 21-22. The announcement of Babylon’s fall in chapter 14 is explained later in chapters 16-19. The persecuting beast in chapter 11:7 is described more fully in chapters 13 and 17. John thus uses the technique of interlocking his anticipatory visions in the first half of the book with the end-oriented narrative in the second half. The Apocalypse is a cohesive body, an organic whole that displays a beautiful architectural design.

A major challenge is how to understand the apparent reiterations in the book. The end of this age is described several times (1:7; 6:12-17; 11:15-19; 14:14-20; 19:11-21; 20:11-15). These recurrent visions of the end are part of the design of the author. They forbid the assumption that John describes the

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church age in a straight-line progression. He, rather, presents different perspectives on the end. John describes the seven seals (6-7), the seven trumpets (8-11), and the seven bowls (16-17) as parallel cycles which complement each other and increasingly center on the final events.

The book of Revelation as a whole progresses from promise to fulfillment. This movement resembles the upward movement of a spiral staircase. The series of seals, trumpets and bowls all build on each other. Together they express more adequately the complexity of the church age than any one of the cycles alone. Each cycle reveals its own emphasis on apostasy, judgment, and deliverance. This intensifying pattern reinforces the message of hope for the beleaguered church of Christ. It also counteracts a fatalistic acceptance of all hostilities.

The persecuted church must remember that the glorified Christ is portrayed as an all-powerful Lamb with “seven horns” (5:6). A “horn” in the OT symbolizes political and military power (Deut 33:17; Dan 7:24). The unrealistic imagery of a lamb with seven horns assures God’s people that the apparently defeated Lamb of God now has omnipotent power to judge and to deliver. He has this ability because He *has* triumphed over Satan in heaven and on earth through His testimony and death (5:5, 9). He now reassures His true followers they also “will reign on the earth” (5:10).

John presents the story of apostasy, persecution and deliverance first in the seven seals and the seven trumpets (6-9). Just as Jesus went *twice* through the church age in Matthew 24 [a] vss. 4-14; b] vss. 15-31], so we observe how the risen Christ repeats the basic themes of Matthew 24 in the seals and the trumpets. While the seals inform the reader about the sufferings of the church, the trumpets deal with God’s preliminary judgments on the enemies of His faithful people.

The Introductory Vision of the Trumpets

In Revelation 8:2-6 John presents an introductory vision to show the origin and purpose of the seven trumpets. The scene begins and ends with the announcement that there are seven angels standing before God, each of whom receive a trumpet (8:2, 6). This literary device, an inclusion-introduction, marks the introductory vision as a self-contained unit. It describes the intercessory ministry of Christ and its cessation. The heavenly throne scene in chapter 8 functions in a similar manner as the introductory vision to the seven seals in chapter 5. Just as the twenty-four elders hold “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (5:8)*, so John sees an angel with a golden censer stand at the altar. “He was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne” (8:3).

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Pleas of the martyred saints “under the altar” are mentioned in the seals (6:9-10). They cry out for divine vengeance because of the injustice done to them. They are asking God to be “true” to His covenant. The vision of Revelation 8:3-4 thus *parallels the time period of the seals in Revelation 6*. The vision refers to the ongoing intercessory ministry of Christ in heaven, because it recalls the daily offering of incense in Israel’s sanctuary service (Exod 30:1, 7-8).

The theme of the introductory vision to the trumpets carries the assurance that Christ hears the prayer requests of His oppressed people, as is stated in Hebrews 4:14-16. Although the prayers of all the saints rise directly to God, they need the essential “incense” from God’s own altar. This incense represents the divine propitiation for our sins. John writes of Christ: “He is the atoning sacrifice [*hilasmos*, propitiation] for our sins” (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Ellen White offers this practical application: “Morning and evening the heavenly universe behold every household that prays, and the angel with the incense, representing the blood of the atonement, finds access to God.”¹

The introductory vision ends with a scene describing the cessation of the angel’s ministry of incense, followed by his casting fire from the altar onto the earth, accompanied by thunderclaps, lightnings, and an earthquake:

Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake (Rev 8:5).

In his final act the angel uses the censer no longer for intercession but for judgment: fire without incense. This indicates that the prayers of the saints (in 6:9-11) will be answered by judgments on earth, followed by the appearance of the Judge of all the earth in conjunction with a cosmic earthquake. A striking prototype is found in Ezekiel, who describes a vision of the curse of Yahweh on an impenitent Jerusalem:

The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, “Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. *Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city*” (Ezek 10:2).

The historical context of Ezekiel’s vision may be summarized briefly. Just before the fateful year of 586 B.C., Israel’s God was leaving Jerusalem’s temple with a mighty sound (Ezek 10:4, 5, 18; 11:23). The casting of burning coals symbolized the execution of God’s judgment on

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Jerusalem by means of war and exile (11:8-10). This judgment was the manifestation of the covenant curses of Leviticus 26, which included the destruction of Jerusalem, its temple, and the scattering of Israel through wars (Lev 26:31-34). The covenant curse implied that God would wage war against His apostate people: "I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over" (Lev 26:24). Nevertheless, God's covenant would provide mercy for those that repented and confessed their sins (Lev 26:40-45; Ezek 11:16-21).

In Ezekiel's historical setting, the casting of burning coals from God's throne on earth did not symbolize the final judgment but a punitive judgment on Israel, intended to lead her to repentance (see Ezek 11:18-20). John's introductory vision to the seven trumpets in Rev 8:2-6 should be understood against this background of Ezekiel. John's vision covers *both* probationary time and the wrath of God. The series of the trumpets announces not merely the final wrath of God (this comes only under the seventh trumpet), but also a sequence of *restricted judgments*, which harm only one third of the earth (11 times, Rev 8-9). These partial judgments of the first six trumpets are *preliminary warning judgments*. They warn the world concerning the *last* plagues to come and the *unmixed* wrath of God to be poured out at the conclusion of the day of atonement, when no one can enter the temple in heaven (15:1, 5-8).

The first six trumpets are sent from the golden altar of incense before God (9:13). This suggests that probationary time still continues during these six trumpets. The symbolic act of hurling fire from the altar onto the earth indicates the initiation of God's judgments in response to the prayer requests of the saints. The sequence of the six trumpets (chaps. 8-9), culminating in the seventh trumpet (involving the seven last plagues, chaps. 15-16), teaches that the angel's symbolic acts at the altar will have a twofold fulfillment:

1. Calamities of a limited extension during the church age.
2. The last plagues, without mercy, on the worldwide enemies of Christ and His people.

Relationship of the Seals and Trumpets

A challenging question is, When do the trumpets begin in relation to the preceding series of the seals? Are the trumpets completely parallel, and thus simultaneous; or sequential; or only partially parallel? There is no unanimous opinion among Bible scholars on this point. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* reports that the

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avored Adventist interpretation sees “these trumpets retrace, to a large extent, the period of Christian history already covered by the seven churches (chs. 2; 3) and the seven seals (chs. 6; 8:1), and that they emphasize outstanding political and military events during this period.”²

The “sequential” view is also mentioned, according to which the seven trumpet-judgments are poured out on the earth *after* the close of probation. But this view is found unsubstantiated in the biblical context by the Adventist “Daniel and Revelation Committee.” The Committee points out that the events of the end-time gospel proclamation in Revelation 10 and 11:1-14 belong to the sixth trumpet. The conclusion is therefore drawn: “The trumpet events occur in historical, probationary time . . . If the seventh trumpet is tied to the closing up of the gospel work, the gospel dispensation, then the preceding six trumpets must of necessity sound during probationary time.”³

The post-probation view of the trumpets is based on the assumption that the trumpets begin only after the introductory vision of 8:2-6 has expired. This view supposes that the sanctuary scene and the trumpets are portrayed in a chronological sequence. But this assumption is not justified in view of the fact that the *other* introductory sanctuary visions did not expire before each series began: the one preceding the seven churches (chap. 1); the one preceding the seven seals (chap. 5), and the one preceding the seven bowls (chap. 15). *All introductory visions remain active throughout each series.*

Each letter to the seven churches refers back to Christ in John’s inaugural vision of chapter 1; each seal-breaking is the result of Christ’s work in the introductory vision of chapter 5; all seven bowls are poured out while no one can enter the temple (15:8). Consequently, it is a more adequate assumption to view the throne-vision of 8:2-6 as *the abiding active source* for the seven trumpets. Jon Paulien concludes: “It is more likely that John intended the reader to see the intercession at the golden altar as being available right up to the instant the seventh trumpet blows, leading to the finishing of the ‘mystery of God’ (Rev 10:7), that is, the closing up of the gospel (Rom 16:25-27; Eph 3:2-7; 6:19).”⁴

The fact that the *fifth* trumpet refers to “the seal of God” on the foreheads of God’s people (9:4) and seems to coincide with the end-time and sealing of God’s servants in Revelation 7 is a significant feature and indicates the sealing work of chapter 7 and the fifth trumpet are closely connected. Both events can be viewed as historical counterparts which occur in probationary time. Also the *sixth* trumpet has been

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recognized as a strong parallel with the sealing of chapter 7, portraying the demonic counterparts of the 144,000 in a stupendous number of destroying troops (9:13-18).⁵

It is important to observe that God's command for the sealing time, "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of God" (7:3), is *still* effective during the fifth trumpet (9:4), in spite of the fact the earlier trumpets had brought partial harm to the earth, the sea, and the trees ("a third" part, being affected, 8:7-9). The revelation that the *sixth* trumpet-judgment is coming from the angel at the "horns of the golden altar that is before God" (9:13) indicates the first six trumpets cover the whole probationary time of the church age. What each trumpet portrays, with reference to actual human history, must be determined by careful application of each trumpet to the religious and political history of the Christian church from the Roman Empire until the present. The trumpets should not be considered by themselves, in isolation from the larger context of Revelation, if we want to avoid speculative conclusions.

Post-probation View of the Last Plagues

The content of the seventh trumpet is unfolded in the seven bowls of God's final judgment (chaps. 15-16). This is implied in the explicit numbering of the last three trumpets as the three "woes" on the earth dwellers (8:13).

The fifth and sixth trumpets are characterized as the first and the second "woe" (9:12; 11:14), with the announcement that "the third woe is coming soon" (11:14). However, the seventh trumpet does not include any woe, except the declaration, "The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants . . . and for destroying those who destroy the earth" (11:18). Some interpreters have concluded the seventh trumpet, therefore, lacks the third woe altogether. But others rightly point to John's further revelation that the seven plagues will be the "last woe," because with them "*God's wrath is completed*" (15:1).

Isbon T. Beckwith comments: "The recognition of the bowl-plagues as the third woe has important bearing on the question of the composition of the Apocalypse."⁶ The series of the trumpets is interwoven inextricably with the seven last plagues through John's device of the three woes. As a result, the major portion of Revelation, chapters 8-19, constitutes a unit that unfolds a successive order of God's judgments.

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The critical point in this chronological sequence is the beginning of the seven last plagues, described as the “unmixed” “wrath of God” (Rev 15:1; 14:10, RSV). The phrase “unmixed [*akratos*, undiluted] indicates that the wrath of God will be manifested “in full strength” in the seven last plagues (Rev 14:10; NKJV, NASB). This means that justice is no longer united with grace in “the cup of His wrath.” John stresses the warning that the rejecter of God’s final message will be “tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb” (14:10). This reminds us of God’s judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen 19:24, 25) and confirms the concept that the plagues come *after* human probation has ended. The statement, “And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever” (14:11), reminds us of God’s destruction of Edom, as a “retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause” (Isa 34:8-10). These OT judgments are apparently alluded to as types of the final outpouring of God’s wrath in the last plagues.

A particular indication of the salvation-historical turning point with the last plagues is the disclosure that *no one can enter* the heavenly temple during that time:

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed (15:8).

This text teaches that when God’s time has come, the plagues can no longer be delayed by intercessory prayers. The “smoke from the glory of God” reminds us of the Shekinah cloud which was manifested in Israel’s temple as the visible presence of God (see 2 Chron 5:13, 14; 7:1, 2; Ezek 10:2-4). When Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne, while “the temple was filled with smoke” (Isa 6:1, 4), he received messages of doom for an apostate Israel (Isa 6:9-13). Similarly, as soon as John sees the presentation of the “golden bowls filled with the wrath of God,” the temple fills with smoke (15:7-8). The meaning is evident: “The time for intercession is past. God in his unapproachable majesty and power has declared that the end has come. No longer does he stand knocking: he enters to act in sovereign judgment.”⁷

If the seven last plagues constitute the woes of the seventh trumpet, this implies that the previous six trumpets symbolize God’s preliminary judgments which take place *during* the church age. If the bowl-judgments mark the beginning of post-probationary time, then the trumpet-judgments fall within probationary time and cover the church age. This interlocking of the trumpets and the bowls presents a

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telescopic view that John has condensed in his introductory throne vision of (8:2-5).

Notes

This paper is based on pp. 161-168 of Dr. LaRondelle's excellent book *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota: First Impressions, 1997); to purchase a copy call 941-355-0037 or send \$20.00 to Dr. LaRondelle at 3915 Balsam Court, Sarasota, FL 34243-5234.

* Biblical citations are from the *New International Version* unless otherwise indicated.

¹ "Ellen G. White Comments," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Francis D. Nichol, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:971.

² *Ibid.*, 7:788.

³ "Issues in Revelation: DARCOM Report," *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, Frank B. Holbrook, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), p. 181.

⁴ Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussion," *Symposium on Revelation*, Book 1, p. 195.

⁵ See, Paulien, *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁶ Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), p. 671.

⁷ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation in New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 290.

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Thoughts on the 144,000

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Variant Views

The history of prophetic interpretation takes us down a winding path. It is sometimes a twisted, or even a knotted path, and none more bewildering than the variety of views on the 144,000 sealed ones of Revelation 7 and 14.¹

Dispensationalists generally believe that the 144,000 are Jews who will convert to Christianity after the secret rapture.² This is probably the most popular view among conservative Christians today.

Evangelical Christians who are not dispensationalists hold a variety of views. One of the most prominent expositors is the late George Eldon Ladd of Fuller Seminary. Ladd believed that the 144,000 represent the church just before the great tribulation, and the “great multitude” (also mentioned in chapter 7) represents the same individuals *after* the tribulation.

There are not many liberals who take the book of Revelation seriously enough to study it in detail. Those who do generally take a preterist position. They believe the entire book refers to events that happened in the first century. Thus, the 144,000 are Jews John hoped would join the church in his day.³

Numerous sects have emphasized the 144,000. They generally say: “We are the 144,000, and the rest of you are Babylon.”

Adventist interpretation of the 144,000 began with controversy. At one meeting not long after the disappointment, a “brother Arnold” stirred things up by insisting that the 144,000 were the people who rose with Christ at His resurrection.⁴ Another brother was sure they were the babies that Herod killed in Bethlehem,⁵ while still another thought they were Jewish Christians of the first century.

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But after this initial flurry of controversy, the mainstream among those who would later be called Seventh-day Adventists arrived at a consensus. There was some disagreement as to details,⁶ but all agreed that the 144,000 were end-time believers, and that they were sealed so they could go through the “time of trouble” and be translated at Christ’s second coming.

Around the turn of the century another flare-up occurred over details of the prophecy, and this brought a rebuke from Ellen White:

Christ says that there will be those in the church who will present fables and suppositions, when God has given grand, elevating, ennobling truths which should ever be kept in the treasure house of the mind. When men pick up this theory and that theory, when they are curious to know something it is not necessary for them to know, God is not leading them. It is not His plan that His people shall present something which they have to suppose, which is not taught in the Word. It is not His will that they shall get into controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand. This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question.⁷

It may be this warning has led most Seventh-day Adventist since that day to shy away from further discussion of the 144,000. However, before we decide to abandon the topic altogether, we need to consider the same messenger also said: “Let us strive with all the power God has given us to be among the 144,000.”⁸ Now if we are going to strive that hard, it seems it would not be wrong to find out something about them. The counsel is to avoid a debating spirit. We are not to “get into controversy” over the topic. Furthermore, we should avoid speculation presenting “something which [we] have to suppose.” We begin, then with the basic question: “Who are the 144,000?”

Marks of Identity

A good deal of what has been written about the 144,000 is based on a spoonful of textual study (exegesis) stirred in with several gallons the interpreter’s own ideas (eisegesis). But this is no reason for despair. Much can be discovered about the 144,000 even when we limit our study to what the text itself plainly says about them.

The 144,000 are God’s People. When we say the 144,000 are God’s people, we are starting with the most fundamental and indisputable truth we can state about them. We see their relationship with God reflected in several ways:

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Sealed by God. This is how the 144,000 are described when they are first mentioned: literally, “the sealed ones.”⁹ The seal means God identifies them as His own, and He identifies *with* them. He says: “I will write on [them] the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem.”¹⁰ So by the sealing, God labels these people with His own name and address.

God is not embarrassed or ashamed to have them carry the family name.¹¹ In fact, He writes it conspicuously on their foreheads. Thus, He commits Himself to them. This is a fulfillment of the first term of the covenant: “I will be their God.”¹² When this seal, which is God’s name and address, is written on their foreheads, it becomes *their* name and address as well. This means that their walk with God has become such a fundamental part of their being, that it identifies them. Anyone who looks at them, can see it clearly written on their faces.¹³ This is in fulfillment of the second part of the covenant: “They will be my people.”

*Loyal to God. They are followers of the Lamb.*¹⁴ This implies steadfast devotion, loyalty, and obedience.¹⁵ *They are virgins.* The OT prophets often compared God’s faithful people to virgins.¹⁶ They also said that worshiping false gods was just the opposite—like visiting a prostitute.¹⁷ The 144,000 live in a time when the great prostitute Babylon is advertising her wares, yet they do not allow themselves to be seduced. They remain loyal and faithful to their promised Bridegroom.

Witness for God. The 144,000 *carry God’s seal—in a symbolic sense—on the most visible part of their bodies.* When the sealing takes place, the “beast” is demanding everyone to carry his mark and do what he says, or die. And yet here are God’s people going around with God’s mark plainly showing: there it is, right in the middle of their foreheads.

They sing God’s song. This is another evidence of the bold public character of their testimony. There is nothing muted about it. The verse says that their song is “like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder.”¹⁸

They are not ashamed to be seen with Him in public. The record states that the 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Like the twelve apostles, they understand that the first and most important part of their commission is to be with Jesus.¹⁹ When we walk with Him, we have something to proclaim, something to witness about.

They witness to the truth. The great majority in the last days has refused to love the truth and has been overwhelmed by powerful delusions.²⁰ But in the mouth of the 144,000 no lie is found.²¹ This means that the truth is found there. The truth has not only been hidden in their hearts; it has been on their lips as well.

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In summary, the 144,000 are God's people. He unashamedly identifies with them, and testifies before the universe that they are part of His family. They are also a people who loyally and boldly take their stand for Him; they identify with Him and they witness on His behalf in the midst of nearly universal apostasy.

The 144,000: the Genuine Distinguished from the False. We could say that the 144,000 are God's Who's Who. The enemy makes a special effort to blur the lines of distinction. And he has been amazingly successful. Where he has his way, everything is fuzzy. Truth and error are confused. Right and wrong are hard to tell apart. Jesus recognized this when He said the "wheat" and the "tares" look alike. However, in the end-time He will resolve this problem once and for all: "At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."²² He is talking here about the sealing.²³ When this takes place, the difference will stand out in bold, contrasting colors.²⁴

Here are two more contrasts that stand out in addition to the ones we have already observed: The multitude obeys the lamb-like beast who rose up from the earth, while the 144,000 worship the Lamb who came down from heaven. The multitude "with wondering admiration"²⁵ follows after the beast who has miraculously recovered from a mortal wound; the 144,000 follow the Lamb "that was slain from the creation of the world."²⁶

In other words, every characteristic described in Scripture places God's people in sharp contrast with the multitude of the apostate world. This is part of what it means for them to be marked with God's seal while the multitude is receiving the mark of the beast.

The sealing of the 144,000 functions as a time line. It establishes a before-and-after relationship to certain events in the plan of salvation. In Revelation 7 four angels are depicted as being about to release the winds of earth when another angel comes rushing in. He shouts his message "in a loud voice." "Wait!" he cries. "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees *until* we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God". This word, "until" establishes a before-and-after relationship. If the destruction must wait *until* the sealing is over, then it is clear that before the sealing God's people are not prepared. After that, they are.

The sealing is an essential preparation for the time of trouble just as the bloodstain on the doorpost of the Hebrew homes at the time of the Exodus was an essential preparation for the coming of the death angel. Later in Christian history John saw the judgments of God (under the fifth trumpet) would fall only on "those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads;"²⁷ and still later, under the first plague,

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“ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.”²⁸

Under the sixth seal, people “will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”²⁹ As they see the judgments of God in the land, they cry out in terror: “The great day of [His] wrath has come, and who can stand?”³⁰ The answer is given at once: There they are, 144,000 sealed ones (Rev 7).

In chapters 13 and 14, a similar contrast is portrayed. Chapter 13 is a walk through hell. There is cursing and blasphemy, persecution and death. “Jezebel” terrorizes and murders until “Elijah” is ready to exclaim: “I am the only one left.”³¹ Not so, answers the Lord. Look! Up there on Mount Zion. There they are, my 144,000 sealed ones, where no earthly power can touch them.³²

The Number

The message in the vision of the 144,000 is one of hope and encouragement for God’s people. But there is still another truth, which may be the most important point of the vision. What does the number itself mean? What message does it convey?

A Simple Statistic? Is the figure cited to give us information about the exact number of sealed persons? Are we to conclude that in the book of destiny there is written with mathematical precision the number of those who will finally bear the seal of God, so that there can never be even one more or one less than 144,000?

The answer can be found by considering other passages in Revelation that demonstrate the usage of number in this book of symbols. For example, when the sixth trumpet sounds, a great horde of soldiers marches by, and we read: “Their squadrons of cavalry, . . . numbered two hundred million.” Not only is the exact number given, but John adds categorically: “Whose count I heard.”³³ Yet no interpreter has ever insisted that this number is a precise mathematical datum on the number of soldiers in the hosts of evil. Similarly, we read in chapter 11 that those who died in the earthquake were seven thousand (Rev 11:13). And yet, this has never been interpreted as a precise statistic.

So the answer to our first question is, No. This number is not intended to convey mathematical information. It is not a statistic. Rather, as with most numbers in the book of Revelation, the number itself is the message.³⁴

The Message of the Number. We notice first how this number is obtained. Verse 4 states that the sealed ones are taken “from all the

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tribes of Israel.” And in order to make the point abundantly clear, the Scripture adds:

Twelve thousand from the tribe of Judah,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Ruben,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Issachar,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph,
Twelve thousand from the tribe of Benjamin³⁵

But what would such a listing have meant to John who wrote out this seemingly unnecessary repetition?

During the early centuries of Israel’s history, the twelve tribes remained intact as distinct ethnic groups within the nation. But the Assyrian captivity largely brought about the disappearance of ten of the tribes (722 B.C.).³⁶ By the time John wrote the book of Revelation, the distinct tribal organizations had ceased to exist.³⁷ However, the loss of the ten tribes always weighed heavily on the Hebrew consciousness. It was a break in the circle of God’s family, a failure in His plan.

Ezekiel foretold a restoration of the twelve tribes to full strength.³⁸ Jesus evidently saw His mission as a fulfillment of this prophecy. He said to His disciples: “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”³⁹

There can be no doubt the leaders of the early church had the same idea. James addressed his epistle to Christians as “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.”⁴⁰ Paul refers to the church as the “Israel of God.”⁴¹ And he tells the believers, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”⁴² So the apostles saw the Christian church as a fulfillment of the promise of the restoration of the twelve tribes.

But why do we have the number 144,000, and why the emphasis on 12,000 from each tribe? As we have noticed, Satan could claim the apostasy of Israel and the subsequent disappearance of the ten tribes was a defeat for God and a great victory for Satan and his cause. The sealing is the opposite of this. It takes place during the time Satan is throwing his worst temptations and his most subtle deceptions at the world. It comes when violence and death are a daily threat to the

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faithful. At that very moment, God will bring forth His own. In the preadvent judgment, after every case has been examined in the presence of the heavenly witnesses, God's triumph will be seen in those who have been accounted worthy and sealed.

So the sealing is a great victory for God and a defeat for Satan. The end-time 144,000 are God's shout of victory. He is saying: See! I have my children back! They are all there, and they are all there in full strength. In a symbolic sense not one tribe has any more than the others, and not one has any less.

The number 144,000 means that God has achieved His purpose of preparing an end-time people for Himself whose loyalty is unwavering: He has prepared His bride and made "her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." In the 144,000 He presents "her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."⁴³

Ellen White said: "Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand."⁴⁴ Well, I say to you, "Brothers and sisters, Let's do it!" Today, as Revelation 13 is being fulfilled before our eyes, as infidelity and apostasy are growing every day bolder and more sophisticated, let's do it. Today, let's follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Today, when standards are coming down, and when values are fuzzy, let's not be afraid to stand out in the crowd and witness for Him. Today, let's keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the world, because we want to be in that number, when the saints go marching in.

Appendix A

The Seal of God and the Sabbath

In the book of Revelation God often calls attention to His faithful followers. In the end-time they will be marked with "the seal of God" in their foreheads.⁴⁵ In chapter 14 this mark is defined as Christ's "name" and His Father's "name." God's "name" is properly interpreted to refer to His character.⁴⁶ In Revelation 14:12, God again identifies His people, placing them in sharp contrast with those who have the mark of the beast. He says: "Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."⁴⁷

"Patience" in this instance means firmness, perseverance. When the masses are doubting and falling in line with the enemy, God's people will be steadfast and unmovable. Keeping the commandments of God tells us the nature of their firmness. They are steadfast in their obedience to God's commands.

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By comparing these three verses, we can see that the seal, or identifying characteristic of the end-time people of God, is not a visible sign. *The trait that identifies them is their firm commitment to keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.* Another way of expressing the same idea is to say that the identifying trait is their loyalty to God. This is what it means to have the “name” or character of God written on their foreheads.

Likewise, *the mark of the beast*, which is the counterpart of the seal of God, will not be a visible mark. The lost are not going to wake up suddenly to find the number “666” stamped on their foreheads or hands with indelible ink. Neither will it be, as some have suggested, the famous bar code or their social security number. If the seal of God is the persistent attitude of obedience to the commandments, then the *mark or identifying characteristic of God’s enemies is their rebellion*, expressed as a persistent attitude of disobedience to the commandments of God.

For something to be a “sign” it has to be visible. Otherwise, it does not identify anything at all. Even so, the sign of obedience must be visible. Some of the commandments can be kept in secret. But since all of them are to be kept—not just nine of them—this must necessarily include the fourth, or Sabbath commandment. The observance of the Sabbath places the Christian at once in a position of distinct and visible contrast with the majority.

So, is God’s seal the Sabbath? Here we must answer carefully. We must not imply that anyone who keeps the Sabbath will automatically be sealed, or that Sabbath-keeping is the only way God’s last-day people show their loyalty. But there is a relationship. The seal stands for identification with God, loyalty to God in all aspects of life. In the last days, the great visible test of loyalty will be the Sabbath. At that time, when Sabbath-keeping is the outward sign of an inward decision and permanent attitude, then it can be said to be equivalent to the sign or seal of God.

Notes

1 Ray Summers presents a summary of numerous positions in *Digno Es el Cordero* (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1985), p. 196-197.

2 See, for example, Ivan Barchuk, *Explicacion del Apocalipsis* (Barcelona: CLIE, 1975), p. 140. Lockyear believes the 144,000 are Jews who will be converted before the rapture (Herbert Lockyear, *Apocalipsis: el Drama de los Siglos* [Miami: Editorial Vida, n.d.], p. 97).

3 For example, William Barclay *The Revelation of John* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1959), 2:29.

4 *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), p. 110-111.

5 Reported by James White in *Review and Herald*, (R&H 5:16). Cf. The view of William Miller: “We in this verse [Rev 14:1] have an account of the whole number

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of infants saved by the number 144,000, it being a perfect or square, showing, in my opinion, that all those who die in infancy are saved" (*Miller's Works*, vol. 1, ed. Joshua Himes [n.p., 1842], p. 135).

6 For example, there was the idea that the 144,000 were Adventists who had never been members of another denomination. This view was based on the statement in Rev 14:4 that they are "virgins" who have never been defiled with "women"; women were understood to mean churches. Uriah Smith rejected this idea as early as 1860 (*Review & Herald*, Dec. 25, 1960), but it persisted. This is the explanation I was given as a boy.

7 Ellen White in *SDA Bible Commentary*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), 7:978.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 970.

9 Greek *tōn esphragismenōn*.

10 Rev 3:12, NIV. Cf. *Early Writings*, p. 15: "The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was writwen, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus' new name.

11 1 John 3:1; Heb 2:11; 11:16.

12 Gen 17:8; Jer 31:31-33; 2 Cor 6:16, etc.

13 "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD" (Exod 34:29).

14 Rev 14:4.

15 Amos 3:3; 2 Cor 6:15-17.

16 Isa 37:22; Jer 31:4; Ezek 23:3; Amos 5:2.

17 Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 1 Chr 5:25, etc.

18 Rev 14:2. This is God's voice (see Ezek 43:2). In other words, they speak with God's voice just as the lamblike beast speaks with the dragon's voice.

19 Mark 3:14.

20 2 Thess 2:10-12.

21 Rev 14:5.

22 Matt 13:30.

23 *Early Writing*, p. 118. "I then saw the third angel [of Revelation 14]. Said my accompanying angel, 'Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal or bind the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.'"

24 Ellen White often spoke of a "demarcation" or a "line of demarcation." For example: "As we near the close of time the demarcation between the children of light and the children of darkness will be more and more decided." (*Last Day Events*, p. 215. See also *Counsels on Health*, p. 238-239 and many others.)

25 Rev 13:3; NEB.

26 Rev 13:8.

27 Rev 9:4.

28 Rev 16:2.

29 Lk 21:26.

30 Rev 6:17.

31 1 Kgs 19:14.

32 "All who follow the Lamb in heaven must first have followed Him on earth, not fretfully or capriciously, but in trustful, loving, willing obedience, as the flock follows the shepherd (Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 591); see also Ellen White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.

33 Rev 9:16; NEB.

34 Another case where the number itself is a message, can be seen in the vision of the seven lamps (Rev 4:5) which are the "seven spirits of God." Since there is no evidence to conclude there are seven Holy Spirits, interpreters uniformly agree that the number, in this case, is a message. Its purpose is to transmit the idea of the universal and all-embracing work of the Spirit. A similar use of numbers is seen in the vision of four angels standing on the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds (Rev 7:1).

35 Vss. 5-8.

36 Kgs 17:1-23.

37 Apparently there were still some individuals who identified themselves as belonging to one or another of the ten tribes. We read, for example, of the prophetess Anna, "of the tribe of Asher" (Lk 2:36).

38 Ezek 47:13-48:35.

39 Matt 19:28.

40 Jas 1:1; 2:1.

41 Gal 6:16.

42 Gal 3:29.

43 Eph 5:26, 27; cf. Rev 14:12; Rom 14:10, 11.

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44 Ellen White in *SDA Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 7:970.
45 Rev 7:2, 3.
46 Rev 14:1; cf. John 17:6.
47 Rev 14:12, KJV.

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Revelation 9:15 and the Limits of Greek Syntax

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Since the translation of the King James Version in 1611, our knowledge of New Testament Greek has expanded greatly. This has far reaching implications not only for translation but also for the interpretation of the text. This paper seeks to explore some of these implications. I propose here that there is a distinction between a syntactical relationship and a statement about objective reality. Some syntactical relationships are objective, meaning that they express how the speaker or writer sees objective reality. Others are subjective, meaning that they express perspective, rather than pure objective reality. I would like to use Revelation 9:15 as an example for our discussion. This present study does not attempt an interpretation of this passage, but rather focuses on the proper (and improper) use of Greek grammar in translation and interpretation. Thus, my focus is on methodology, rather than interpretation. Let us begin with a brief comparison between the King James Version and some modern translations.

KJV	And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year , for to slay the third part of men.
NEB	"... They had been held ready for this moment, for this very year and month, day and hour. "
Amplified	"... who had been in readiness for that hour in the appointed day, month and year "
NIV	"... who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year "
TEV	"... for this very hour of this very day of this very month and year "

LI: REVELATION 9:15 AND THE LIMITS OF GREEK SYNTAX

What is at issue here is a rule of Greek syntax known as the Granville Sharp rule.¹ It is generally understood that when two or more nouns are connected by the conjunction *kai*/, and only the first one has the article, they refer to the same person or thing. For example, Brooks and Winbery explain it as follows:

Sharp's rule states: if two substantives are connected by *kai*/ and both have the article, they refer to different persons or things ...; if the first has an article and the second does not, the second refers to the same person or thing as the first Of course the rule could also be applied to a series of three or more.²

In the original, the expression in Revelation 9:15 literally reads "the hour and day and month and year."³ Most translations and commentaries, therefore, take it as a point in time (i.e., the hour = the day = the month = the year) rather than a sequence of time periods. In fact, one commentator goes so far as to use Revelation 9:15 to disprove the historicist method of prophetic interpretation.

Some historicist pillars are easily dislodged. For example, Rev. 9:15 is taken as a period of time involving the year-day principle. But the Greek points to a point, not a period of time.⁴

We could cite other commentaries who hold the same opinion. However, our focus here is not on how Revelation 9:15 has been or should be interpreted. Rather, my purpose is simply to use this text as an example of the need to distinguish between subjective syntax and objective reality.

Subjective vs. Objective

Before discussing our passage directly, I should note here that the distinction which I am proposing is already recognized in the use of the verb tenses in the Greek New Testament. This is sometimes called the distinction between aspect and *Aktionsart*.⁵ Aspect refers to a speaker's perspective of the action. *Aktionsart* refers to the nature of the action itself. To use an example from English, let us consider two sentences, both of which are true and refer to the same event.

1. "I flew to Jackson yesterday."
2. "I was flying to Jackson yesterday."

In the first sentence, the verb I used was punctiliar, whereas in the second it was continuous, implying a period of time. So, the same action can be viewed from two different points of view, which is what the word "aspect" means. However, regardless of whether I use sentence number

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1 or number 2, the nature of the action itself was still the same. The plane trip itself took exactly the same amount of time, regardless of how I choose to describe it.

We can find similar examples in Greek. John 2:20 uses the aorist tense for the building of the temple. The syntactical function of the aorist is punctiliar (that is, indefinite or unqualified). But the very same text tells us that the actual event took forty six years! Another example is Philippians 2:12, “as ye have always obeyed” (aorist tense). Obviously, Paul did not mean that they obeyed once-for-all. Nor did he mean that their obedience occurred at some unspecified point in time!

Now, let us consider two more English examples:

3. “John used to fly from Boston to London every week.”

4. “John flew from Boston to London.”

Sentence 3 tells us something about objective reality. John’s action was habitual or customary. However, sentence 4 is neutral. One cannot infer from sentence 4 that John did not fly from Boston to London every week. It says he flew once. And that is all it says, no more. It does not say that he did not do it every week.

We may summarize the four sentences as follows:

Sentences 1 and 4: neutral

Sentence 2: subjective (aspect)

Sentence 3: objective (Aktionsart)

Thus, we need to distinguish between syntactical relationships that imply something about objective reality from those that are subjective or neutral.

Sharp’s Rule and Revelation 9:15

Now, returning to the topic of Sharp’s rule and its relevance to Revelation 9:15, the question we need to answer is: What kind of syntactical relationship is Sharp’s rule? Is it objective, subjective, or neutral?

Let us look at some examples. In the Greek, Matthew 16:1,6 lumps Pharisees and Saducees together under one article. Did Matthew think that these were different names for the same group? Hardly (see Matthew 22:23,34). But the two groups functioned together as a syntactical unit in those verses. They both opposed Jesus. Acts 23:7 is even more interesting. Here, Pharisees and Saducees, lumped under one article, both had a “dissension.” They functioned as one in the syntax of the sentence, but not in real life.⁶

Examples from Revelation would also be useful. Revelation 14:7 lumps the “earth,” “sea,” and “fountains of waters” under one article. They are grouped together as a unit in the structure of the sentence.

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But obviously, they are not all the same thing.⁷ Also, in Revelation 5:12 heavenly beings ascribe a sevenfold blessing to Christ, all lumped together under one article. Yet, we cannot automatically conclude that these seven items refer to the same thing. Notice that in Revelation 7:12 the same heavenly beings ascribe a similar sevenfold blessing to God, but each of the seven items is preceded by its own article.

Due to these and other examples, some scholars (including Sharp himself!) prefer to place limitations on the application of Sharp's rule. Note Turner's caution:

In Hell., and indeed for practical purposes in class. Greek the repetition of the art. was not strictly necessary to ensure that the items be considered separately."⁸

Blass-DeBrunner is also cautious.⁹ The latest German edition is especially noteworthy: "Der Artikel scheint (naturgemäß) zu fehlen, wenn das letztere von zwei durch kai/ verbundenen Attributen eine Apposition bei sich hat" (p. 226). Thus Blass-DeBrunner-Rehkopf applies Sharp's rule only *if* an apposition is actually intended (the implication is that an apposition may not always be intended).

However, rather than to give many "exceptions" to the rule, a simpler solution is to define Sharp's rule as a subjective syntactical relationship. Notice for example Greenlee's definition:

Granville Sharp's rule: When the article is used before the first member only of a series, the members are to be considered as a connected whole. When the article is used before each member, each is to be considered separately.¹⁰

I like this definition. Sharp's rule tells us only how a series of items should be considered, whether separately or together. It does not tell us whether they are identical. Therefore, given a series connected by the conjunction kai/, if each member of the series has the article, then we should consider them separately. Of course, we then could deduce that they are separate persons or items, because otherwise they could not be separated. But that is a matter of logic rather than grammar. However, the opposite is not true. If only the first item in a series has the article, we cannot automatically conclude that they are all identical. For Sharp's rule says only that we should consider them together, no more. Thus, Sharp's rule is a subjective syntactical relationship, not an objective one.

This distinction is crucial to exegesis and interpretation. For, if we are dealing with objective syntax, it is important not to miss it.

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Otherwise, we may miss an important exegetical or even theological clue. However, if we are dealing with subjective syntax, then we must be careful not to read into the Greek more than is actually there.

Let us now return to Revelation 9:15. According to Sharp's rule, the hour, day, month, and year in this passage are viewed as one unit. However, that does not tell us whether that unit is a point in time or a period of time. The distinction here is not between a point in time and a period of time, but between one unit and four units (i.e., one "package" of four items instead of four separate items). In other words, the Greek syntax may simply indicate one total time period instead of four separate time periods. Therefore, the question of whether Revelation 9:15 refers to a point in time or a period of time is not resolved by the Greek, and the best translation is one that allows for the ambiguity, such as, "the hour and day and month and year" (NKJV).

Once we have established the translation of the passage, we may proceed to interpret it. However, as I mentioned at the beginning, the interpretation of our passage is not the focus of this paper. That must remain for another occasion. Suffice it to say here that regardless of how one may interpret Revelation 9:15, the Greek syntax alone does not allow a translation to prejudge the question of whether it refers to a point in time or a period of time.

Notes

¹Sharp originally published it in 1798. The third edition was also the first American edition. It was entitled, *Remarks on the Uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament: Containing many new proofs of the divinity of Christ, from passages which are wrongly translated in the common English version* (Boston: Fry and Kammerer; Philadelphia: B. B. Hopkins, 1807). I understand there is also a reprint edition by Original Word, which I have not had a chance to see. As can be seen from the title, his primary interest was in proving the divinity of Christ. This specific argument, however, did not gain unanimous acceptance. See, for example, Nigel Turner, "Syntax," in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Hope Moulton, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 181.

²James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979), p. 76.

³Both the Textus Receptus and the UBS/NA texts agree. However, several mss. insert a second article before the second noun.

⁴Desmond Ford, *Crisis—A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, vol. 2 (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Publications, 1982), p. 402.

⁵Perhaps the first one to make this distinction was S. Agrell, *Aspektänderung und Aktionsartbildung beim polnischen Zeitworte: ein Beitrag zum Studium der indogermanischen Präverbia und ihrer Bedeutungsfunktionen*, Lunds Universitets Arsskrift NS 1, IV.2 (Lunds, 1908). This distinction was also made by H. Jacobsohn, "Aspektfragen," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 51(1933)292-318 and his review of J. Wackernagel [*Vorlesungen über Syntax mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Griechisch, Lateinisch und Deutsch*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Basel: Emil Birkhäuser, [1926]), *Gnomon* 2(1926)369-395. See also, Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*, *Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Although Comrie does not formally make this distinction, his definition of aspect appears to distinguish it from Aktionsart. For recent discussion on its application to New Testament Greek, see Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with*

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Reference to Tense and Mood, Studies in Biblical Greek vol. 1, revision of author's thesis (New York: P. Lang, 1989); Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs, revision of thesis (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, eds., *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*, JSNT Supplement Series 80 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) for the interaction between Porter and Fanning, as well as some reactions by others.

⁶For another example, see Ephesians 3:18.

⁷The meaning of this clause is that God is called the Creator of two things: 1) "the heaven"; and 2) the various aspects of this world, summarized by "the earth and sea and fountains of waters."

⁸Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, p. 181.

⁹F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, A Translation and Revision of the ninth-tenth German edition incorporating supplementary notes by A. DeBrunner by Robert W. Funk (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), § 276 (pp. 144-145). See also the latest German edition, F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Bearbeitet von Friedrich Rehkopf, 16th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), § 276 (pp.226-227).

¹⁰J. Harold Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 5th ed. revised (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), p. 23 (sec. I.B.11).

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Is the Angel of Revelation 10 a Divine Being?

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Introduction

The passage in Revelation 10:1-3 is unique within the biblical canon.¹ Never is an angel described in this much detail or in these terms. The practice of describing angels—including names, functions and appearance—was part of a growing late second temple practice among certain Jewish authors.² However, these elaborations do not appear in the NT, which does not go beyond OT usage,³ unless the exception is here in this passage.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the appearance and acts of the angel in Chapter 10, together with his oath (vss. 5-6), and to identify him in light of the significance of John's description.

There are several issues which impact an investigation of this sort. One is the issue of John's sources. That is, should Revelation be interpreted in light of the OT (with its limited angelology), or in light of the non-canonical material of late second temple Judaism (with a more advanced angelology), or in light of the NT (with its OT oriented angelology). Furthermore, since John never clearly cites a source, how do we know when he has a source in mind, and how that source is functioning in the context of Revelation?

It is generally taken for granted by commentators that the OT functions as the source of images and symbols for John. Merrill Tenny, in a chapter on the "Old Testament Background of Revelation," says:

The reader of Revelation will not have perused many of its pages before he realizes that much of its language sounds familiar. It is filled with references to events and characters of the OT, and a great deal of its phraseology is taken directly from the OT books. . . .⁴

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Pick up any commentary and this becomes evident, as symbol after symbol is referred back to the OT. There are names like “Son of Man” (1:13), “Balaam” (2:14), “Moses” (15:3), “Babylon” (14; 17; 18), “Gog and Magog” (20:8). There are images like the “four living creatures” (Rev 4; Ezek 1), the altar and incense (Rev 8; OT sanctuary service), the plagues of Revelation 16 recall the plagues of the Exodus. However, what becomes equally clear is that for many images there is no agreement on which OT passage(s) John may have had in mind.

That there is a relationship with the NT is also generally taken for granted. This seems appropriate due to its inclusion in the NT canon,⁵ although the nature of that relationship is debated by some.⁶ In both the NT (John 1:29, 36; 1 Cor 5:7 cf. Exod 12) and Revelation (Rev 5:6; 6:16) Jesus is pictured as the Lamb. There are a number of images in common to both, for example, churches, the Son of Man coming on the clouds, etc. Some kind of relationship between the seals of Chapter 6 and our Lord’s prophecy (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) is generally recognized.⁷ Some of these are items that both Revelation and the NT share in common with the OT, such as the Son of Man terminology.

The relationship to the noncanonical apocalyptic literature is less certain. Though the NT seems to contain certain thoughts or language similar to them, it does not appear to recognize this literature as authoritative nor quote from it in the same way it does those documents traditionally considered canonical.⁸ The question arises, When John uses an image present in both the OT and the other literature, which is John drawing upon? Is this to be determined by genre or canon? Given that much of the relationship between Revelation and this literature is “indirect,”⁹ given the overwhelming use of the OT in Revelation, and given the fact that the OT is considered canonical by the NT writers, the OT should have priority unless the contrary can be proved. That there is some sort of relationship would seem to be evident from R. H. Charles’ collection of textual similarities between Revelation and the Apocrypha.¹⁰ The background in this literature will be examined due to its development of a more advanced angelology.

The uncertain nature of what is a source for Revelation can be illustrated by comparing the lists of passages thought by various scholars to be cited from the OT. Tenny places the count at 348, these being “verbal resemblances” and “contextual connections.”¹¹ The margin of the Nestle-Aland Greek text cites over 850 OT verses. R. H. Charles cites 284 verses based on one of the ancient texts or echoes of them.¹² UBS¹³ cites fewer verses than Nestle-Aland, but still around 800;

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however, in its “Index of Quotations” zero references are cited for Revelation to the OT.

In line with this more formal approach to quotations is the study of Robert G. Bratcher. He includes “all formal quotations and some of the more obvious paraphrases and allusions which seem to reflect a conscious use of a specific OT passage or OT phraseology.”¹⁴ With this approach Bratcher counts just 19 quotes/allusions in Revelation to the OT.¹⁵ Gleason Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, in their *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey*, count only 17 OT quotes in Revelation.¹⁶

This brief survey points up both the lack of formal quotations in Revelation and the difficulties in determining to which verse or verses John might be referring. It is also evidence of the different ways scholars evaluate how John used his sources.

Several scholars have sought to put this issue in a more defined setting. But since John never tells us how he functions in relation to his sources, there is a degree of subjectivity in all these attempts. The value in such discussions is that the difficulties are clarified and the procedure/method is at least thought through more completely. This may keep the researcher from seeing allusions and parallels where none were intended at all.¹⁷

When scholars talk about Revelation’s sources, they sometimes use the word “allusion.”¹⁸ But defining and determining the nature of an allusion can be an allusive enterprise.¹⁹ M. Tenny discusses the problem in his book, as does G. Beale. The fullest study I know of is the dissertation of J. Paulien.²⁰ A repeat of this discussion would seem redundant here, and the reader is referred to the above sources.

In terms of our study of Rev 10:1-3, the background of a given symbol will be investigated in the various possible sources, looking for similar words, themes, and interlocking ideas and structures. We will review OT texts that have the same word(s) via the Greek Septuagint (LXX) to see if it is possible to isolate which ones John may have had in mind and see if there is a pattern to the symbolism as John uses it.

Symbolic Imagery—Appearance²¹

“Another Mighty Angel.” “Then I saw *another might angel*” (*allon aggelon ischuron*) is the phrase that introduces the angel of 10:1. The Greek word for “angel” occurs 76 times in Revelation, but only 3 times is it combined with the adjective “mighty” (Rev 5:2; 10:1; 18:21). Only 10:1 precedes the phrase by the form “another.”

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Since “another” (*allos*) usually notes some kind of contrast with what precedes,²² the question of the contrast arises. Some contrast this angel with the trumpet angels,²³ the fallen star of chapter 9,²⁴ or the angel of 8:3.²⁵ Others identify him with the mighty angel of 5:2.²⁶ The presence of the adjective *ischuron* (mighty) alone is sufficient to contrast this angel with the other angels of chapters 8 and 9. And if John had wanted to identify this angel with the mighty angel of 5:2 he would have used the Greek definite article, either *ton ischuron aggelon*, or *ton aggelon ton ischuron*. The fact that he does not use the article, but rather uses the contrastive adjective “another” together with “mighty angel” would seem to indicate that the *contrast* is with the “mighty angel” of 5:2. Thus, in 10:1 a different “mighty angel” is being presented.

Cloud Imagery. We turn now to the imagery associated with this angel. In the Septuagint²⁷, among the books counted as canonical, there are 114 uses of the term for cloud (*nephelē*).²⁸ Of these, fifty-six²⁹ refer to the Pillar of Cloud/Glory of the Lord in the Exodus account. Thirty-nine are literal clouds,³⁰ and nineteen³¹ could be literal, but in their usage and associations could just as well be interpreted another way.³²

The word “cloud” is never associated with an angel. One reference to the *malʾāk hāʾelōhīm*, “the Angel [or Messenger] of God”—associated with the pillar of cloud/fire—(Exod 14:19) is identified in vs. 24 as YHWH.

Among commentators there is often seen a link between this cloud imagery and the pillar of cloud associated with the tabernacle and the wilderness wanderings. E. S. Fiorenza writes, “. . . The clouds and the pillars of fire in turn evoke the Exodus and Sinai covenant with Israel (Exod 13:21ff; 19:16ff).”³³ J. A. Siess likewise reviews many of the OT passages which are associated with the pillar of cloud motif.³⁴ And J. M. Ford notes:

The angel is more than a sign of the Noachic covenant; his feature bear the traces also of the Sinai covenant. The words *katabainō*, “descend,” *nephelē*, “a cloud,” and *stuloi puros*, “pillars of fire,” recall the following texts: Exod 33:9, where the pillar (*stulos*) of cloud (*nephelē*) descended (*katabainō*), and stood at the door of the tabernacle”³⁵

She further cites Exodus 34:5; Numbers 11:25; 14:10 and Deuteronomy 31:15, all of which use similar language.

Another group of texts often cited by commentators is Psalms 104:3, Daniel 7:13, Acts 1:9, and Matthew 24:30.³⁶ The theme common to these

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texts is that the cloud symbolism concerns the vehicle for movement by God, the Son of Man or Jesus Christ, depending on the passage cited. We may rule out these passages as sources for interpreting the cloud imagery of Revelation 10:1. For while the angel moves between heaven and earth, the cloud functions as his covering and not his transport.

Another passage cited is that of Genesis 9:13-14.³⁷ The word for cloud is the same and both passages speak of a rainbow; however the themes are not the same. Genesis 9 presents a literal cloud in the sky without image, or symbol or metaphor, a different picture than the Revelation 10 description.

Of the various kinds of backgrounds proposed for this imagery, that of the Being who appears in the cloud at the door of the tabernacle seems the best. The functions of the cloud are similar, that is, in both contexts the cloud functions as a covering. In the Exodus situation it is a covering for YHWH; in Revelation 10 it is a covering for the angel and seems linked with the terminology of the pillar of fire.

The word *nephelē* (cloud) occurs 26 times in the NT. Once in a literal sense (Luke 12:54), twice as a metaphor (2 Pet 2:17; Jude 12), seven times in the transfiguration,³⁸ and two times for the pillar of cloud (1 Cor 10:1, 2). In the remaining passages the cloud imagery is a vehicle for Christ, the Son of Man, the redeemed, and the symbolic two witnesses of Revelation. This follows the same basic imagery pattern as found in the OT.

The use of cloud imagery in the noncanonical literature³⁹ seems to function differently than in either OT or NT. One passage uses the cloud imagery for the pillar of cloud (Ps-Philo 13:1-2), another speaks of the clouds as encircling the throne of glory in the description of the celestial rainbow (3 Enoch appendix 22c:4; cf. Gen 9:13). In the appendix to 3 Enoch 24:1-23 there is a list of the chariots of God based on various OT passages; vss. 3 and 4 mention chariots of swift clouds and chariots of clouds respectively. The other references do not have similarity with OT/NT, or specifically Revelation 10:1.⁴⁰

Rainbow Imagery. The common Greek word for rainbow is *iris*, but it is not used in the LXX.⁴¹ Rather the Greek word *toxson*, archer's bow, is used to translate the Hebrew *qešet* which stands for both rainbow and archer's bow. When Josephus comments on the bow in the cloud (Gen 9), he informs his readers ". . . whereby is meant the rainbow, for they determined that the rainbow was the bow of God."⁴² On this matter Ringstorff concludes,

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In view of the linguistic and material background of the word *iris*, we may say in conclusion, that this term, which is not itself a biblical word, is given in Rev the content of the OT *tv,q/toxon* and that with this content is seen in the light of the revelation in Christ . . .⁴³

Toxson occurs 74 times in the LXX.⁴⁴ Of these, only four uses have the clear meaning of rainbow;⁴⁵ the others refer to the archer's bow. With only two passages (Gen and Ezek) the amount of background is limited.⁴⁶ A number of commentators see the background in Genesis 9 and the covenant with Noah.⁴⁷ However, the same limitations that occurred with the cloud imagery seem relevant here. Ezekiel 1:28 is also cited as background.⁴⁸ Here the appearance of God is described as "the likeness of the glory of the Lord," using cloud and rainbow together for the description.⁴⁹

The only other passage in the NT which uses *iris* is in Revelation 4:3, where a rainbow is seen around the throne. A number of scholars cite this passage as the source for the rainbow imagery in Revelation 10.⁵⁰ J. A. Seiss notes that the definite article is present in 10:1, indicating that the rainbow of 4:3 is again in view.⁵¹

In the Appendix to 3 Enoch 22:4f there is a vision of a huge "bow" in the cloud which is around the throne of God. In the Apocalypse of Abraham 11:3 the headdress on the head of the angel Jaobel is likened to a rainbow.

Face Like the Sun. This imagery does not specifically occur in the OT.⁵² Only two passages in the NT can be considered as background here. The first is Matthew 17:2. The words *to prosōpon autou hōs ho hēlios* are nearly identical in the two passages. In this account of the transfiguration Jesus' face shines like the sun. The second passage (Rev 1:16) is John's description of the Son of Man. John's phrase differs from Matthew's by the exchange of *hē oyis* for *to prosōpon* and the addition of the expression "in its strength."

In 3 Enoch 22 of the noncanonical literature the being Kerubi'el YHWH is described. Part of this description states that His face looks like "a blazing fire." The description of Michael who appears to Aseneth in Joseph and Asenath 14:9-10 includes a face like lighting. In 2 Enoch 1:45 two huge men are described with faces shining like the sun. And the description of an angel in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah includes a face shining like the sun.

Feet Like Pillars of Fire. In the LXX the phrase, "pillar of fire," occurs in only six passages,⁵³ but the same context, that is, the cloudy pillar of fire that led Israel by night. The phrase "pillar of fire" is always used in conjunction with the "pillar of cloud." The significance of the

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plural (pillars) in Revelation 10:1 would seem to be its connection with the plural “feet,” each foot or leg is like a pillar of fire.

The rest of the NT has no phrase comparable to this (pillars of fire), although in 1:15 the feet of the Son of Man are described as fired brass or burnished bronze, alluding to the Being of Daniel 10:6 whose feet are described like the gleam of burnished bronze.

Among the descriptions of heavenly beings in the noncanonical literature, there are two that describe the feet. The Apocalypse of Zephaniah (6:11-15) describes an angel with feet like bronze, probably a reference back to Daniel 10:6. In Joseph and Asenath 14:9-10, sparks fly from the hands and feet of Michael. Neither of these would serve as an adequate background to the personage of Revelation 10:1.

Symbolic Imagery—Activities

He set his feet (vs. 2). The meaning of this terminology is variously interpreted. For Ladd it suggests not only his “gigantic size,” but also that his message is for the whole world.⁵⁴ For Morris it means that he has mastery over both the land and the sea, and the message is universal;⁵⁵ Charles, too, says the message concerns the whole world.⁵⁶ Mounce takes the angel’s stance as symbolic of his authority over the entire earth and thinks it less likely to point to a universal message.⁵⁷ Ralph Earle also believes it points to his authority.⁵⁸ The *Interpreters Bible* follows this line and sets it in contrast with the desire of the Roman Empire for world domination.⁵⁹ Krodel thinks the angel’s position points to his authority as the representative of God.⁶⁰

Several commentators discuss this symbolism in light of the OT “foot motif” wherein the person who places his/her foot on something announces ownership, subjugation, victory etc.⁶¹ In his article on the term *pous* (foot) Weiss notes a symbolic use when “the foot is the sign of power exercised by the person.”⁶² He cites Joshua 10:24 where the captains of Joshua put their feet on the necks of their enemies, also Josh 14:9; Deut 11:23; Josh 1:3; 2 Sam 22:39=Ps 18:38; Ps 58:10 with the same motif. Other passages cited from the OT directly concern the Deity: 1 Chron 28:2; Ezek 43:7; Ps 99:5; Lam 2:1; Ps 77:19; Zech 14:4; Hab 3:6.⁶³

While these passages illustrate the “foot motif,” none of them are used by John in the sense of an allusion. They seem, rather, to form the broader background of a motif echoed by John in the act of this angel in Revelation 10. John’s decision would seem to indicate some significance beyond the size of the angel or the universality of the message to point to a claim being made.

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Like a Lion Roaring. When this angel cries out, His cry is compared to the roar of a lion. The idea of a roaring lion occurs several times in the OT. But since the verb *mukaomai* (roar) does not occur in the LXX, a verbal parallel is not possible. Several passages speak generally about a roaring lion, such as Isaiah 5:29 and Amos 3:4, but these do not appear in contexts similar to our passage and probably do not form a background to Revelation 10. In two passages a voice is likened to a lion's roar: Amos 3:8 provides a loose parallel in which "a lion has roared" and the "The Lord God has spoken" function in poetic parallelism. In Hosea 11:10 God is said to roar like a lion. In two other passages, Amos 1:2 and Joel 3:16, God is said to roar, but the word for lion is absent.

Within the book of Revelation the Lamb who takes the sealed scroll (5:7) is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah"; one of the creatures around the throne is like a lion (4:7); in 9:8 the locusts have lions' teeth; in 9:17 the heads of the horses are like lions; and in 13:2 there is a beast with a mouth like a lion. In the apocryphal book of 4 Ezra⁶⁴ 11:37 there is a creature which roars like a lion which in 12:31 is interpreted as the Messiah.

Summary and Conclusion

Our study has investigated the background of the angel of Revelation 10 against the background of the OT, the NT, and the non-canonical Jewish literature. Our research did not find a close correlation between the non-canonical literature and Revelation but for one exception: the symbolism of the face shining like the sun. The areas which Revelation and this literature share any similarity seem to be due to the OT as a common source. Since this is the case, our summary and conclusion will focus on the OT and NT relationships.

The title of this essay asks a question: "Is the Angel of Revelation 10 a Divine Being?" Commentators have often noted that the imagery found in the passage is linked to imagery used in various places to describe God. For example, in the *Interpreter's Bible*: ". . . This angel arrived in a cloud, as did Yahweh in Ezek 1:27-28, for he had a rainbow on his head, his face shone like the sun and his legs were pillars of fire (cf also Dan 10:5-6. . .)." ⁶⁵ However, the angel is not identified beyond this similarity. Alan Johnson writes:

The author sees a mighty angel (possibly Michael the great prince [Dan 12:1]) whom he describes in such dazzling terms (cloud, rainbow, sun, fiery pillars) that some have identified him with Christ. But

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angels are always angels in the Apocalypse, as well as the rest of the NT and should not be identified with Christ . . .⁶⁶

Ladd likewise writes, “All of these items are similar to descriptions of the glorified Christ. However in the apocalypse angels are always angels; Christ is never called an angel. . .”⁶⁷ R. H. Charles and Morris hold the same opinion.⁶⁸ R. H. Mounce, after reviewing the imagery and having noted that some commentators take this angel to be Christ, writes, “This identification is rejected by most because in the Apocalypse Christ never appears as an angel . . .”⁶⁹

When I read these authors (all of whom I respect and have learned from), I am troubled by the lack of explanation. If this is a mere angel, why is he presented in the majesty of Deity? The assertion that in Revelation angels are always angels is not very helpful. Stating that nowhere is Christ called an angel is beside the point. Even in this passage this angel is not called or designated as Christ. The question raised by these verses is not what this being is designated (that he is called an “angel” is very clear), *but what is this “angel” doing in a wardrobe reserved for divinity if he is not a divine personage?*

Are angels always angels? This is not the only problematic use of angels in the book of Revelation. In chapters 2-3 John is instructed to write a message to the “angel” of each church. According to 1:1 this revelation of Christ was mediated to John by an angel. It makes little sense to see John receiving a message mediated by one angel for him to pass on to another angel! Even commentators who have said that angels are always angels in Revelation struggle (with little success it seem to me) to see these as angels.⁷⁰ It is hard to see how the assertion, “angels are always angels,” is either true or helpful.

Another passage where understanding the role of angels seem difficult is Revelation 14:6, 8, 9. How does one envision these passages? In the NT the commission to preach the gospel to the world is given to Christ’s disciples; the announcement of the fall of Babylon is taken from a previous prophet.

The problem lies in limiting the range of meaning for the term “angel.” In the OT the word for angel, *mal’āk*, often means messenger (see Gen 32:3, 6; Num 20:14; 21:21; 22:5 etc.). Even the phrase *mal’āk YHWH* (the Angel of the Lord), who is often interchanged with YHWH (cf. Exod 3:2, 4), is used to designate the prophet Haggai (1:13). And in the NT the term “angel” may also refer to human messengers (Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52, etc.), though less often than in the OT.

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In each of the passages noted above in which the role of the angel is strange or problematic, the being referred to as “angel” is functioning as a messenger. Consequently, the specific identity of the messenger is to be clarified by the clues found in the context, and not by an assertion that angels are always angels in a given book regardless of the problems of interpretation the identification may cause. To what does the context of our passage point?

First, this angel is not to be identified with any other in the Book of Revelation.

Second, no matter how we take the cloud imagery, it all points to imagery used of God and His covenant. However the best background seems to be the pillar of cloud imagery in which YHWH wrapped Himself.

Third, the background to the rainbow imagery is limited. But the rainbow in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek 1:23) and the rainbow in John’s vision (Rev 4:3), being related, probably form the background to our passage.⁷¹

Fourth, the terminology, “face like the sun,” is used only of Jesus in His transfiguration and John’s vision of the Son of Man.

Fifth, the feet like pillars of fire point again to God’s manifestations during the Exodus.

Sixth, the stance of this personage indicates his authority over the earth.

Seventh, His voice roars like the voice of God.

John has picked imagery and symbols limited to divinity from Scripture. It is difficult, then, to escape the conclusion that this angelic figure is none other than the Son of God in His role of messenger to the prophet John.

There yet remains one point of discussion, the oath. This is one of the key reasons that many commentators reject the interpretation that this messenger figure is Christ. To them the oath is inappropriate for Christ to pronounce.⁷² In response we wish to make several observations:

First, it is not impossible for God to swear by Himself. ““But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation,”” (Jer 22:5). ““And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, ‘By myself I have sworn,’ declares the Lord, ‘because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son . . .’” (Gen 22:15-16). In this passage not only does God swear by Himself, but does so by the voice of an angel. About this oath the author of Hebrews writes in 6:13

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“For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.”⁷⁵

Second, the oath sworn by the messenger figure of Revelation 10 is an allusion to Daniel 12:7. The language of the oath may be present in order to draw the attention of the reader to Daniel 12 and its context, and should not be used to outweigh all the other evidence, if one still feels that this oath could not be given by Christ. To illustrate, there is the figure of the Son or Man in Revelation 14, who, because he receives an order from an angel, could not, according to some scholars, be Christ or the same Son of Man in 1:13.⁷⁴ I’m not at all certain that the symbolic imagery in Revelation should be strained in this manner.

Third, it should be noted that earlier in the book of Revelation the roles of Creator and Redeemer were considered separately. In Revelation 4 the “One seated on the throne” (the Father) is deemed worthy because He created; in Revelation 5 the “Lamb,” standing in the throne area, is deemed worthy because He redeemed.

Finally, this kind of language (the oath addressed to the Creator by the “messenger,” 10:6) is consistent with other NT passages. For example, in 3:1-2 the Son of Man (1:12-20) says, “. . . Awake, and strengthen what remains, and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of *my God*.” In Matthew 27:46 Jesus cries out “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” For the Christ to swear by the Father as Creator (Rev 10:6) or to address Him as “My God” (Rev 3:1-2; Matt 27:46) does not seem to be too different. As the second does not deny Christ’s divinity, neither should the first.

Is the “Angel” of Revelation 10 a Divine Being? In light of the symbolism and activities of this Being, we conclude that the Risen Christ has appeared to John.

Notes

1 Meaning the Protestant canon.

2 Cf. D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 235-249; Carol A. Newsome, “Angels,” *ABD* 1(1992), pp. 248-253.

3 Duane F. Watson, “Angels,” *ABD* 1(1992):253-255, notes the lack of description of function, names or appearance beyond what is given in the OT.

4 Merrill C. Tenny, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 101.

5 Cf. K. A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Naples, Florida: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1972), pp. 18, 22.

6 This debate will not detain us here. I agree with J. Paulien “Interpreting Revelation’s Symbols,” in *Symposium on Revelation-Book I* (Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, F. B. Holbrook, ed., (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 6:76. “It is evident from the very first phrase (‘the revelation of Jesus Christ’) that Revelation is a Christian book (1:1). Jesus Christ is present every where, both explicitly and in symbol. There are references to churches and to the cross. The careful reader also becomes aware of scores if not hundreds, of echoes recalling NT themes, vocabulary, and theology. . .”

7 See Paulien, “The Seven Seals,” *Ibid*, p. 243.

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- 8 See R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 91-92; G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), pp. 74-75.
- 9 See R. H. Charles, *Revelation ICC* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1920?), I:lxv.
- 10 Charles, lxxxii-lxxxiii.
- 11 Tenny, p. 101.
- 12 Charles, I:lxviii-lxxxiii.
- 13 *The Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, p. 903.
- 14 Robert G. Bratcher, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1984), vii.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
- 16 Gleason Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), xxii.
- 17 Cf. Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1961):1-13. On page 1 he defines "parallelomania" ". . . as that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction."
- 18 Eg. Bratcher, *Ibid.*; Tenny, p. 102; Beale 306ff; Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets* (Andrews University Doctoral Dissertation [Series] No. 11 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987), throughout.
- 19 Strand (28) notes the fluidity of a symbol and some of the problems that would make their sources "allusive."
- 20 The bibliography is available in their works already cited in the footnotes here. Additionally, Paulien has written a shorter version of his study, see footnote 6.
- 21 The Greek text of Revelation 10:1-3 has no significant variants that affect the thrust of this study.
- 22 Cf. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 272.
- 23 Eg. George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 141; E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St John* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1851), p. 376.
- 24 Eg. J. M. Ford, *Revelation, Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 161.
- 25 Suggested by Ladd, p. 141.
- 26 Ladd, p. 141, "The fact that he is a strong angel may identify him with the strong angel of 5:2. But see 18:21 for similar language." G. A. Krodel, *Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), p. 210, sees this as part of the thematic relationship between chapters 5 and 10. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Oliphants, 1974), p. 170, notes that the language "harks back" to the first mighty angel of 5:2, but he does not make any identification between the two.
- 27 LXX is the abbreviation generally applied to the Greek translation of the Pentateuch made in Alexandria by either 70 or 72 translators (depending on the tradition), by extension LXX (Septuagint) is applied to the entire Greek OT, see Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates* (New York: Ktav, 1973), p. 66.
- 28 Count based on Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, Reprint, 1991).
- 29 Exod 13:21, 22; 14:19, 24; 16:10; 19:9, 13, 16; 24:15, 16(2x's); 33:9, 10; 34:5; 40:34, 35, 36, 37(2x's), 38; Lev 16:2; Num 9:15, 16, 17(2x's), 18, 19, 20, 21, 22; 10:11, 12, 34; 11:25; 12:5, 10; 14:10, 14(2x's); 16:42(17:7) Deut 1:33; 31:15(2x's); Jos 24:7; 3 Ki (1 Ki in English) 8:10(2x's); 2 Chron 5:13, 14; Neh (1:2, 19 Ps 77(78):14; 98(99):7; 104(105):39; Isa 4:5 Ezek 10:3, 4.
- 30 Gen 9:13, 14(2x's), 16; Judg 5:4; 2 Ki (2 Sam in English) 22:12; 3 Ki 18:44, 45; Job 26:8; 35:4; 36:27; 37:11; Ps 35(36):5; 56(57):10; 107(108):4; 134(135):7; 146(147):8; Eccl 11:4; Hos 6:5(4); 13:3; Joel 2:2; Zech 1:15 Isa 5:6; 18:4; 44:22; 45:8; 60:8; Jer 4:13; 10:13; 28(51):16; Lam 3:44; Ezek 1:4, 28; 31:3, 10, 14; 32:7; 34:12; 38:9, 16.
- 31 Job 22:14; 36:29; Ps 17(18):11, 12; 67(68):34; 76(77):17; 77(78):23; 88(89):6; 96(97):2; 103(104):3; Nah 1:3 Zech 2:13(17); Isa 14:14; 19:1; Lam 3:44; Ezek 1:20; 303,18; Dan 7:13.
- 32 Please note that in the above passages the verses cited are for the LXX, the verses in parenthesis are for the MT (BHS-Hebrew). English Bibles may follow one or the other or neither of the verse numberings. In addition the LXX has a number of verses which use the word "cloud" though the corresponding word is not used in the MT, and so will not likely be used in an English version.
- 33 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 75.

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- 34 J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), p. 224.
- 35 Ford, p. 162.
- 36 See Leon Morris, *Revelation*, TNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 134; Ladd, p. 141; Mounce, p. 206. None of these commentators cite all these texts; Ladd, p. 141, also notes that in Rev 10:1 a cloud provides the angel's garb, not his vehicle.
- 37 See J. M. Ford, p. 161-162.
- 38 Matt 17:5(2x's); Mark 9:7(2x's); Luke 9:34 (2x's), p. 35.
- 39 I have relied on the indexes of James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 2 vols (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) and references in D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Maxwell J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 11 (Sheffield: JSOT press, 1992); T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976); and Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (New York: Crossroad, 1982). In the areas of OT/NT using standard concordances, I worked with every passage using "cloud," but this has not been possible with this literature. Furthermore, as this literature covers many languages, all comparisons were made from Charlesworth's edition, English to English.
- 40 Jubilees 2:2, among the "spirits" which minister before God are "the angels of the spirit of the clouds and darkness and snow and hail and frost," among many other types of angels. 2 Baruch 53 records a "vision" in which a cloud waters the land. In 2 Enoch 3:1-3 Enoch is carried to heaven in a cloud, though in rescension [A] the word "wing" is used. In the Sibylline Oracles book 3 §805, one of the signs of the end is "a battle of infantry and cavalry in the clouds, like a hunt." And in 1 Enoch 14:8ff the clouds and fogs call him to vision. For a discussion of *'arobot* in 3 Enoch 19:7 see fn 19j in Charlesworth and see Rowland, p. 81, where *'arobot* is the 7th heaven in some rabbinic interpretation. For the MT, *'arobot*, *CHAL* gives "desert," the NKJV, KJV, and NJPS translate "clouds," the Tg translates "heaven" and the LXX gives "west."
- 41 K. H. Rengstorff III, "*iris*," TDNT 3:339-40. *Iris* only occurs at Exod 30:24 as a translation of qiddāh, a plant used for a kind of ointment.
- 42 Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, I. III. 8. William Whiston, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Publications, 1960), p. 29. Cf. Loeb 1:103.
- 43 Ringstorff, p. 342. Cf. Rev 6:2, the only use of *toxon* in the NT means an archer's bow, in contrast to the two uses of *iris* in Rev 4:3 and 10:1.
- 44 See Hatch and Redpath for references.
- 45 Gen 9:13,14,16; Ezek 1:28. Since the remaining passages do not mean rainbow, and do not serve as background to this imagery of Rev 10:1-3, they will not be listed here.
- 46 A number of scholars either don't comment on the background (e.g. Johnson), or give it a different kind of interpretation. Charles (1:259), for example, says the rainbow is due to the light on the angel's face, due to the cloud. Ladd (141) calls it a glorious headdress.
- 47 Among them, Fiorenza, p. 75; Krodel, p. 312, cf. note 26; Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), p. 188. Mounce refers the reader to Rev 4:3, where he discusses the rainbow in terms of the covenant to Noah.
- 48 J. M. Ford, p. 162; Morris, p. 143, refers the reader to Rev 4:3, where he discusses Ezek 1.
- 49 Cf. C. Rowland, pp. 59-60, where he evaluates this imagery in a similar way.
- 50 Among them, Mounce, p. 207; and Morris, p. 134.
- 51 Seiss, p. 224.
- 52 In Dan 10:6 there is a being whose face is like the appearance of lightning.
- 53 Exod 13:21, 22; 14:24; Num 14:14; Neh 9:12, 19.
- 54 Ladd, p. 142.
- 55 Morris, p. 134.
- 56 Charles 1:260.
- 57 Mounce, p. 208.
- 58 Ralph Earle, "Revelation," *Beacon Bible Commentary* vol 10 (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1967), p. 559.
- 59 "Revelation," *Interpreters Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), p. 439.
- 60 G. Krodel, p. 213.
- 61 See H. W. Lay and R. W. Vunderink, "Foot," *ISBE* 2(1982): 331-332.
- 62 Konrad Weiss, "mous" (or "pous") *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, TDNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1968), 6: 624-631.
- 63 *Ibid*, pp. 626-627; Ford, p. 162. Cf. Seiss, p. 225, and Hengstenburg, p. 382.

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64 This is the 4th Ezra as designated by Charlesworth's edition. For the relationship of the various books that bear Ezra's name see Charlesworth 1:516 and *The Apocraphal Old Testament* edited by H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), pp. 927-928.

65 *Interpreter's Bible*, p. 439; Fiorenza, p. 75.

66 Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 496.

67 Ladd, p. 141.

68 Charles 1:259; Morris, p. 133.

69 Mounce, p. 207.

70 See Mounce, p. 82; Morris, pp. 56-57; Ladd, p. 35.

71 See Rowland, p. 102.

72 See Mounce, p. 207; cf Morris, p. 134.

73 See also Isa 45:23; 62:8; Amos 4:2; 6:8; Jer 44:26; 49:13; 51:14; Deut 32:40.

74 See the discussion in Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), pp. 240-245.

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The Christian Coalition and the End Game¹

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In America, bastion of religious liberty, forces are at work to tear down the wall of separation between church and state. There is a relentless attack against the first amendment of the Constitution, and leading the fight is the Christian Coalition. According to the historicist reading favored by Adventist interpreters, prophecy tells us that America will exercise “all the authority of the first beast” (Papacy) and will make “the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast” (Rev 13:12, NIV). In fact, America will set up an image of the Papacy. The Papacy is a union of church and state, so the image in America will be a union of church and state (Rev 13:13-14). When church and state unite in America, then the church will use the government to enforce its agenda, for the issue in Revelation 13 is worship (vss. 4, 8, 12, 15). Whoever refuses to engage in the mandated false worship will be threatened by boycott and death (vss. 15-17).

Purpose of the Constitution and the First Amendment

In their book, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness*,² Isaak Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore demonstrate that the Constitution is a secular document, even though Christians took part in producing it. The framers of the Constitution believed religion to be a personal matter between the believer and God; church matters were not for government. Church and state were to be two separate powers, one to serve the spiritual and the other the secular needs of citizens. The First Amendment is a two way street, in which the government must not meddle in Religion, and Religion must not meddle in governing. A wall of separation kept them apart. History had proven the wisdom of this separation of powers. The framers of the

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Constitution knew the necessary limits of both church and state to safeguard religious liberty, so often lost in countries where they merged.

Liberty article, "Our Godless Constitution," Kramnick and Moore note the Constitutional framers, building on good English political theory derived from John Locke, limited government "to protect people's rights to life, liberty, and property, not to tell them how and when to pray." Nowhere in the Constitution is Christianity or even God mentioned. No prayers for guidance were offered during the Constitutional Convention. Although the founding fathers were mostly believers in God, "they did not want a godless America, just a godless Constitution."³ However, the framers of the Constitution did not have "a radical secular agenda for the nation."⁴ Obviously, they were only interested in separating church and state, which is anathema to the Christian Coalition.

Attacks on the First Amendment

The First Amendment reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Here are two important principles: the Establishment clause and the Free Exercise clause. The government must stay out of the sphere of religion, which also means that religion should not force government to legislate in matters of faith and conscience. The Christian Coalition supports candidates for government who will promote their religious agenda. They have considerable influence in the Republican party and hope to get the Republican President of their choice elected in the year 2000.

The Berlin wall came crashing down in Germany. Forces are working to tear down the wall of separation between church and state in America. As Rob Boston observes, Christian Coalition critics "insist that destruction of the wall of separation between church and state remains a key goal of Robertson and the Coalition." In October 1981, "Robertson's '700 Club' aired what amounted to a week-long attack on the separation of church and state."^{5, 6} Robertson wants His Christian Coalition to rule. He once said, "We have enough votes to run the country . . . And when people say, 'We've had enough,' we're going to take over."⁷ He sees no problem with the church ruling the state, governing the people. It's as if the First Amendment had never been written. It's as if he had amnesia about other church-state regimes that inflicted religious bigotry and intolerance on dissenting minorities.

"In 1992 the American Center for Law and Justice, a legal group founded by Robertson, printed an article titled "TEAR DOWN THIS

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WALL!” in its Law & Justice newsletter. The article, written by ACLJ director, Keith Fournier, compared the wall of separation between church and state to the Berlin Wall and demanded that it be demolished. Fournier insisted that religious liberty in the United States, ‘has been hampered by this fictitious wall that was never intended by the founding fathers and one which militates against the First Amendment.’ In the same newsletter, Robertson raged against the “so-called ‘wall of separation’ between church and state.”⁸

The New Christian Right is out to Christianize America. Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, challenged, “Our goal is a Christian nation. We have a biblical duty, we are called by God to conquer this country.”⁹ There’s no biblical duty about Christianizing America. But there is a warning about the result of uniting church with state (Rev 13:11-17). In commenting on the Coalition’s “Contract with the American Family,” Sandy Alexander stated, the Christian Coalition aims to “abolish the long-held Constitutional doctrine of separating church and state.”¹⁰ In speaking about the “many religious conservatives” who “would like to junk” church-state separation, *American Business Review* republished a Chicago *Tribune* editorial stating “Church and state stand best apart.”¹¹

“Not true!” thunders the Coalition. Church and state were never supposed to be apart. “Indeed,” they say, “America was a Christian nation,” a fact that James Madison denied, and he was one of the principle designers of the Constitution.¹² Furthermore, the *Federalist papers*, written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay right after the Constitutional convention, are the most authoritative commentary on the Constitution. This series of eighty-five letters were published under the pseudonym Publius in the New York newspaper, and, as Clifford Goldstein concludes, “are almost as secular as the Constitution itself. They never once use the name ‘Jesus Christ’ or ‘Christian.’ The word *Christianity* appears once, in *Federalist* #19, in this context: ‘In the early states of Christianity, Germany was occupied by seven distinct nations.’ A handful of references to ‘Providence’ (#2), ‘heaven’ (#20), and ‘the Almighty’ (#37) show that the authors believed in God, not that they were establishing a Christian republic. The most telling refutation of the Christian nation idea was in *Federalist* #69, written by Hamilton.” Comparing the President with the king of England he said, “The one has no particle of spiritual jurisdiction; the other is the supreme head and governor of the national church.”¹³

The contrast couldn’t be greater. The British monarch is head of the secular state and the national church of England, thus imaging the Papacy to the extent that the Pope resides over the Vatican state and

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the Catholic church. It is precisely this image to the beast, this union of church and state, and its resultant legislation, that Scripture warns about in Revelation 13, and which the Christian Coalition seems to be on a fast track to fulfill.

Not persuaded by the facts about the Constitution, its First Amendment, and the Federalist papers, the Christian Coalition says, “the words ‘Wall of separation’ do not appear in the Constitution or in the First Amendment, they are just a bad metaphor from a quick letter penned by President Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut. Hear the facts. The twenty-six churches forming the Danbury Baptist Association were a religious minority who longed for religious liberty in a state where Congregationalism was the established religion. It was out of this context that they congratulated the President as he came to the Presidency, for they knew his stand on religious liberty.”¹⁴

Thomas Jefferson’s January 1, 1802, letter to the Danbury Association said, “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between church and state.’”¹⁵ These words spoke to the lack of liberty suffered by the Danbury Association because of an established religion, and also represent the real intent of the First Amendment.

The Danbury Association were discriminated against by a church, not by the state. The Separating Wall was intended to work both ways. The Christian Coalition sees the state as interfering with religion when Christian prayer is not a part of the public school experience, or Bible reading is not in the public school curriculum, or Christian religious symbols are excluded from secular government property. What they utterly fail to realize is that any place given to one religion over others in the secular sphere would be an establishment violation, as surely as Jefferson and the Danbury Association discerned in Connecticut.

David Barton’s book, *The Myth of Separation: What is the Correct Relationship between Church and State?* also puts a revisionist spin on things. He says, “There is no ‘wall of separation’ in the Constitution, unless it is a wall intended by the Founding Fathers to keep the government out of the church.”¹⁶ The Christian Coalition is not alone in this antipathy to Jefferson’s Wall metaphor. The Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, William A. Rehnquist, concludes, “The ‘wall of separation between church and state’ is a metaphor based on

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bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned.”¹⁷ I agree with Robert Alley that Rehnquist’s conclusion was based on “a remarkably weak historical argument,” which one can follow in his article “Mr. Rehnquist’s Misplaced Metaphor.”¹⁸ I also agree with Haig Bosmajian that the Supreme Court justices are revisionists when they base their argument on Justice Holmes’ aphorism that “a page of history is worth a volume of logic.”¹⁹ For, when arguing about the Free Exercise clause of the first amendment, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and Justice Antonin Scalia arrive at opposite conclusions.

Christian Coalition Attacks on the First Amendment

It is important to understand the worldview of the Christian Coalition. Pat Robertson, past Founding President of the Coalition, and now Chairman of the Board, in his book *The New World Order*, sees two forces at work on the planet: the “Babylonian humanistic and occultic traditions to unify against the people of the Abrahamic, monotheistic tradition.” Hence “the world government of the new world order will one day become an instrument of oppression against the Christians and Jews around the world.” In light of this worldview, he describes the mission of the Christian Coalition: “We must rebuild the foundation of a free, sovereign America from the grassroots, precinct by precinct, city by city, state by state.”²⁰ What he fails to see in this scenario is the parallel between the two forces, with the Babylonian forces ruling the world and the Christian Coalition ruling America.

A part of the Christian Coalition worldview is the misguided sense that Christians are being persecuted in America today. Sam Munger, in *The Nation*, wrote of “Martyrs before Congress.”²¹ Brittany Settle Gossett stands before a giant American flag in a Capitol Hill hearing room. “She leans toward the microphone and declares, in a voice heavy with indignation, that religious persecution exists in the United States. In fact, because of such bigotry she received a failing grade on a high school writing assignment. The crowds nodded sympathetically.” She claimed that she failed because her subject was Jesus Christ. But the teacher advised her to choose another topic because she knew that topic. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit concluded, “The student has no constitutional right to do something other than that assignment and receive credit for it.”REF?

For more Religious Right public school horror stories that don’t stand up under scrutiny, see *Church and State*, May 1997, p. 7. Compare them with the 160, 000 Christians martyred worldwide every year, reported by Jeff Taylor, managing editor of Compass Direct,

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which monitors real Christian persecution.²² Clifford Goldstein rightly says, “The rhetoric sounds as if the authors were Christians in Nero’s Rome, not evangelicals living in a nation that allows them the freedom they would use to destroy freedom for others.”²³

Here are the facts about religious persecution. For Christian Coalitioners it’s persecution of Christians when government cannot legislate school prayers and Bible reading and the Ten Commandments cannot hang in secular government places—ignoring the fact that this discriminates against the Veda for Hindus, and other such religious prayers, readings, and documents for other religions. It’s as if the Christian Coalition believes that God owns America, and so Christians have a right to make all other religions toe the line according to the Christian agenda. What kind of persecution will this lead to? It’s sad that on March 5, 1995, by a 295-125 vote, the U.S. House of Representative adopted the H. Con. Res. 31, a non-binding resolution that endorses the display of the Ten Commandments in government buildings and courtrooms.²⁴

In the fiftieth anniversary conference of the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, on November 1-3, 1997, in the Hotel Washington in Washington, D.C., a debate was held between Americans United president Barry Lynn and Oliver North. During questions from the audience, a Rochester, New York, woman, who said she was pagan, asked North about Judge Moore’s display of the Ten Commandments in his Courtroom in Alabama. She asked if “he would support the right to post the Wican Rede (a religious code for witches) on her courtroom wall if she were a judge. ‘No,’ replied North curtly. When the crowd jeered, North added, ‘I believe that this country’s whole premise going back to the seminal documents of this country were based on Judeo-Christian principles, and you don’t have to like it but they were.’”²⁵

Lynn said, “the Religious Right wants to interfere in the personal decisions of families and individuals. ‘I don’t want people meddling in my moral choices.’” Lynn pointed out that since the Supreme Court’s landmark 1947 *Everson v. Board of Education* decision emphasizing church-state separation, “religious beliefs and practices have not suffered. He derided North’s claim that religion is being squelched in America. Citing Princeton Research Center polls, Lynn noted, ‘In 1947 when this organization [Americans United] was founded, a whopping 90 percent of Americans said they prayed regularly. Fifty years later in 1997 a mere 90 percent say the same thing. Fifty years ago 41 percent of Americans went to church frequently and today that percentage has plummeted to 41 percent. In 1947 95 percent of all Americans believed in God. After 50 years of cultural warfare against heaven itself, 96

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percent believe in God . . . It looks like religion in America is doing just fine.”²⁶ Christian Coalition advocates don’t think so. They look at the moral degradation in the country and rush to legislate morality. “Make this a Christian nation” they cry, as their sledge hammers pound the wall of separation.

In its intent to break down the wall of separation, the Christian Coalition is using “stealth” candidates. They get them elected to Congress on a “balance the budget” agenda and other neutral issues, and then when they are there, they are ready to work on the religious (non-neutral) agenda of the Coalition. This same “stealth” method is seen in “the Samaritan Project” unveiled January 30, 1997, in Washington, D.C. Here the Coalition took up a neutral project, to help the poor. Reed said, “We believe that government and the church can be partners in undertaking this great endeavor.” The trouble is that the second item in a list of eight²⁷ speaks of “Opportunity Scholarships,” which is really another name for religious school vouchers, or a way to get government to spend tax dollars to fund sectarian education.²⁸

It should be remembered that former Secretary of Education, William Bennett is opposed to the wall of separation. *Church and State* reports that “According to Bennett, there really is no wall, only ‘a pile of stones here and a pile of stones there.’” He has dodged the July 1, 1985, U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Aguilar v. Felton*, where federal funds for remedial education were disallowed. Bennett circumvented the law, launching the van program to take federal remedial education to a close distance to private schools, so that parochial students could come aboard and receive government education. For example, in New York, “126 vans are leased at an annual cost of more than \$106,000 apiece, which includes salaries for security personnel and drivers. The end result is that New York’s Catholic schools are being bombarded with federal dollars.”²⁹ The Christian Coalition wants to increase the flow of government aid to churches through “the Samaritan Project.” But in this case, there is no bus driven to a neutral place, the poor will come to churches and receive government aid through religious leaders, with all of the religious impact that could make. Government funding to parochial schools, or to the poor through the church, violates the wall of separation.

The next example of the Christian Coalition’s attack on the First Amendment is their backing of Judge Roy Moore of Etowah County, Alabama, and Governor Fob James of Alabama. The American Civil Liberties Union sued Judge Moore for sponsoring religion in the courtroom by opening each session with prayer and by hanging the Ten Commandments in the courtroom. Montgomery County Circuit Judge Charles Price ruled against Judge Moore in November 1997. Judge

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Moore defied the order. Governor Fob James backed Judge Moore. In a speech he thundered, "I say to my fellow Alabamians at this moment, the only way those Ten Commandments and that prayer will be stripped from that court is with the force of arms. Make no mistake about that statement." He was inspired by a speech from Richard Land, director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission who "encouraged people to work through government to legislate morality."³⁰

Legislate morality—that's precisely the plan of the Christian Coalition. Doesn't that sound like Revelation 13? Pat Buchanan "hailed Gov. James' threat of force and suggested it may be the start of a national showdown similar to the American Revolution." Buchanan asked, "Are the Ten Commandments a religious document?" Then he answered, "of course they are. . . They were a foundation of American law. From Sunday blue laws to anti-blasphemy laws, to laws against adultery, false witness and murder, they served as the basis upon which we built much of our civil code and public life. Who is to tell us they cannot serve again?" *The Mobile Register* said the governor is pledging his 'maximum effort' to keep the Ten Commandments in the courtroom and indicated that he might defy both the state and the federal courts if necessary. . . The governor suggested that his ultimate goal is to overturn the Supreme Court's decisions on church and state, complaining that citizens didn't do enough to fight the court's 1962 and '63 decisions against public school-prayer and Bible reading." And that's why the Christian Coalition have thrown their full support behind the governor and Judge Moore.³¹

Governor James "threatened to call out the National Guard and state troopers if necessary to keep the government-sponsored Christian religious expressions in place." Ralph Reed, then Executive Director of the Christian Coalition, said, "As long as there is breath in our bodies the Ten Commandments will never come down from this courthouse." Americans United director Barry W. Lynn said, "The organizers of this rally are courting anarchy and promoting theocracy. Many Christians have been fooled into thinking this rally is about support for the Ten Commandments. In fact, it's about the rule of law and church-state separation. When public officials threaten to defy lawful courts and vow to enforce their personal religious agenda, the American form of government is placed in jeopardy."³²

"Game Plan" of the Christian Coalition

On September 13, 1997, there was a closed door breakfast for Christian Coalition state leaders in Atlanta. Pat Robertson "offered a

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detailed ‘game plan’ for delivering the White House to a hand-picked Christian Coalition candidate in the year 2000.” “According to Robertson, the nation faces the threat of annihilation by God due to legal abortion. The only way to save the country from God’s wrath, he added, is for the Christian Coalition to elect a president who will implement the organization’s agenda.” Someone taped Robertson’s speech and it went public. He called for his Coalition to get behind one Republican candidate for president, and so revealed the partisan nature of their scheme.³³

For the Coalition to seek religious tax exempt status when engaged in partisan politics shows how blind it is to the moral issue involved. No organization with any partisan agenda can legally claim religious tax exempt status. But it comes as no surprise to find the Coalition seeking this status when it rejects the separation of church and state.

Church and State journal reports that “Robertson insisted that the time has come for the Coalition to demand that Congress implement its agenda. We just tell these guys, ‘Look, we put you in power in 1994, and we want you to deliver. . . Don’t give us all this stuff about you’ve got a different agenda. This is your agenda. *This is* what you’re going to do this year. And we’re going to hold your feet to the fire while you do it...we’re going to say, ‘Gentlemen, it’s time.’ You know our time has come.”³⁴ This is the kind of church control of the state that caused the pilgrims to flee from Europe to the American continent. This is the kind of church control of Congress that is expected to fulfill Revelation 13. Right now it seems that the Christian Coalition is on a fast track to fulfill that chapter.

Even those who know nothing about Revelation 13 and the end-game in America are alarmed at the Christian Coalition. Robert Boston’s book, *The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition*,³⁵ gives important insights. Presbyterian minister Robert H. Meneilly dubbed the New Right as “a present danger greater than ‘the old threat of Communism.’”³⁶ What makes the Coalition so dangerous is their deep conviction that God is using them to redeem America, to restore it as a Christian nation, to enforce a Christian agenda on the nation in spite of what non-Christians think. William Martin’s book *With God on Our Side* expresses their sentiments well. They believe they have a God-given mandate to break down the wall of separation, to force their moral agenda, and wash away moral degradation. Instead the wall will come crashing down with the onrush of religious intolerance.

An enigma in the Coalition’s take-over of the Republican party is that the party is against big government and is concerned with individual freedom. Yet the Coalition ignores individual free choice

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about prayer and Bible study in the public square by mandating it for all. *The New York Times* editorial for May 17, 1995, said, "It ought to terrify Republicans who believe in their party's traditional concern for individual liberty and Constitutional integrity. That tradition is about to be hijacked by religious activists who value the party not as a political institution but as a vehicle for promoting their churches' social agendas."³⁷

The 1995 Coalition "Road to Victory" Convention

I attended the Christian Coalition Road to Victory '95 convention in Washington, D.C., September 8-9, 1995. The Washington Hilton Ballroom was packed. I thought about the first meeting, just five years before, when 250 delegates attended. This year 4,260 came. Of the 143 speakers on the program, 7 of the 9 Republican Presidential candidates spoke. Others included William Bennett, Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey, Pat Robertson, Phyllis Schlafly, Judge Robert Bork, Peter Marshall, Jr., Ralph Reed, Keith Fournier, Jay Sekulow, E. V. Hill, and Oliver North. Clearly the elections of November, 1994, which catapulted the Republican Party into control of both the Senate and Congress, stirred the delegates to further conquests as they geared up for 1996.

Some of the speakers really got the delegates riled up. "Let's get rid of Kennedy of Massachusetts!" Thunderous applause ripped through the crowd. "Take the nation back for God!" "Out with the liberals!" "Away with their agenda!"

"Crucify them!" I heard that refrain break into my mind from other religionists bent on getting the state to do their bidding. "We have no king but Caesar!" You can't join state and religion any closer than that. Properly understood, any church joining the state is an illegitimate marriage—Caesar replaces Christ.

I listened and wondered. The Christian Coalition wallows in adultery and knows it not. The very movement opposed to moral degradation is up to its neck in it. Another love has captured its heart. Caesar beckons. "Get power! Control the future! Be in charge!" The One who said, "My Kingdom is not of this world" lays trampled on the "Road to Victory." His words, "Go ye into all the world with the gospel" are drowned out in the mad dash. "Get those God-hating dummies out!" "That's the way to go. Christ needs to be relevant. This is the eve of the third millennium. Everyone knows that power means everything. The way to take the gospel to the world is to take over the world and legislate your agenda. Sure beats going from door to door, and having it slammed in your face!"

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I attended Keith Fournier's afternoon session. Fournier is one of the leaders in the Christian Coalition. He's Catholic. An all-Catholic panel led out. I sensed they felt at home. "About 250,000 of Christian Coalition's 1.7 million members nationwide (in 1995) are Catholics, according to Mike Russell, the Christian Coalition communications director."³⁸ Think of it. Protestants and Catholics have slung heresy charges at each other for centuries! They've died for doctrine. Not now. Here they sit cozily snug in a common cause. They sense victory in the air, and it's not Calvary's but Caesar's. They'll take over, come what may. Nothing will stop them. It's only a matter of time.

"Catholics are 15 years behind Protestant evangelicals," Catholic Deal Hunson reported in that afternoon session. Two months later, in November, 1995, Catholics organized at the grass roots. They formed the Catholic Alliance, which is a spin-off of the Christian Coalition. Imagine when 27 million Catholics are organized like the 1.7 million Christian Coalition members! There's every reason to believe these Christians will travel a fast track to take over government in order to push their moral agenda.

"We can no longer afford to be divided. It is a luxury that is no longer ours," said Ralph Reed, Executive Director of the Christian Coalition, to a gathering in Boston, Massachusetts, "The left wants you and me to be divided," he said. "Nothing frightens them more than Christians shattering the barriers of denomination."³⁹

In his book *Politically Incorrect*, Ralph Reed says, "The future of American politics lies in the growing strength of evangelicals and their Roman Catholic allies. If these two core constituencies—evangelicals comprising the swing vote in the South, Catholics holding sway in the North—can cooperate on issues and support like-minded candidates, they can determine the outcome of almost any election in the nation . . . No longer burdened by the past, Roman Catholics, evangelicals, Greek Orthodox, and many religious conservatives from the main-line denominations are forging a new alliance that promises to be among the most powerful and important in the modern political era."⁴⁰

Secular or Spiritual Power?

The fact that America is morally awash pushes the churches together. If only they can have a united front, they'll make a difference. Isn't this the way to be salt in the world, and its light? Even the Promise Keepers men's movement, founded by Bill McCartney, with its desire to make men keep promises to wives and family, focuses on the uniting of denominations. As L. Dean Allen, II, stated, "Promise Keepers' 1996 conference theme, 'Break Down the Walls,' was intended

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to refer to removing the racial, denominational and other barriers between Christian men.”⁴¹ A commitment to truth is far more important than any other commitment. Breaking down the wall of separation between church and state or between churches is not led by the “Spirit of Truth” (John 15:26). Any union not based on truth is suspect, because all the world will unite in false worship in the end-time (Rev 13:39, 12-17).

The book *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* is a powerful critique of evangelicals who have taken up political issues while forgetting issues of the Gospel. In this book Charles W. Colson says, “Today’s misspent enthusiasm for political solutions to the moral problems of our culture arises from a distorted view of both politics and Christianity—too low a view of the power of a sovereign God and too high a view of the ability of man.”⁴² The Christian Coalition rushes to become sovereign, with little thought about the One who is.

Does the end justify the means? Has it ever? Consider the evangelical reaction to the 1988 MCA/Universal film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. “There are many ironies in *The Last Temptation* affair,” says Kenneth A. Myers, “that make it a microcosmic example of the great temptation facing American evangelicals. Stated simply, that temptation is to become so preoccupied with power *in the service* of holiness and truth that holiness and truth become eclipsed. As more and more Christians succumb to that temptation, a further problem is increasingly evident: Theology, the biblically rooted study of God, His Word, and His will, is gradually replaced by ideology, a system of assertions, theories, and goals that constitute a sociopolitical program.”⁴³

“Although one might respect the intentions of people who promote them,” says Myers, “the use of boycotts in the name of Christ is always liable to distract attention from the prophetic, authoritative proclamation of truth and repudiation of error that is the first duty of the church of Jesus Christ . . . If the tactics of the parachurch dominate Christian activity as it confronts a post-Christian culture, protest and politicking will loom larger *in the public mind* than the proclamation of the church . . . The E. T. boycott attempted to render judgment on MCA/Universal by a jury of angry consumers. That is a fine way to distract New York and Hollywood executives from contemplating a judgment that will render all profit and loss statements meaningless.”⁴⁴

There’s a new twist in church relations today. No more battle for the truth. Only war against those who don’t have the truth. “Doctrinal distinctives are simply treated with indifference,” comments Myers, for “one is most trusted in evangelical leadership if he adheres to social,

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cultural, and political conservatism, regardless of whether or not he can define ‘justification,’ which, according to Martin Luther, was ‘the article by which the church stands or falls.’”⁴⁵

Let’s face it. The Christian Coalition is appalled at the moral disarray in the country, but winks at the doctrinal disarray in the church. They shout out against moral degradation, but don’t even whimper about doctrines on the trash heap. This uniting for a moral cause is a moral disaster. Here truth is also on the scaffold while wrong is on the throne. How can one be abhorred and the other bring a yawn? Where is morality in all this? Why rush to change someone else’s morals when your own are worse? Why render unto Caesar and not unto God? It’s not just the nation that is morally awash, but the Christian Coalition, too! How can they, in the name of Christianity, drag Christian truth in the dust while scrambling to get rid of liberals? Are they not liberal, too—theologically? They call themselves conservative. Are they? Their passion for social morality without spiritual morality (truth) is humanism, not Christianity. Yet behind their revolt against moral degradation is their cry against humanism! They evidently don’t get it.

One of the leading thinkers of our day, David F. Wells, writes about the danger of imposing laws in a time when morality has ebbed. He states, “When moral principle breaks down, of course, we are left with no other recourse than that of law.” He then comments, “Today we stand at the turbulent meeting place of these two swirling, swollen currents. From one side, the loss of moral vision threatens to undo culture along its entire front; from the other side comes the escalating recourse to law in order to contain a society that is splitting its own seams. This contest between license and law is one that, in the absence of recovered moral fiber, can only become more shrill, more frustrating, more culturally destabilizing, more damaging, and more dangerous, and it is one that poses both temptations and opportunities to Christian faith.”⁴⁶

Ervin S. Duggan warns, “the evangelical church must hold to its historic priorities of worship, teaching, pastoral care, and evangelism—and not imagine that political shortcuts can further the work of the kingdom. To renounce such shortcuts can further the work of the kingdom. To renounce such shortcuts will not diminish the power of the church to do good in the world; it will enhance it.”⁴⁷

Edward G. Dobson, senior editor of *Christianity Today* and pastor of the Calvary Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, wrote a powerful article, “Taking Politics Out of the Sanctuary.” Nearly every week he receives letters or phone calls soliciting his church’s involvement in a political issue for the community. “If I decline their request (which I do), they are often upset with me, and in subtle ways they call into

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question my Christian conviction. Nearly every pastor I know faces this same pressure on a regular basis.” He makes sound judgments that need to be heeded by the Christian Coalition: (1) “We should keep the church out of partisan politics and political action.” It’s one thing for individuals to be involved politically, and quite another thing for the church. (2) “We war against abortion, but what alternatives are we providing? What kind of love and concern do we demonstrate for the mothers who walk into abortion clinics and the people who work in them?” (3) “Ultimately, the Great Society and the Contract With America will fail. The only solution is the gospel of Christ, which changes people from the inside out. Some Christians have lost this perspective.”⁴⁸

Today there is a uniting of churches and a uniting of churches with the state that covers the lack of the churches uniting with Christ. Secular power has never been a substitute for spiritual power. To the degree that Christians seek the former is the degree to which they may not seek the latter.

The Impending Conflict

The Great Controversy says, “Let the restraint imposed by the divine law be wholly cast aside, and human laws would soon be disregarded.”⁴⁹ There is a necessary relationship between the divine and the secular when it comes to morality. For example, “Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel.”⁵⁰ Separation of church and state doesn’t mean separation of the influence of the moral from the secular. All moral laws of society reflect moral values. This is not the issue. The issue is the danger of moralists attempting to legislate their moral values on minorities. This is the danger of the Christian Coalition agenda, and that of Dominion theology. In past history we may see how other Christians, even Protestants, have legislated their view of morality on the rest, and religious bigotry and persecution followed. But this has happened even in pagan religious persecution, and as proposed in Plato’s *The Republic* and *Laws*.

As Clifford Goldstein points out, “In fact, Plato even urged the death penalty for those whose worship deviated from the state religion, because, he wrote in *Laws*, those who do deviate ‘increase infinitely their own iniquity, whereby they make themselves and those better men who allow them guilty in the eyes of the gods, so that the whole state reaps the consequences of their impiety to some degree—and deserves to reap them.’”⁵¹

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During the 1990s there have been unprecedented natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Each year there are 6,000 major earthquakes, and there were a record 1,297 tornadoes in 1993.⁵² The Christian Coalition and the New Right consider these natural disasters as judgment acts of God for moral degradation. And this fires them up in their push to place secular leaders in power to push their religious agenda. But *The Great Controversy* gives the real purpose of these disasters. Satan “will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous.”⁵³

As we watch the Christian Coalition out to force through its social revolution, we remember that “Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas.”⁵⁴ Then, as a part of their moral agenda, Christians will paradoxically cause the moral law to be repudiated (Fourth commandment, Exod 20:8-11) by enforcing a Sunday law, a human substitute (Rev 13:12-17). But such a law is a moral outrage—a defiance of God’s moral law! What right have any humans to tamper with God’s moral law in their quest to legislate “Christian” morality? So the church will use the state to legislate morality and tear down the very Sabbath law, that if kept from the beginning, could have safeguarded the world from immorality. What a paradox! So even “in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected.”⁵⁵ That’s where the union of church and state is heading.

“This very class put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called ‘Christian sabbath,’ and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the *morals* of society.”⁵⁶ At that time, “Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the *moral* restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth.”⁵⁷

Imagine. The only ones loyal to the moral law will be blamed for breaking down moral restraints. Those true to God will be blamed for God’s judgments. That’s how morally bankrupt the church-state union

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will become one day. While thinking they are fighting for God they will be doing the opposite, for it's Satan who is mad against the end-time commandment keepers (Rev 12:17). "When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image to the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result."⁵⁸ That's the result of breaking down the wall of separation. That's the end-game.

Notes

- 1 This article also appears as a chapter in my book, *Christ is Coming*, Review and Herald Publishers, 1998.
- 2 Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness*, (W.W. Norton, 1996).
- 3 Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, "Our Godless Constitution," *Liberty*, May/June, 1996, pp. 13-14.
- 4 Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, "Yes! A Godless Constitution," *Liberty*, November/December, 1996, p. 12. This article was in answer to "A Godless Constitution?" by Daniel L. Dreisbach in the same issue of *Liberty*, pp. 10-13.
- 5 Robert Boston, *The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition*, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), p. 69.
- 6 Rob Boston, "Ralph Reed's War on Poverty: Hope or Hype?" *Church and State*, March 1997, p. 6.
- 7 Pat Robertson, quoted by Clifford Goldstein, "Him Whose Name Is Above All Names," *Liberty*, May/June, 1996, p. 30.
- 8 Rob Boston, *The Most Dangerous Man in America?* p. 76.
- 9 Randall Terry, quoted in Clifford Goldstein, *One Nation Under God: Bible Prophecy—When the American Experiment Fails*, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), p. 37.
- 10 Sandy Alexander, "The Re-Packaged Bigotry of the Christian Coalition," *NOW*, August, 1995.
- 11 Editorial from the *Chicago Tribune*, "Church and State Stand Best Apart," *American Business Review*, West Haven, May 21, 1997.
- 12 Robert H. Meneilly, "New Right Wrongs," *Liberty*, March/April, 1994, p. 16.
- 13 Clifford Goldstein, *One Nation Under God*, p. 69.
- 14 Daniel L. Dreisbach, "Another Meaning of the Metaphor: Is the 'Wall of Separation' really what we think it is?" *Liberty*, September/October, 1997, pp. 16-17.
- 15 Derek H. Davis, "What Jefferson's Metaphor Really Means," *Liberty*, January/February, 1997, p. 12.
- 16 David Barton, *The Myth of Separation: What Is the Correct Relationship Between Church and State?*, (Aledo, TX: Wall-builder Press, 1992), p. 45.
- 17 William A. Rehnquist, *Wallace v. Jaffree*, p. 2517; quoted in Derek H. Davis, *Liberty*, January/February, 1997, pp. 13-14.
- 18 Robert Alley. "Mr. Rehnquist's Misplaced Metaphor," *Liberty*, January/February, 1997, pp. 19-20.
- 19 Haig Bosmajian, "Aphoristic History: Is a Page of History Worth a Volume of Logic?" *Liberty*, November/December, 1997, pp. 20-24.
- 20 Pat Robertson. *The New World Order*, (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), pp. 258, 261.
- 21 Sam Munger, "Martyrs Before Congress," *The Nation*, June 23, 1997, Vol 264, Issue 24, p.5.
- 22 Jeff Taylor, "Hollow Cries," *Liberty*, January/February, 1998, pp. 27-29.
- 23 Clifford Goldstein, *One Nation Under God: Bible Prophecy—When the American Experiment Fails*, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), p. 37.
- 24 *Church and State* published a list of each member of the House and how they voted, April 1997, p. 7.
- 25 Joseph L. Conn, "50 Years of Freedom," *Church and State*, December 1997, p. 13 (parenthesis supplied).
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 12

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- 27 Faye Bowers, "Christian Coalition Tempers Its Wish List for Congress in '97," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1997, p. 4.
- 28 Rob Boston, "Ralph Reed's War on Poverty: Hope or Hype?," *Church and State*, March 1997, p. 4.
- 29 Rob Boston, "Religious Schools, Tax Dollars, and the Supreme Court," *Church and State*, April 1997, pp. 10-13.
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The “Fall of Babylon” Motif in the Books of Jeremiah and Revelation

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The New Testament use of and relation to the Old Testament is well documented, especially the Old Testament echoes in the Apocalypse.¹ While the book of Jeremiah has the least number of quotations and allusions in the book of Revelation,² it plays a key role in the motif of the Fall of Babylon, a theme which is shared between both writings. Indeed, no other Old Testament book has as sustained or as dramatic a picture as does Jeremiah on this issue (chaps 25; 50-51). For this reason, it is worth exploring the relationship between Jeremiah and Revelation, since the Apocalypse has also devoted much space to the same issue (chaps. 14:8; 16:17-19:16).

In an attempt to avoid subjective “parallelomania,”³ we are not trying to prove that John borrowed from Jeremiah. Instead, we are establishing probable thematic links that bind both books, especially in light of the theme of the Fall of Babylon. This study, therefore, shows the connections between mystical Babylon in the Apocalypse (identified as “all apostate religious organizations and their leadership”)⁴ and its historical counterpart in the OT book of Jeremiah.

I. God’s Sovereignty

The fact that ultimate authority rests with God is demonstrated in that He is the real antagonist behind the punitive actions actuated against Babylon. Interestingly, He used Babylon as the agent of destruction for His own people, Judah. So even the judgment *by* Babylon shows that final power is in His command. We may observe this in Jer 25:8 where God calls Nebuchadnezzar “my servant.”⁵ Further, the strength of the statements designate God as the real antagonist behind the judgment: “I will summon . . . ; I will completely

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destroy” (vs. 9). This is nothing less than the *ban*, that is, the irrevocable giving over of things or people to the Lord, often by totally destroying them.

In a similar vein, judgment *against* Babylon is also directed by the hand of God. Note the directness and strength of the language: “I will finish . . . Babylon” (vs 12); “I will bring upon that land all *my words* that I have pronounced against it” (vs. 13).

It is also important to realize that God determines when the hour of Babylon’s judgment comes. Babylon will have its way for 70 years (25: 11-12). This is God’s determination and not that of humankind. It is not merely the political movements of the international scene that dictate Babylon’s judgment. *It is God’s determination.*⁶

In short, according to Jeremiah, God used Babylon to effect judgment against His people. However, even if Babylon was cognizant that this occurred because of Israel’s sin, her boastful disclaimer, “We are not guilty” (Jer 50:7), is illegitimate. Because God is supreme, He could use Babylon to effect His cause, and then in turn, adjudicate punitive measures against her.

In the book of Revelation, however, it does not appear that Babylon was an agent used by God to accomplish His divine will. But here too, even though Babylon is the “Mother of Prostitutes and the Abominations of the Earth” (Rev. 17:5), she too is subject to the authority of God. Even her boastful claim, “I sit as queen; I am not a widow” (Rev 19:7), will not suffice in the day of her visitation.

Indeed, Babylon’s allies are the ones who turn on her and render evil against her. Even though the horn and beast powers once supported Babylon, they will turn on her and render her desolate and naked, exposing her shame. Inebriated by hate, they will prey on her like a carnivorous beast which violently and completely devours its catch. Whatever is left will be consumed by fire (Rev 17:16).

When this ruination comes it is because God has effected it “to accomplish His purpose” (vs.17) and until His “words are fulfilled” (vs.17). The divine will is behind the devastation of Babylon, and it comes according to God’s timetable, not any human, political intrigue. The connotation is transparent: God is the One who effects judgment against Babylon. *It is God’s determination.*

In both Jeremiah and Revelation, the facts indicate that despite the agents used in the judgment, the real protagonist behind the fall of Babylon is God. He is supreme.

John Thompson’s comment concerning the prophet’s passion against the nations is also appropriate to the book of Revelation:

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Prophecies against the nations were one aspect of the prophetic ministry. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Nahum, and Obadiah all have considerable sections devoted to the theme, while other prophets generally mention the nations. Such prophecies indicate Israel’s view that Yahweh was not merely the God of Israel but was *Lord over all the nations of the world, whose destiny lay in God’s hands.*⁷

II. Certainty of Judgment.

Jeremiah 25:13 indicates the surety of judgment in light of “all that is written in this book (i.e. Jeremiah) and prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah against all nations.” Jeremiah’s prophecies against the nations are found in chaps 46-51,⁸ with 50-51 dedicated to Babylon alone. From the outset, the proclamation of judgment rings with the tones of absolute certainty for Babylon’s gods will be annihilated, her religion damned, her land decimated, and her people wasted (50: 1-3). This theme is threaded throughout Jeremiah’s prophecy against Babylon: 50:9-13; 18, 24, 31, 40, 44; 51:12-14; 24-26; 41-44. In 50:35-38, the prophet graphically describes the judgment in a sustained manner by repeating five times that a “sword is against” (i.e. death) Babylon’s people, leaders, warriors, and treasures.

This same certainty is observed in Revelation 14:8 and 18:2, where a similar shout is heard: “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!” In fact, the Revelator speaks with such clarity and surety of imminent judgment, that although it has not yet come, it is described as though it has already occurred. The word *epesen* is in the aorist tense, indicating that this is a done deal.

In fact, the fall of Babylon has already been spied on by Jeremiah when he says, “Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken” (51:8; cf. Isa. 21:9). This may contribute to the repetitive lament of Rev 18: 10, 17, 19 that Babylon’s ruin is effected in one hour.

Kenneth Strand has well illustrated that the main part of Rev 18 denotes the “actual *execution* of judgment” after an investigation has taken place.⁹

Indeed, just as both prophets describe Babylon as one who lives by “many waters” (Jer 51:13; Rev 17: 1,15); and being rich (Jer 51: 13; Rev 18:11-17), so too they underline the certitude of judgment against her.

III. Reason For Judgment

This addresses the reasons *why* judgment befalls Babylon. Jer 25:14b plainly states, “I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.” The judgment is further described as a “time

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for the Lord's vengeance" to "pay her what she deserves" (Jer 51:6). Again, "Repay her for her deeds, do to her as she has done" (Jer 50:29b).

This sentiment is echoed in Rev 18:6, "Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup." Judgment is depicted in terms of justice and retribution according to the actions of Babylon. This is consistent with scripture (Ps 137: 8-9). The basic factor is that Babylon is guilty (Jer 25: 12).

Both Jeremiah and John underscore Babylon's actions as deserving just retribution based on three factors:

(1) *She is the enemy of God.* Jeremiah's shout that "she has sinned against God" (50:14b) is echoed in John's record of her prostitution and the "golden cup in her hand filled with abominations and the filth of her adulteries" (Rev 17:2, 4). Little wonder the testimony of Rev 18:5 is that "her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes" (cf. Jer 51: 9). Further, Babylon is seen as being blasphemous (Rev 17:3) and full of pride, boasting, "I sit as a queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn" (18:7b).

It is precisely such hubris that led to ancient Babylon's decimation by Yahweh. In her bid for world domination, Babylon "engaged in a contest" (Jer 50:24b)¹⁰ with Yahweh and acted in proud defiance of His authority (vs. 25b).¹¹ In fact, the force of Babylon's absolutely reprehensible blasphemy of arrogantly disregarding God is captured in the noun *zadon* in vss. 31, 32. Here, "Babylon is apostrophized as "insolence personified."¹² "Insolence" is therefore to be cauterized without hope of renewal. Because of her overwhelming pride, Yahweh's judgment renders Babylon to be destroyed without leaving a trace. Perhaps this picture lies behind Rev 18:7-8, describing speedy judgment directed by the "mighty . . . Lord God who judges her."

(2) *She is the enemy of God's people.* Babylon opposes not only God, but by her tyrannical activity, she oppresses and opposes God's people. The truth of the historical record of Babylon's activities against Israel is clearly documented. The Babylonian captivity speaks of this. Babylon "pillaged my inheritance," says the Lord (Jer 50:11) and claimed that she was guiltless (vs.7). But her oppression is magnified in verse: "Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into confusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our delicacies, and then spewed us out. May the violence done to our flesh be upon Babylon,' say the inhabitants of Zion. 'May our blood be on those who live in Babylonia," says Jerusalem'" (Jer 51:34-35 [NIV]).

In fact, Babylon's opposition to Israel is described as crushing his bones (Jer 50:17). This is why her judgment is based, in part, according

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“as she has done to others” (vs.15). Babylon’s actions as a tyrannical imperium are made the grounds for her own defeat: “Repay her according to her deeds; do to her according to all she has done” (50:29). The same mighty Babylon who in her zenith of power as “the hammer of the whole earth” (vs. 23) had smashed the nations into subjugation will suffer similar defeat. The completion of judgment is evident, in that those expected to be most resilient, young men and soldiers, will be destroyed (vss. 30-31). Indeed, the lack of survivors or escapees is highlighted in that the consuming fire of Yahweh’s wrath will destroy “all who are around her”(vs. 32; cf. Rev. 18:8).

This same retributive justice is noted in Rev 18:6, “Give her back as she has given.” John adds a significant detail, “Pay her back *double* for what she has done. Mix her a *double* portion from her own cup.” Such a condemnation is demanded because of Babylon’s murderous opposition to God’s people: John describes her as being “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (Rev 17:6). Again, “In her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth” (18:24; cf. 16:6).

Such repayment or retribution reflects a verdict handed down by a court of justice. It is based on the law of malicious witness (Deut 19:16-19). Strand comments:

In the case of the malicious false witness, “both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and judges who are in office in those days” and “the judges shall inquire diligently.” If the witness was found to be a false witness, “then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. In our setting in Rev 18, Babylon has this verdict rendered against her—in double measure. . . The verdict is to render against Babylon the judgment that she, the malicious false witness, had rendered against God’s people.¹³

It cannot be overemphasized that Babylon is the antagonist against God and His people.

(3) *Babylon is corrupt*. Jer 51:7 asserts that Babylon was a golden cup (a reference to her great wealth) in the hand of God. She functioned as an instrument of Yahweh’s wrath against the nations, making them drunk with her wine, the effect of which was madness.

John, however, depicts Babylon not as a cup in God’s hand, but having her own cup, and with the wine of her adulteries contained therein, she intoxicated the inhabitants of the earth. This golden cup is “filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries” (Rev 17:2, 4; cf. 14:8). This is a reference to her false teachings, which are

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equivalent to the idolatrous practices of ancient Babylon, detailed by Jeremiah.

She has divorced herself from God and is acting independently of Him. This is the height of rebellion (cf. Is. 14:12-14). But in the day of her visitation (Rev. 17:1), Babylon the Unclean (the Great, 16:19) is compelled to swallow the cup of God's wrath (16:19). Hence, God is still sovereign.

IV. Symbols of Judgment

1. *Cup of wrath.* Jer 25:15 states, "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all nations to whom I send you, drink it."¹⁴ The figure of the "cup of wrath"¹⁵ indicates judgment in the form of a compelling drink which has a stupefying effect: those who drink will stagger¹⁶ and go mad (vs.16). Jeremiah uses the same figure in 13: 12-14 to designate a ruthless destruction against *all* levels of society: royalty, religious leaders, and common people, even the family unit.

Commentators agree that the cup of raging wine¹⁷ is a metaphor which "symbolizes Yahweh's resolve to consummate His judgment against them" (the nations).¹⁸ The manner in which the prophet is to execute the divinely issued command is not known (vs. 15), but the effects of drinking are clear (vs. 16). The cup of judgment is the sword that Yahweh will employ to effect the fate of the victims.

The nature of the task is seen in the comprehensive list of nations to whom the prophet must fulfill this command (vss. 17-26). Probably, Jerusalem and Judah are mentioned first because of the unique covenant they had with God. The description as an object of curse reminds one of the covenant context, for "curse is part of broken covenant as surely as blessing is a part of obeyed covenant."¹⁹

The concern here is not to pinpoint the geographical location of each nation but to note two significant factors: (1) *the universality of the judgment* and (2) *the inevitability of the judgment*. None is exempt. Not even Jerusalem can claim "most favored nation" status. The striking issue in the listing of the nations is not the geographical movement, (i.e., starting with Egypt to the southwest of Judah and moving northward; or moving from neighboring to more distant nations), but that all are included. Further, it demonstrates that the mighty enemies of Judah will also perish: from Egypt, the first tyrant, to the present antagonist, Babylon. This is reinforced by the inevitability of the judgment, as emphasized in vss. 27-29. All must drink. If the work of evil begins with Jerusalem, the elect city of God, how could the foreign nations be exempt? All must suffer a similar fate, the mighty enemies

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of Judah as well as tribes with whom Judah had no contact. This universality and inevitability of judgment are subtly highlighted, in that even those already reduced to insignificance, “the remnant of Ashdod,” will suffer the divine wrath.

This passage indicates that there is no safety in the multitude of nations. All will fall, even those that seem impregnable, like Egypt and Babylon. Finally, only Yahweh will remain. His sovereignty is ultimate.

This is precisely the case with mystical Babylon as recorded in Rev 16:19 in a message concerning the consuming fury of “God’s wrath on the earth” (16:1). The entire chapter details God’s punitive actions on a *universal scale*. *Inevitability of judgment* is seen in the exclamation, “It is done!” (vs. 17). Then the cryptic statement is added, “God remembered Babylon the Great (Grk., Unclean) and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath” (vs. 19). Even Babylon that boasts, “I will never mourn” (18:7), will fall. Only God will remain.

(2) *The mourning*. Jeremiah repeatedly symbolizes the judgment in terms of “mourning” (50:46; 51:8-9a; 52b;54). In each instance the wail is followed by an indicator signaling *imminent destruction*. The same holds true for Revelation. Describing chapter 18 as “a sort of funeral litany,”²⁰ Strand illustrates the chiasmic structure, demonstrating that the central factor (vss. 9-19) is a litany characterized by mourning at the judgment scene. Mourning is followed by an indicator signaling both *imminence* (“in one hour”) and *absolute destruction*.²¹

(3) *The stone*. The closing act of Jer was to write out all the disaster that would befall Babylon, rendering it a desolate, uninhabited wasteland as divined by the judgment of God. He instructed the courier, Seriah²² to perform a symbolic act: tie the scroll to a stone and throw it into the Euphrates, and pronounce, “So will Babylon sink to rise no more . . .” (51:64). This signaled the violent end of Babylon.

The closing act of divine judgment against Babylon in Revelation is narrated in 18:21, “Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a millstone and threw it into the sea . . .” What follows is a series of pronouncements asserting, “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, *never* to be found again” (vs 21b). The absolute nature of punitive action is verified in that six times the negation (“no;” “no more;” “never”) is repeated against her (vss. 21-23).

V. Result of Judgment

Judgment has a two-fold result: annihilation of Babylon and salvation for God’s people.

(1) *Annihilation of Babylon*. This may be described in terms of:

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(a) *Great reversal*. In Jer 50:9-16a Yahweh directs an enemy (from the N) to destroy Babylon. The tumble of imperatives (“set yourselves” [*irku*]; “shoot” [*yedu*]; “raise a shout” [*hari u*]) expresses a sense of eager anticipation for this destruction. The vengeance of the Lord demands that Babylon’s punishment equals the evil she has done (vs. 15a). This is the principle of *lex talionis*. Therefore, she is to be “cut off” (*krt* vs.16a), i.e., rooted out, eliminated, or destroyed by a violent act.²³ This is a *great reversal*. Babylon had once destroyed cities and peoples; now she throws up her hands in surrender: *nat nah yadah*, “she has given her hand.”²⁴

This section expresses the “great reversal”²⁵ of the fortunes of Babylon.

Yahweh’s judgment of and the fall of Babylon, are introduced by a summons to battle. Yahweh commands the invading forces to destroy Babylon. Yet it is clear that while these are agents of destruction, Yahweh Himself is behind this punitive action.²⁶

The first intervention (vs. 21) is particularly caustic in its description of the unleashing of unrelenting judgment: “Attack the land of Merathaim and those who live in Pekod. Pursue, kill and utterly destroy,” declares the Lord “Do everything I have commanded you.” There is more than geographical location in the names Merathaim and Pekod.²⁷ This is a scorching wordplay. As Thompson shows, “The root *mrh* means ‘to rebel’, and the form of the word is a dual, meaning ‘(land of) double rebellion’ or ‘two-fold rebel’, that is, ‘rebel of rebels.’”²⁸ The root *pqd*, “to punish,” points to Pekod, that is, the “land of doom.”²⁹ Hence, the names correspond to what Babylon will experience when God’s wrath is vented on her as her enemies attack her. Further, the call for complete destruction is nothing less than the ban, the talionic principle.³⁰

A similar situation may be observed in the Revelation. Babylon made the nations drink the portion of her adulteries (17:2; 18:3); she now drinks the wine of God’s wrath (16:19). The same principle of *lex talionis* (just or legal retribution) is meted out as 18:6 denotes: “Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double³¹ for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.”

While it seemed that Babylon had a free hand to do as she pleased, divorced from God and guilty of heinous crimes, the judgment against her reverses this, for “God has remembered her crimes”(18:5).

Further, reversal is noted, in that, while Babylon once enjoyed regal status (18:7) and ruled over the kings of the earth (17:18), these same ones will in turn devour her (vs. 16). Also, the wealth and luxury characteristic of Babylon (17:4; 18:9-19) are snatched away such that she is reduced to a despicable haunt (18:2; cf. Jer 50:39).

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(b) *No remnant*. Jer 50:26-27 continues the stinging threat of judgment. In brilliant images, the poet declares Yahweh’s open arsenal, the invading forces, tearing apart the enemy and laying waste the land. The metaphors are taken from the harvesting process, in that granaries bursting with produce are to be torn open and the precious grain spilled out in heaps. Her “bulls” (vs. 27), a metaphor for the Babylonian soldiers, the strong ones of the nation,³² are to be slaughtered. The destruction is absolutely complete, such that there is no thread of anything left. No remnant will survive the disaster, so terrible it will be. Carroll comments correctly, “Such a reversal of the harvest is the *death* of a culture. . . . Yet how well the images of destroyed granaries convey the idea of a powerful and politically sated empire such as Babylon being overrun and devastated by invaders!”³³

Babylon’s destruction is seen as complete decimation. Not even a tiny fraction of the former whole must be left. Babylon must be totally and comprehensively overthrown so that the possibility of rejuvenation and rebuilding is eradicated.

This absolute lack of a remnant is highlighted in that there is a “common emphasis on the totality of Babylon’s destruction: it must be utterly destroyed (vs.21); utterly destroyed without remainder (vs. 26); and with none escaping (vs. 29).”³⁴

Indeed, the surety and absoluteness of Babylon’s judgment is portrayed in that it is likened to the destruction of Assyria (50:18), Sodom and Gomorrah (vs. 40).

While the technical term for “remnant” (*loipos*) is not present in the verses dealing with Babylon’s overthrow, the thought is certainly prevalent. No remnant will be left in Babylon. The following statements indicate this: “All your riches and splendor have vanished, *never* to be recovered” (18:14); “the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, *never* to be found again” (vs.21); *never again* will the sound of music be heard; the tradesmen fly their crafts; light shine; and marriage be consummated (vss. 22-23). Nothing short of absolute decimation is in view here.

2. *Salvation*. It is precisely God’s judgment against Babylon that effects the liberation of His people. At the very time the ban (the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to God, often by totally destroying them) is leveled against Babylon (Jer 51: 3-4), God proclaims, “Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the Lord Almighty. . .” (vs.5). God’s sovereignty again comes to the forefront: just as He inflicted punishment, He effects salvation. (And this according to His time schedule (cf. Jer 29:10 ff.).

Jer 50: 4-20 provides a summary statement of salvation in terms of restoration for the remnant. Four (4) factors are underscored:

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unity of the people (vs. 4); repentance (vs. 4);³⁵ covenant renewal (vs. 5; cf. 31:31-34; 32:40); and forgiveness (vs. 20).³⁶ Again, this is all accomplished by God, within the very context of Babylon's defeat. At all points, "Israel's future will be a commensurate reversal of its past."³⁷

In Jer 50:34 God is the Redeemer of Israel. His salvific power is attested to in His *name* and *activity*. He is Yahweh of Hosts, that is, the God mighty in battle. This is the Warrior God who fights for His people. He acts as their advocate in that He Himself will plead their cause.³⁸

John's description of "the punishment of the great prostitute" (17:1) indicates that in the controversy with the Lamb, whose name is "Lord of lords and king of Kings," the combined forces of horns, kings, and beasts will be defeated. In rage, they will turn on the prostitute (Babylon) and devour her (17:14,16). This is accomplished according to God's purpose and time ("until God's words are fulfilled"- vs.18). But within this very context of judgment, the Lamb's victory effects salvation for those who are "with him . . . his called, chosen and faithful followers" (vs.14b). His *name* and *activity* clearly bespeak salvation. As the Supreme Commander He defeats the foe and saves His people.

In both prophets, judgment and salvation are juxtaposed. Nevertheless, a solemn responsibility devolves upon the people. In view of Babylon's despicable and deplorable situation, and the verdict pronounced against her, the divine warning and invitation is: "Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. Come out of her, my people! Run for your lives! Run from the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jer 51:6,45).

The parallel in Revelation is certain: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (18:4).

God's salvific activity is not arbitrary. Yes, Babylon will be judged. But those who will escape it must make and act on a conscious decision to cooperate with God. Refusal to do so results in judgment. Acceptance results in salvation. Indeed, judgment and salvation are juxtaposed.

VI. Exultation of God

With the defeat of Babylon and the salvation of God's people, the cry of victory resounds, "Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon . . . You who have escaped the sword, leave and do not linger! Remember the Lord in a distant land, and think on Jerusalem" (Jer 51: 48, 50). God is exalted because He is Creator, whose nature distances Him from fraudulent idols (Jer 51:15-

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19); and whose sovereignty allows Him to use Babylon for His purposes, yet punish her appropriately (vss. 20-24).

In similar fashion, Rev 18:20 celebrates the retributive justice of God: “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.

In fact, Rev 19:1-16 erupts in praise for God’s vengeance on Babylon and the salvation of His people (described as a bride ready for her wedding and dressed in fine linen). But note vss.1-2: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, true and just are His judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of His servants”.

Finally, the great prostitute with her title: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (17:5) is defeated by the One who is LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS (19:16). This is the culmination of the fall of Babylon and the establishment of God’s kingdom.

Conclusion

The judgment against Babylon is effected by God. As Sovereign Lord (Jer 50:25), the Lord Almighty (51:14,33; 58), He is “the Lord God, omnipotent,” whose judgments are “true and righteous” (Rev 16:7). His sovereignty as King (Jer 51:57) cannot be overlooked. In fact, in the grand finale celebrating His victory over Babylon, He is hailed as King of Kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16).

Absolute judgment is leveled against Babylon in terms of the ban. Further, the principle of *lex talionis* is applicable. In fact, as a God of retribution (Jer 51:56), the Lord avenges Babylon both on His own and His people’s behalf (Jer 51:11, 24, 36; Rev 18:5-6; 20; 19:2). But it is this very act of judgment that effects the salvation of God’s people. In both prophets, judgment and salvation are juxtaposed. The Fall of Babylon indicates both the destruction of that people *and* the salvation of God’s people.

Notes

¹ R.V.G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1946); F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969); James M. Eifird, ed., *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and other Essays* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972); M. Black, “The Theological Appropriation of the Old Testament by the New Testament,” *SJT* 39 (1986): 1-18; L. P. Trudinger, “The Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation” (Th.D dissertation, Boston University, 1963); C. G. Ozanne, “The Influence of the Text and Language of the Old Testament on the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D Thesis, University of Manchester, 1964); Jon Paulien, “Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation,” *BR*

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33 (1988): 37-53; Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSNTS 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

² Moyise, 16.

³ S. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13.

⁴ F.D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 19), 830.

⁵ Cf. Isa 44:28, where Cyrus is called "my shepherd."

⁶ Daniel recognized this very fact as reflected in Daniel 9, where, on the basis of his study of the book of Jeremiah, he prays, asking God to effect salvation (Dan. 9:2; cf. 2 Chron. 36:21-22; Zech. 7:5).

⁷ John Thompson, *Jeremiah* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 687 (Emphasis mine).

⁸ In LXX these chapters are interspersed from 25:14b in the MT. It suggests that these may have been an independent unit, especially since they form a distinct block in the book. The arrangement between the MT and LXX is also different, with the first following a broadly geographical outline (west to east), and the second providing an order according to political importance. See further, Thompson, 27-50, for discussion on structure and composition.

⁹ Kenneth Strand, "Two Aspects of Babylon's Judgment Portrayed in Revelation 18," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 55, 57.

¹⁰ MT *hitgarit*, "engage in a contest," "oppose," "challenge." This is the only appearance of the root *grh* in the book of Jeremiah.

¹¹ This is the only occurrence in Jeremiah of the verb *zud*. It appears elsewhere only in Exodus 18: 11 in the qal stem. So its precise connotation here is difficult to ascertain. However, the noun derivative is found in Jer 41:16 and 50:31- 32. The verb carries the idea of "insolence," "arrogance," "presumption," "hubris."

¹² John Bright, *Jeremiah*, Anchor Bible, vol. 21 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 355. He translates *zadon* as "Sir Pride." Josef Scharbert, "*zudh*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1980), 4:46- 51, indicates that the Lord points to a foreign power that arrogates to itself rights over Israel or Yahweh as Israel's protector to which it is not entitled.

¹³ Strand, 56, 57.

¹⁴ The phrase "nations to whom I send you" reflects the fulfillment of the call to prophetic office (cf. Jer 1:5,10).

¹⁵ LXX reads *tou oi nou tou akratou*, "of unmixed wine," the equivalent of *yen hahamer*, according to *BHS*. Bright, 158, suggests reading the construct *yen* for *hayyayin* and thus translating, "this cup of the wine of wrath." It may be that "this cup of wine/ this cup of wrath" are variants.

¹⁶ LXX says *kai pointai kai exemountai*, "and they shall drink and vomit." Cf. William McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," *VT* 30 (1980): 491.

¹⁷ This "cup" may have had its origin in the ordeal procedure whereby a portion was imbibed to test the innocence of a person (cf. Num. 5:11-31). It may have been derived from a banquet setting in which poison substituted for wine. See Carroll, Jeremiah, 502. The cup is understood variously as a cup of poison that all the nations must drink because they are ineluctably destined to death [See H. A. Brongers, "Der Zornesbrecher," *OTS* 15 (1969): 177-192.] Hugo Gressmann, "*H koinonia ton daimonion*," *ZNW* 20 (1921): 224-230, posits an anti-banquet situation where the festivities associated with a cultic meal are reversed. H. Ringgren, "Vredens Kalk," *SEA* 17 (1952): 19-30, concentrates on intoxication as a "Chaos Motif" that is connected to the New Year Festival. The "cup" indicates a nexus between intoxication and the judgment of the enemies.

¹⁸ McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," 490. Cf. Duhm, 91. The image of the drinking of a cup to indicate judgment is found elsewhere in the OT: Pss 11: 6; 75: 9; Isa. 51: 17, 22; Jer 49: 12; 51: 7; Lam 4:21; Ezek 23 :31- 33; Obad 16; Hab 2: 15, 16; Zech 12 :2.

¹⁹ CKD, 371.

²⁰ Strand, 53-55. He offers a helpful excursus from Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth* (Wash. DC: 1968), 145, dealing with the funeral litany and structure of the chapter.

²¹ The word "judgment" (*krisis*) in vs. 10 parallels the term "made desolate" or "laid waste" (*eremthe*) in vss. 17a and 19. See *ibid.*, 55.

²² It appears that in 594/3 B.C.E., the fourth year of Zedekiah, a plot implicating the king in rebellion against Babylon (cf. Jer 27) was uncovered. Zedekiah wisely went to Babylon himself to refute the claims and pledge allegiance and/or to pay the annual tribute. However, LXX implies that he did not go, but that Seriah went "from Zedekiah," i.e., he was the envoy. Since both Seraiah and Baruch are described as "ben Neriah ben Mahseiah," it is believed that they were brothers.

²³ E. Kutsch, "krt, abschneiden," *THAT* (1984), 1: 857-860. LXX offers *exoethreusate*, "completely cut off."

²⁴ Cf. 1 Chr 29:24; 2 Chr 30:8. The same expression *natan yad*, "to give a hand," is used in Chronicles and here as a sign of surrender. Babylon, personified as mother, will be reduced to a minor status, the least of nations. This too is a great reversal. In former times Babylon had reduced cities to

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uninhabitable wasteland so that passersby would whistle in appallment as they went by. In this day of Yahweh’s wrath, the same expressions would be used of Babylon. Hence, Babylon stands indicted.

²⁵ Christensen, 260, n. 109. He borrowed this phrase from Martin Kessler in a paper (presented in November 1960 at the Society of Biblical Literature) entitled, “Oracles Against the Nations: Jeremiah 50, 51.”

²⁶ Note the following text: “I set a trap for you, O Babylon, and you were caught before you knew it” (vs. 24a). “The Lord has opened his arsenal and brought out the weapons of his wrath, for the Sovereign Lord Almighty has work to do in the land of the Chaldeans” (vs.25).

²⁷ Merathaim was likely the area/district of Mat Marratim at the head of the Persian Gulf at the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It was called nar marratu, “bitter river.” See W.S. LaSor, “Merathaim,” *ISBE* (1986), 3:321. Pekod refers to the Akkadian Puqudu in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts. It refers to one of the larger Aramean tribes that led a nomadic life but settled in Southeastern Babylonia between the lower Tigris and Elam by the 8th century B.C. See M.J. Horsnell, “Pekod,” *ISBE* (1986), 3: 736. For both places consult further, J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* (Leiden : E. J. Brill 1959), 451.

²⁸ Thompson, 741.

²⁹ Ibid.; Bright, Jeremiah, 354.

³⁰ Cf. Deut. 2: 32; Josh 8:28; Judg 1:7. See also Christensen, 261, who describes it as devoting “Babylon to the sacred ban of Israel’s most ancient holy war traditions.” Cf. Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophet: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 94.

³¹ Meredith Kline, “Double Trouble,” *JETS* 32(1989): 171-179, believes that the word translated as “double” in Rev 18:6 (cf. Isa 40:2; 61:7; Jer 16:18; Zech 9:12), really means “equivalent.”

³² Thompson, 742. The LXX varies the image, *anaxerante pantas tous Karpous autes*, “dry up all her fruits.” This continues the harvesting metaphor of destroying the agricultural products of vs. 26.

³³ Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 830 (emphasis mine).

³⁴ Aitken, 38. See Kenneth Mulzac, “The Remnant Motif in the Conflict of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Jeremiah.” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995), 245-252; 280-282.

³⁵ The expression “seek the Lord” invokes the idea of repentance. While this occurs only here in Jer, it is found within the context of repentance or the lack thereof in Hos. 3:5; 5:6; Zeph. 1:6; 2:3. Cf. Thompson, 733; Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 415.

³⁶ For a complete discussion, see Mulzac, 321-330.

³⁷ Aitken, 34.

³⁸ The verb plus the infinitive absolute adds power, “He will surely plead their cause.” Note the assonance in Hebrew: *rib yarib 'et-ribam*.

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The Millennium and the Judgment

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Introduction

The main objective of this article is to study the divine purpose of the period designated in Revelation 20:1-6 as “a thousand years,” usually referred to as the millennium. This purpose is stated in verse six: those who share in the first resurrection will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Christ for a thousand years. They are called “blessed and holy.” The immediate content of this reign is summed up at the beginning of verse four: “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed.”¹ These words indicate that the primary purpose of the millennial reign of the saints with Christ is a work of judgment.

This article will attempt to clarify how the millennial reign of the saints is related to judgment. In the first section we present a brief historical survey of what major traditional views of the millennium have to say about this relationship. Part two deals with contextual questions about the connections of Revelation 20:4-6 with its immediate context in the book of Revelation as well as with the larger context of Scripture.

Major Millennial Views

In recent literature four major millennial views have been identified: amillennialism, postmillennialism, historic premillennialism, and dispensational premillennialism.² How is the purpose of the millennium, and more particularly, how is the purpose of the millennium as stated in Revelation 20:4-6, perceived in each of these theories? The answers to these questions have to be brief and succinct.

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These views made their appearance in a historical order and in specific historical settings on which there is a fair amount of agreement. They have been traced in general surveys³ as well as in a number of limited studies dealing with specific periods or individuals.⁴ Because the historical context and sequence shed light on the emphases found in the different views, they will be discussed in the order in which they emerged in the history of the church. Due to the limitations of the article, a discussion of postmillennialism is omitted.

Premillennial View of Early Church Fathers. It is generally admitted that the earliest millennial view found in the writings of the church fathers is a premillennial view. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue With Trypho*, chaps. 80 and 81) explains to Trypho “that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.”⁵ He appeals to Isaiah 65:17-23 and 2 Peter 3:8 in support of this belief. As final proof, he refers to the fact that “there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that, thereafter the general, and, in short the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”⁶

Apparently Justin Martyr believed in a thousand year reign of resurrected believers in Christ in a rebuilt and enlarged Jerusalem here on earth. This millennial reign would be followed by the general resurrection and judgment of all men. Although Justin mentions the last and general judgment as following the millennium, he does not comment on the statement in Revelation 20:4 that judgment is given to those who are seated on thrones, nor does he discuss the purpose of the millennium. It is significant, however, that Justin has the resurrected saints dwell in the earthly Jerusalem, although there is no hint of that in Revelation 20.⁷

Early church fathers who held premillennial beliefs are Papias, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Commodianus, Victorinus of Pettau, Lactantius, and others.⁸ Although there are differences in their opinions, they all believed that the millennial reign of the saints with Christ would take place on earth, but little explanation is given concerning the reason for this millennial reign.

Irenaeus comes closest to stating its purpose when he writes that the just (raised in the first resurrection) by means of “the kingdom which is the commencement of incorruption, . . . are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature,” and that “it behooves the

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righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterward.”⁹ He then goes on to describe the fecundity of this renovated earth by quoting a supposedly dominical saying from Papias, and by adducing passages from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel.¹⁰ These descriptions of the millennial kingdom are not to be interpreted allegorically of celestial blessings but of real earthly conditions, asserts Irenaeus in the closing chapters of his famous work, *Against Heresies*.¹¹

In reaction against the sensual and material descriptions of the millennial kingdom, especially by heretical writers such as the Gnostic Cerinthus, and because of the allegorizing and spiritualizing hermeneutic of the school of Alexandria, the church fathers Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Jerome opposed any form of chiliasm, that is, any concept of an earthly millennial kingdom.¹² Augustine, who originally believed in an earthly millennial reign of the saints, later became the most influential opponent of chiliasm. Because of their emphasis on the carnal pleasures of the millennial kingdom, Augustine states that those who believe such things “are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millennarians.”¹³

Amillennial View of Augustine. In Book 20 of his influential work *The City of God*, he presents another interpretation of Revelation 20. The first resurrection he interprets to be the resurrection of the soul to new life. The second resurrection, which comes at the end when Christ returns and the final judgment takes place, is the resurrection of the body.¹⁴ The thousand years is for him either the period between the first and the second comings of Christ, or it stands for the whole duration of this world. He seems to prefer the first interpretation. The binding of Satan begins with Christ’s first Advent. Satan cannot now seduce the elect to eternal damnation, although he can still tempt them. The abyss in which the devil is cast is “the countless multitude of the wicked whose hearts are unfathomably deep in malignity against the Church of God.”¹⁵ The thousand year reign of the saints is the present reign of the believers with Christ, whether in the body or in the soul, to be followed by the eternal kingdom after the second resurrection and the last judgment.¹⁶ Commenting on the phrase, “And I saw seats and them that sat upon them, and judgment was given” (Rev 20:4), Augustine assures his readers: “It is not to be supposed that this refers to the last judgment, but to the seats of the rulers and to the rulers themselves by whom the Church is now governed.”¹⁷

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For Augustine, therefore, the purpose of the millennial reign is identical with the purpose of the church or kingdom militant in the Christian era. The judgment given to those seated on the thrones refers to the government of the church by its rulers (which, of course, are none other than the bishops). The Augustinian view of the millennium had a prevailing influence in the Catholic Church for more than a thousand years.¹⁸ It has come to be referred to as the amillennial view, although some scholars would prefer to give it a different name.¹⁹

Early Protestant Views. The early Protestant Reformers also accepted the Augustinian view of the millennium and rejected chiliastic expectations. Paul Althaus summarizes Luther's view:

Now Luther agrees with the catholic church in its rejection of chiliasm. He too does not interpret Revelation 20 in terms of the end of history but as a description of the church. The millennium lies in the past and was brought to an end through the coming of the Turks or with the papacy becoming the Antichrist. Luther's theology, in distinction from that of the official teaching of the church, however, once again revives the eager expectation of the coming of Jesus common to the early Christian church.²⁰

John Calvin also rejected chiliasm, considering it a childish fiction not worth refuting. According to Calvin, the number "one thousand" in Revelation "does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth."²¹ Heinrich Quistorp, in his book *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, observes that Calvin's exegesis of Revelation 20:1-6 "is by no means convincing," and suggests that the millennium "is an eschatological event, but is not in itself the end nor yet the eternal kingdom of God."²² Some Lutheran and Reformed confessions condemned chiliastic teachings as Judaistic and fanatical, especially because they were associated with Anabaptist beliefs and with the excesses of the Muenster revolution.²³ In such an atmosphere the purpose for the millennial reign did not have a chance to serious consideration.

Post-Reformation Views. In the Post-Reformation era a revival of a more balanced premillennialism occurred, and many Protestant interpreters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries believed that the thousand year reign of the saints would begin at Christ's second coming with the first resurrection, the bodily resurrection of all who had died in Christ, and would conclude with the second resurrection, the resurrection of the wicked, and the last judgment.²⁴ The thousand

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year reign was widely understood as a reign of Christ with the saints on earth.

Dispensational Premillennialism. In the nineteenth century, as a result of the teaching of John Nelson Darby, a new form of premillennialism took shape: dispensational premillennialism. The differences between historical premillennialism, as it is now designated, and dispensational premillennialism we cannot describe here.²⁵ The former considers the church to be the spiritual successor of Israel and holds that the millennial reign of the saints with Christ on earth includes the believers from all the eons of time. The latter believes that the church will be raptured away from this earth and spend the millennium in heaven, while a restored Israel under Christ as the Davidic King will fulfil the promises made to literal Israel in the Old Testament. However, in neither case is the unique connection between the reign of the saints as priests of God and Christ for a thousand years and the fact that judgment is committed to them satisfactorily explained. Walvoord, for instance, distinguishes seven future judgments and suggests that Revelation 20:6 will be fulfilled in the reign of the resurrected saints with Christ over the millennial earth, where people still live in natural bodies, and in that way the saints will judge the world.²⁶ It is hard to see that such an explanation is based on a sound interpretation of the passage. However, recent studies point to a different solution, as we intend now to show.

The Millennium According to Revelation 20

In recent times considerable attention has been given to Revelation 20 in general and to verses 4-6 in particular. One prominent issue in the debate is its relationship to the rest of the Book of Revelation, and especially to chapter 19:11-21 and to chapters 21 and 22. Amillennialists such as Hoekema,²⁷ Cox,²⁸ and White²⁹ argue that Revelation 20 constitutes a recapitulation of the Christian era, followed by the general resurrection of righteous and wicked, the last judgment, and the eternal kingdom. Premillennialists such as Deere,³⁰ Hoehner,³¹ and Townsend³² have presented convincing exegetical and theological arguments interpreting chapter 20 as part of a continuous sequence of events starting with Christ's second coming to destroy the apostate powers of the end time (Rev 19:11-21), followed by the millennial reign of the resurrected saints and culminating with the resurrection of the wicked, the final judgment, and the everlasting kingdom. Adventist interpreters for the last hundred and fifty years have espoused a historical premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20. Scholars such

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as Strand,³³ Shea,³⁴ and LaRondelle³⁵ have set forth exegetical and structural reasons for this interpretation.

Another much debated issue is the interpretation of the expression “they came to life” (vs. 4, *ezēsan*). Whereas amillennialists, following Augustine, have interpreted this phrase to refer to the coming to life of the soul in the new birth,³⁶ premillennialists have understood this to refer to the bodily resurrection of the righteous,³⁷ which is the first resurrection, in contrast with the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the millennium (vs. 5). Adventists agree with a number of other premillennialist interpreters that this first resurrection includes believers of all ages who have died in Christ and are raised at Christ’s second coming.³⁸

This view is completely in harmony with Paul’s eschatological affirmation in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 that when the Lord descends from heaven with the sound of the trumpet of God, “the dead in Christ will rise first.” Speaking about the same resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul assures us that “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable.” This must refer to the resurrection of the just, for the wicked will certainly not be raised with imperishable or immortal bodies.

Contextual Insights. We now wish to explore the meaning of the statement “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgement was committed” (vs. 4). The reference to thrones raises the question, “Where are these thrones located? In all occurrences of the word “throne(s)” preceding Revelation 20, reference is made to the throne of God or to thrones associated with the throne of God, with three exceptions. The three exceptions are references to the throne of Satan (2:13) and the throne of the beast (13:2; 16:11). These facts strongly favor a heavenly location for the thrones in Revelation 20:4.³⁹

This conclusion is strengthened when we ask the question, Who are seated on these thrones? Many suggestions have been made in regard to their identity. An obvious possibility are the twenty-four elders mentioned earlier as sitting on thrones (4:4, 11:16). This possibility is argued by Mealy, who, nevertheless, in the end suggests that, “what makes the best sense of the data in Rev. 20:4 is the notion of an *invitation* [emphasis his]: an invitation to a possible paradoxical interpretation which adds layers of meaning on top of the straightforward reading.”⁴⁰ Deere also discusses the possibility of the twenty-four elders as well as other suggestions, such as the martyrs mentioned in the latter part of verse 4, or the apostles on the basis of Matthew 19:28, but in the end concludes that, “it is more likely that all the saints are in view.”⁴¹ Scholars such as Ladd,⁴² Beasley-Murray,⁴³ and Hoehner⁴⁴ agree that those who are seated on the thrones are all the saints of all ages, who have been raised in the first resurrection.

We ask next, what happens to these saints who come to life in the first resurrection? Before Jesus was crucified, He promised to His disciples He would go to prepare a place for them. He also promised, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also,” John 14:3. This is a clear

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promise that Christ would take the redeemed to the place where He resides, namely to the Father's throne. Paul comforts fellow Christians with the hope that those raised in the first resurrection, together with believers still alive at Christ's second coming, "shall be caught up . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). The immortalized saints will be taken to heaven, and that is where the book of Revelation pictures the innumerable multitude of the redeemed before the throne of God (Rev 7:9-10; 15:2-4). We conclude, therefore, that the thrones on which the resurrected saints of all ages are seated are located in heaven and not on earth. The thousand year reign of the saints with Christ is a heavenly reign and not an earthly one.⁴⁵

It is evident that this interpretation differs from the prevailing understanding of both historical and dispensational premillennialists. The former usually locate the thousand year reign of Christ with the saints on this earth, although the descriptions of this reign tend to be somewhat vague.⁴⁶ The purpose of this reign is interpreted as providing an opportunity for the manifestation of Christ's righteous and beneficent rule over a world in which Satan cannot deceive the nations.⁴⁷ Dispensational premillennialists have seen a double aspect of the millennial reign of Christ and the saints. Christ rules in a restored Jerusalem over literal Israel and over the Gentile nations of the earth. The immortal saints dwell in heaven but in some way participate in Christ's rule on earth.⁴⁸ They reign with Him as priests of God and of Christ. This view of the millennial reign is based on a hermeneutic of literalism, making a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church which even to some dispensationalists has become problematic.⁴⁹ It is our conviction that both positions have failed to understand the true purpose of the millennial reign. It is to that purpose that we now turn.

The Purpose of the Millennial Reign. It is said of those who are seated on the thrones that "judgment was committed" to them (vs. 4). What is the significance of this statement? What is this *krima* (Greek) or judgment that is given or committed to the saints on the thrones? Some have interpreted the word *krima* in this passage to mean the rule of the saints.⁵⁰ However, a careful study of the context would suggest that the word *krima* here refers to judgment. God's eschatological

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judgments constitute a major theme in the latter part of Revelation, as is evident from 14:7; 16:5, 7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 11; 20:12, 13. We concur with Mealy's assessment that, "In Rev. 19:11-20, 15, the theme that is consistently dwelt upon is that of *judgment* [emphasis his], and, in particular, that negative form of judgment which deals with the eschatological encounter between God and his Christ on one side, and the unrepentant on the other."⁵¹

The question naturally arises: what is the role of the saints in this eschatological judgment? Could it be that the answer is found in the questions with which Paul chides litigating saints in Corinth? "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" and "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" These questions suggest that the saints will be involved in the eschatological judgment of Satan, the fallen angels, and the wicked who have rejected God's salvation. Scholars from different millennial persuasions have recognized the connection between 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 and Revelation 20:4-6: (so, Hoekema,⁵² Walvoord,⁵³ Beasley-Murray,⁵⁴ Deere,⁵⁵ and others. Frequently they associate this judgment by the saints with Daniel 7:22, 27; Matthew 19:28; and Luke 22:30.

The fact that Revelation 20:6 emphatically states that the resurrected saints "shall be priests of God and of Christ," and as such shall reign with Christ a thousand years, indicates that during this millennial period they will exercise a priestly function. The priesthood of all believers is firmly established earlier in the New Testament (1 Pet 2:5-9; 2 Cor. 5:17-21). The priestly function of God's people in this world is "to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ," (1 Pet 2:5), to "declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light," (vs.9). In that function they are entrusted with "the ministry of reconciliation" and with "the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18, 19). Is this the priestly function referred to in Revelation?

In three places in the book of Revelation the redeemed are referred to as priests. The first reference is somewhat similar in wording to Peter's statement (1 Pet 2:9), when John states that Christ has "made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father." This passage seems to refer to the priesthood of God's people in the present world.⁵⁶ The second reference is in a song of praise to the Lamb which says, "thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign in the earth" (Rev 5:10). Although the phrase "hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God" again seems to refer to a present reality, the future tense of the final phrase, "and they shall reign on earth" suggests a future

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fulfillment. It is not surprising that some interpreters would link the latter phrase with the millennial reign of the saints in Revelation 20:4-6⁵⁷ and take it as an affirmation that that reign takes place on earth.

The third reference is Revelation 20:6. The context of Revelation 20:4-6, however, as we have seen, is a context of judgment. The saints will indeed reign on earth, as is clearly promised in a number of Scriptures (Matt 5:5; Rom 4:13). But the reigning on earth refers to the time when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven and God will dwell with His people on this earth (Rev 21:2-3). The priestly reign of the saints in judgment takes place in heaven.

Before God will execute the final judgment upon Satan and his angels, and upon the multitudes of lost humanity who have rejected the salvation offered them through Christ's sacrifice, Christ, together with the saints of all ages, will open the books of heaven and sit in judgment. This is a process that will take time. As priests of God and of Christ the redeemed will be given to judge the world and even the fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). We suggest that this is the true meaning and purpose of the words in Revelation 20:4, "I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed."

Notes

1 Unless otherwise indicated Scripture quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

2 So e.g. in Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977); Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), ch. 14, "Major Millennial Views," pp. 173-193; Stanley T. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

3 General surveys of the history of millennial theories are provided in D. H. Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church: Studies in the History of Christian Chiliasm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945); LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 volumes, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1946-1954). The latter work traces the development of the interpretation of the books Daniel and the Revelation throughout the history of the church, including the historical development of different millennial theories.

4 Such studies of millennial views held in specific periods or by specific individuals are too numerous to list here. Some of them will be mentioned in later notes.

5 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 80; ANF 1:239.

6 *Ibid.*, ch. 81; ANF 1:240.

7 Most likely this is based on his understanding of the prophecies of Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets. See Joel Cliff Gregory, "The Chiliasm Hermeneutic of Papias of Hierapolis and Justin Martyr Compared with Later Patristic Chiliasm," Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1983.

8 Besides the general surveys mentioned above in note 3, an excellent discussion of millennial views in the early centuries is Hans Bietenhard, "The Millennial Hope in the Early Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 6 (1953): 12-30.

9 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:32:1; ANF 1:561.

10 *Ibid.*, 5:33:4; 5:34:1-4; ANF 1:563-564.

11 *Ibid.*, 5:35:1-2; 36:1-3; ANF 1:565-567. Irenaeus, in the concluding paragraph (36:3), connects John's vision of the kingdom with the promises of the prophets when he writes, "John, therefore, did distinctly foresee the first resurrection of the just, and the inheritance in the kingdom of the earth; and what the prophets have prophesied concerning it harmonize [with his vision]."

12 Froom, 1:315-326; Bietenhard, pp. 20-21.

13 Augustine, *The City of God*, 20:7; NPNF 2:426 (1st series).

14 *Ibid.*, 20:6; NPNF 2:425-426.

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- 15 Ibid., 20:7; NPNF 2:427.
- 16 Ibid., 20:9; NPNF 2:429-431.
- 17 Ibid; NPNF 2:430.
- 18 William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), From 1:464-491.
- 19 See Hoekema, pp. 173-174.
- 20 Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 419.
- 21 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3:25:5; LCC 21:995.
- 22 Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), pp. 160-161.
- 23 See ch. 14, "Chiliasm and the Reformation," in Kromminga, pp. 169-179; Douglas McC. Lindsay Judisch, "Postmillennialism and the Augustana," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47 (1983): 241-245.
- 24 From attributes the revival of premillennialism to Joseph Mede (1586-1638). From, 2:544, 548-549, 559, 785. Robert Clouse has shown that Mede was preceded by and indebted to the German Calvinist scholar Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638), who broke away from Calvin's eschatological views and espoused a premillennarian interpretation of Revelation chapter 20. Robert G. Clouse, "Johann Heinrich Alsted and English Millennialism," *Harvard Theological Review* 62 (1969): 189-207.
- 25 Despite the obvious agreement on major aspects of premillennialism, the differences between the two views have deep roots in understandings of the biblical covenants and the relationship between Israel and the Church.
- 26 John T. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), pp. 276-295, 329.
- 27 Hoekema, pp. 223-226. Hoekema argues that the book of Revelation "consists of seven sections which run parallel to each other, each of which depicts the church and the world from the time of Christ's first coming to the time of his second coming" (p. 223). Chapters 20-22 constitute the seventh section. He does, however, observe that these sections "reveal a certain amount of eschatological progress," and hence "this method of interpretation is called *progressive* [emphasis his] parallelism" (p. 226).
- 28 William E. Cox, *Biblical Studies in Final Things* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), p. 171.
- 29 R. Fowler White, "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev. 20:1-10," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989): 319-344.
- 30 Jack S. Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 58-73.
- 31 Harold W. Hoehner, "Evidence from Revelation 20," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, pp. 235-262, edited by Donald R. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992).
- 32 Jeffrey L. Townsend, "Is the Present Age the Millennium," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (1983) pp. 206-224.
- 33 Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976).
- 34 William H. Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23 (1985): 37-54.
- 35 Hans K. LaRondelle, "The One Thousand Years of Revelation 20," *Ministry: A Magazine for Clergy*, September 1982, pp. 12-14.
- 36 Hoekema, pp. 232-237; Cox, *Biblical Studies*, pp. 166-167.
- 37 Hoehner, pp. 253-256; Charles L. Feinberg, *Millennialism: The Two Major Views*, third and enlarged edition (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980; former title *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?*), pp. 345-358.
- 38 See e.g. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. 358.
- 39 This point is discussed at some length in Michel Gourgues, "The Thousand-year Reign (Rev. 20:1-6): Terrestrial or Celestial?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985): 676-681.
- 40 J. Webb Mealy, "After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 70 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), p. 109.
- 41 George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 263-264.
- 42 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), pp. 292-293.

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43 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), pp. 292-293.

44 Hoehner, p. 253.

45 On this point amillennialists have criticized premillennialists, claiming that there is no evidence in Rev 20:4-6 for an earthly reign of Christ in a restored Jerusalem. We believe this criticism to be valid.

46 So e.g. Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 102.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101. See also D. J. Kromminga, *The Millennium: Its Nature, Function, and Relation to the Consummation of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 45-76.

48 Walvoord, p. 329.

49 See e.g. Craig A. Blaising, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, edited by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), pp. 13-34.

50 So e.g. Ladd, p. 264.

51 Mealy, p. 45.

52 Hoekema, pp. 192 and 256-257.

53 Walvoord, p. 329.

54 Beasley-Murray, pp. 292-293.

55 Deere, pp. 63-64.

56 Caird wonders whether the sharing in Christ's priestly and royal office by the believers does not constitute them "a body through which he can exercise his redemptive as well as his regal power?" G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John The Divine*, second edition, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: A. and C. Black, 1984), p. 17.

57 So Ladd, pp. 263-264.

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The Restoration of the Primordial World of Genesis 1–3 in Revelation 21–22

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One of the key discussions in religious studies today revolves around the effect of post-modern thinking upon contemporary society. While modernity may be characterized as the age of empirical truth—what can be gained by the scientific method—post-modernity may be portrayed as an age in quest of renewed interpersonal relationships.¹ Some of the most vital questions raised in connection with the post-modern world view are those which have to do with origins and endings.²

The two biblical books which deal most directly with these questions are Genesis and Revelation.³ When we compare their content, we find their respective messages are more related, and perhaps more relevant, to today's world than we might think at first. Both deal with the intimately connected themes of origins and endings, two vital matters among the concerns of the post-modern world.⁴

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the subject of origins as expressed in Genesis 1-3 and its relationship to the apocalyptic end of the world presented in Revelation 21-22. We especially wish to examine the reconstruction of the primal ecological relationships in four specific areas: our relationship with God, ourselves, others, and the world.⁵ The reconstruction and renewal of the primordial world and its proper ecological relationships can, if properly understood, restore a sense of confidence in the future to the post-modern thinker.

In our study we will first examine the connection between the books of Genesis and Revelation. Secondly, we will investigate the loss/restoration motif by comparing what the entrance of sin did to the primordial world described in

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Genesis 1-3, and how that which was lost will be restored through the creative power of God as described in Revelation 21-22. We will then observe the implications of the loss/restoration motif for the post-modern world.

Genesis and Revelation

We can hardly fail to notice that the great themes of the Bible have their beginnings in the book of Genesis. These are continuously developed and enlarged upon throughout the remainder of Scripture. Finally, they come to their climactic consummation in the last book of God's Word, the book of Revelation.⁶ If the book of Genesis were excised from the Bible (as many might prefer), the rest of the Bible would be incomprehensible.⁷

The book of Genesis reminds us of our exalted, primordial beginnings, whereas the book of Revelation emphasizes the proper orientation to and preparation for events yet to come on the earth.⁸ But because the Revelation deals with future events, we cannot take it any less seriously than the book of Genesis. We can learn much about the primordial world by studying the two books together, just as we can learn much about the future of the human race by studying both.

Genesis, then, describes genuine primeval history, while the book of Revelation concentrates on actual future history. In the former, the characters and stories are factual. In the latter, the events are as authentic as the characters in Genesis. Both tell us that God will finish the work He began at creation, interrupted by the intrusion of sin. Well has Thomas Altizer written when he states, "apocalypse can finally have no meaning if it is divorced from genesis."⁹

Thus, in a very real sense, the book of Revelation can be considered the sequel to the Book of Genesis. The two books bind together with a thread of unity all of history as well as all of God's revelations to human beings. They are the alpha and omega of God's word, the book of beginnings and the book of endings. They comprise the foundation and capstone of God's inspired word to mankind. The two must be taken together in order to present a comprehensive, coherent, and compelling world view to post-modern society. More than ever before, modern Christians need to believe and understand these complementary books if they would truly live an effective life and be able to witness in today's confused and hurting world.¹⁰

Loss and Restoration in Genesis and Revelation

The loss/restoration motif, quite common in the Bible, has a strong attestation in the books of Genesis and Revelation. In the primordial scene of Genesis, the reader is introduced to a probational world that falls prey to sin.¹¹ The final world as described in Revelation depicts

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human beings who, while they have sinned, have also experienced redemption and renewal. In other words, the first three chapters of Genesis outline the entrance of sin into the primordial world and point up the need to have the curse of sin and death removed from it. The last chapters of Revelation outline the purgation of sin from God's world and its resultant renewal into the pristine form described in Genesis before sin changed it.

After the original human couple made a choice to follow Satan's deception, God pronounced a series of curses that would come upon His creation as a result of the Fall.¹² Hence, the ground was cursed (3:17), sorrow would come upon the human family (3:17), and hard toil would be the lot of humanity in the struggle to survive and grow food in the midst of thistles and thorns (3:18-19). Furthermore, humans would now die and return to the ground from which they were created (3:19). The couple were given coats of skin to clothe themselves (3:21). They were told Satan would continually attempt to harass and destroy them and their descendants (3:15). Finally, the primordial pair were barred access to the tree of life and even to the Garden of Eden itself (3:23-24). This destruction of the primordial world described in Genesis 3 is a bleak picture of human life which must now somehow survive rather than flourish spontaneously.

However, if we carefully study the last few chapters of Revelation, we observe that what was lost by human transgression will be restored by God, who will renew this world to its pristine purity. There will be no more curse (22:3) and no more sorrow (21:4) in the new cosmos. The exacting labor and struggle in pain to survive will be replaced by a world in which there will be no pain or tears (21:4), and one which will now produce abundantly as it was designed to do.

While in Genesis death occurs because of sin, in Revelation death is banished in the renewed world (21:4). Animal coats are now replaced by clothes of fine linen (19:14). There is no more ecological deconstruction or exploitation of the world in order to satisfy human wants and needs.

In the primordial world under the curse of sin, Satan continued to harass humanity, whereas in the renewed world Satan is not present, having been destroyed prior to the recreation of the earth (20:10). Finally, the redeemed of the human race will have free access to both the city and the presence of God (22:4, 14) and to the tree of life (22:14) because they will reflect the *imago dei* as their forebears did when originally created.

The losses suffered when sin was introduced into the perfect cosmos described in Genesis (the devastating effects upon our ecological relationships with God, ourselves, others, and the world) are now

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restored in full in the book of Revelation. In one sense, the primordial world becomes better than it was originally because sin will not make inroads into it ever again.

Knowing that this world is to be restored to its primordial pristine state has several significant implications for the post-modern mind. The promise tells us God has a purpose for the world, a plan for it, and He will renew it.

Implications of Loss and Restoration

God Has a Purpose for the World. The existence of earth with its inhabitants, created by the hands of an omnipotent, holy, loving God as affirmed in the book of Genesis, necessarily indicates a divine purpose. It implies that the omniscient, omnipotent God had a great and eternal purpose for His creation in His heart before He began to create. The temporary intrusion of sin and death can never permanently thwart or deter His design. The time will come for God to fulfill that purpose, and He will remove the great curse imposed upon the creation. The kingdom of God is soon to be established, and His saints will inherit it as He promised.¹³

The book of Revelation describes in detail the shape the fulfillment of God's purposes will take.¹⁴ Its message, as it describes the reconstruction of the universe, tells us God is not daunted by the storms of history. The end is assured, because it has already begun through God's action in Christ; it is now present, and will be concluded in God's time.¹⁵ God's purpose in creation involves a glorious future for His creatures, and that purpose must and will be fulfilled.¹⁶ Thus, Revelation presents a sovereign God whose purposes must be victorious over evil and all associated with it.¹⁷

The assurance of the triumph of God's purpose for this world is the supreme contribution of the book of Revelation to the Church as well as to contemporary society.¹⁸ Revelation, therefore, above all else, in its presentation of the restoration of what was lost in Genesis, is designed to assure us that what God has said is true. What He promised, He will do.¹⁹ And if God's interest in the human being is real, and if His purpose is sure, then there is a reason for us to maintain a struggle against evil. This is so because our sacrifice will be rewarded, and hope will find freedom to hope for a better future. The message that God has a purpose for this world, that it is not headed for chaos, then, is most certainly a timely message for our contemporary world.

God Has a Plan for the World. Closely related to God's purpose is His plan for this world. Both the books of Genesis and Revelation have been definite sources of spiritual strength for the church in all

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ages precisely for this reason. In fact, these two biblical books are wholly given to the consideration of God's plan for His people's future.

Revelation predicts a new world order founded upon the redemptive work of Christ when He restores the pristine perfection of the primordial cosmos described in Genesis. The equality and justice of His rule will eliminate the miseries and injustices that continually disfigure society because of the presence of sin. In Revelation the present world can see both its doom and its hope for a better future.²⁰

The fact that God has a plan for this world calls His church and others to take seriously what He is teaching about the establishment of His kingdom in history.²¹ John's frequent use of eschatological language in the Revelation is actually an assertion that history is moving towards an end and therefore has meaning.²² If history has meaning, then human beings can find a sense of identity, as our lives do mean something, a much needed emphasis in today's identity-confused world.

God Will Renew the World. The existence of sin in the world, as described in Genesis, reminds us God's victory is not as complete as He intends it to be, and what He designed the world to be has not yet been fully implemented.²³ Revelation, on the other hand, presents a time when this world will be completely free from the power of sin as God takes up His eternal abode with the redeemed. According to the restoration motif in Revelation 21-22, the debilitating effects of sin are to be abolished forever.²⁴ This removal of sin is, of course, set within the context of God's two great acts emphasized in Revelation: creation (4:11) and redemption (1:5; 5:9).²⁵

In the final world, the redeemed will experience the final aspects of redemption and renewal.²⁶ The last two chapters of Revelation (21-22) depict the consummation of the plan of redemption. The covenant promise of Genesis 3:15 is now fulfilled. The blessings of the first paradise created perfect by the Creator as pictured in Genesis 1-2 are now restored in Revelation 21-22, including the tree of life itself.²⁷ Paradise lost in Genesis becomes Paradise regained in Revelation.²⁸ Just as the work of creation was finished by God through Christ (Gen 2:1-3; Heb 1:1-2), and the work of redemption was finished by God through Christ (John 19:30; 2 Cor 5:18), so now the restoration of the creation by God through Christ is finished (Rev 21-22).

The vision in Revelation 21-22, therefore, can be viewed as the climax not only of the book of Revelation but of the whole story of salvation.²⁹ In spite of the long interruption occasioned by sin, we can be sure everything good in the first creation will be restored in the new creation, or it will be replaced by something better. The earth and its heaven will once again be "very good" in every way. The age-long curse is gone. There is no more death and sin. The earth and its inhabitants,

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and indeed the entire creation, are henceforth to thrive in fullest vigor.³⁰ The ecological problems in our relationship with God, ourselves, others, and the world are now resolved in such a way as to bring unity to the universe and the much needed renewal and primal restoration of the pristine creation. It is this alone which can give hope to the individual.

All humans who live in a hopeless world, who survive in the midst of uncertainty, need to hear the message of the book of Revelation and its emphasis on the restoration of this world to its primal beauty and perfection. The hope offered in the book of Revelation is grounded in the God who made and will remake the cosmos. God's will cannot be finally frustrated by any creaturely power in heaven or on earth. In restoring and renewing the earth through what Christ has done, God is telling us He does indeed have the power to bring about a new world order and thereby provide the conditions suitable for redeemed humanity to develop its full potential.

The restoration portrayed in the Revelation, which reverses the losses incurred by the human race so succinctly detailed in the book of Genesis, should lead us to conclude that only within the framework of the God-human relationship we can find our true identity, our sickness and its cure, our values, our mission in life and the fullest development of character.

God's purpose and plan for the world provides hope for the human family. It tells us God can bring about permanent change both in individuals (so they may live an ethical life) as well as in the cosmos (so life may flourish spontaneously rather than simply survive in an increasingly untenable environment). While some aspects of God's plan and purpose may be experienced now in today's situation, Revelation inspires hope for "a better tomorrow." This is the fundamental message of the book of Revelation and becomes that which is most relevant for post-modern society.³¹

Conclusion

The first three chapters of Genesis outline the entrance of sin into God's perfect creation. The last chapters of the book of Revelation outline the purgation of sin from God's redeemed creation.³² Sin and the curse are removed, and there is no more death. God has the power to accomplish His purposes and renew the creation. The visions recorded in Revelation are, then, a genesis, a genesis not of an old world being destroyed by sin but of a new creation, an absolutely new creation brought about by an apocalyptic ending of an old world order and an old reality.³³

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It is small wonder that the great enemy of God's truth has directed his most intense attacks against Genesis and Revelation, denying the historicity of the former and the truthfulness of the latter. With neither creation nor consummation, beginning nor ending, we would have only an existential present with no hope of learning from the past or guidance to face the future, a situation finding almost universal attestation in our modern philosophical and religious world.

But, the book of Revelation, written by the last of the apostles at the end of the Apostolic Age, has provided guidance for God's people throughout the Christian era. It particularly focuses on the great climactic events that will bring God's work begun at creation to completion and fullness in apocalyptic fashion.³⁴ There is progressive movement in John's prophecy, a movement towards the completion of God's plan for the world, and not simply the ticking off of the minutes of time on some huge, celestial clock.

The book of Revelation, which emphasizes restoration after loss, reminds us that the answers to the problems of life do not lie in man's ability to create a better world. Rather, the hope for this world lies in the return of One whose sovereign power controls the course of human affairs.³⁵ As the Alpha and Omega, the Lord God Almighty is the initiator of His creation (Genesis); and in His hands lies the whole intermediary process of the restoration of the world, which He Himself guides to His desired conclusion (Revelation).³⁶ This world is not out of control, speeding towards chaos. Rather, God is overruling all things to work out His purposes, especially in regard to earth's recreation and renewal. This is the significance of the restoration of the primordial world of Genesis 1-3 in Revelation 21-22. This message gives us the hope and the security of knowing for sure that there is a better world coming, a much needed assurance for the post-modern age.

Notes

1 See, for example, Thomas Oden, *After Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 195-199, and Stanley Grenz, *Revisiting Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), and Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1, Prolegomena* (unpublished manuscript), pp. 237-304. See also Norman Geisler, *The Apologetic Importance of John's Gospel*, James Sire, *Worldviews in Sociological Perspective*, and Norman Gulley, *The Challenge of Postmodernity to Evangelical Theology*, (these papers are unpublished manuscripts presented at ETS 1996 Southeastern Regional Meetings, March 15-16, University of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama).

Especially since the publication of Darwin's book, *The Origin of the Species*, the understanding of the creation narrative as recorded in Genesis 1-3 has come under intense scrutiny by scientists and theologians alike. Many questions have been raised and are still being raised in connection with the viability of holding a creationist position in regard to human origins. But there is more to the issue than simply determining what the origin of humanity is. Calling into question creationism has resulted in the production of a certain amount of tension regarding other theological doctrines, such as salvation and eschatology, not to mention the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture (epistemology/hermeneutics) and particularly anthropology.

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2 This thinking has raised a number of significant questions along the lines of existence, meaning, purpose, and spirituality of human life. These include such queries as, "Is there anything I can believe in?" "Who am I?" "Does it matter who I am?" "If I die, would anybody really miss me or even care?" "Is everyday work and making money to spend on things that cannot help me identify my true self all there is to life?" "What is the meaning and purpose of life?" "What is its goal?"

3 These have received a great deal of theological attention in this century. While the historicity of Genesis has been to a large extent denied, the truthfulness, relevancy, and interpretation of Revelation is repeatedly called into question. See Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), p. 21. The Pope's recent statement on evolution is typical of the debate which surrounds the book of Genesis. Since the Roman Catholic Church seems to espouse the idea that evolution is acceptable, it calls into question the traditional understanding of the book of Genesis. See Jeffrey L. Sheler, "The Pope and Darwin," *U.S. News and World Report*, 4 November 1996, p. 12. The number of commentaries and methods used to interpret the book of Revelation is proof enough of the intense battle over it.

4 For example, the creation of the world is mentioned at least four times in Revelation (4:11; 10:6; 13:8; 14:7). Revelation stresses the battle with the serpent (Rev 12:1-17) which is foretold and which is said to end in the victory of God (Gen 3:15). In Revelation 5:5, Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, a possible reference to Genesis 49:9. Again, both Babylon and Sodom are mentioned in Revelation (17-18 for the former and 11:8 for the latter), both of which are referred to in Genesis (11:1-9 and 18-19 respectively). It appears then that Revelation and Genesis are very much connected. For further information, see Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 21-24.

5 Hence, the ecological crisis in the world cannot be solved from the perspective of ecospirituality, nor by ecofeminism, but by the direct apocalyptic intervention of God. Thus, the solution for ecological problems is theocentric rather than anthropocentric and theological and not from the perspective of a philosophy of religion. An understanding of the apocalyptic end of our world as well as an appreciation of the value of our primordial creation are the starting grounds for dealing with the ecological dilemma of relationships and the world we face. For more information on ecospirituality, see Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988) and Matthew Fox, *Creation Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991). For ecofeminism, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God, An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), Sallie McFague, *The Body of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) and Carol Adams, ed, *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1993).

6 Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 21-23.

7 Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, 1990), pp. 32, 17.

8 Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 21, 31.

9 Thomas Altizer, *Genesis and Apocalypse* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), p. 11.

10 Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 14-15.

11 Morris, *Genesis*, p. 33.

12 For further information about the comparisons between the books of Genesis and Revelation, see Morris, *Genesis*, pp. 33-34 and Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 21-24. This study assumes the historicity of the Genesis account in its description of primordial events. This is not, in the opinion of this study, a theological interpretation of events but events which are real historical happenings which have and do affect our world today.

13 Morris, *Revelation*, p. 463.

14 Morris, *Genesis*, p. 18.

15 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, in the *New Century Bible*, ed by Matthew Black (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), pp. 25, 46.

16 Morris, *Revelation*, p. 435. Merrill Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 198.

17 Merrill Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 198.

18 Beasley-Murray, p. 45.

19 Morris, *Revelation*, p. 31.

20 Tenney, pp. 197-199.

21 Beasley-Murray, p. 38.

22 G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 292. Caird goes on to remind us that at every point, however, we must remember that only the earthly life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the key to the divine purpose and plan (ibid.).

23 Caird, p. 262.

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24 Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 372.

25 Beatrice Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse with Implications for Character Education* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), p. 203.

26 Morris, *Genesis*, p. 33.

27 Revelation 22:1-2.

28 Morris, *Genesis*, p. 32.

29 Beasley-Murray, p. 305.

30 Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 436, 467.

31 Neall, p. 206.

32 Morris, *Revelation*, p. 22.

33 Altizer, p. 10.

34 Morris, *Revelation*, pp. 21, 31.

35 Mounce, p. 396.

36 Beasley-Murray, p. 312.

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Preaching Revelation to the Secular Mind

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Introduction

The last book of the Bible has intrigued and fascinated multitudes of people throughout the centuries.¹ It seems to have a special appeal to our own society, which is speculating what destiny the year 2000 will bring to the individual as well as to the world.

From the perspective of the church the book is infinitely worth studying, for it reminds the Christian Church to remain faithful in times when life is an agony and many expect the end of the world as they know it—and yet still believe in some way that God is above the raging of men.² It assures the church that it will triumph through Jesus Christ its Lord.³

In this latter sense the teaching of the book, then, is not concerned exclusively with eschatology, that is, last-day events. Revelation was written not only for the purpose of revealing that which must shortly come to pass, but also to stabilize the life and testimony of believing Christians. It is—and has been—a definite source of spiritual strength for the church and individuals in all ages. Within its pages may be found the pattern for behavior along with exhortations to godliness and zeal.⁴

However, images of dragons, beasts, plagues, trumpets, a woman standing in heaven with white garments, the number 666 and the mark of the beast, angels flying with messages, seven plagues coming from jars held by angels, a woman sitting on a red beast drinking human blood, and a warrior-king dressed in a garment drenched in human blood, make a collage of interesting yet enigmatic images in the book of Revelation. They remind us that not only is the book of Revelation different, but that it is also notoriously difficult for the modern Christian mind to understand, a fact that is confirmed by the number

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of commentaries and varying viewpoints regarding the meaning of its symbolism. As a result of this confusion the book is sometimes abandoned or presented in such a way as to leave believers confused.⁵ For many, the Apocalypse, which means “unveiling,” has become the Apocrypha, which means “hidden.”⁶

If the book is difficult for Christians to comprehend, what about the “secular” person who often has had very little contact with or understanding of Christianity?⁷ How can this person, who lives in a scientific and often anti-religious world, be expected to receive any benefit from this maze of symbolic images?

To answer these questions is the focus of this article. Our study will affirm that the book of Revelation has indeed something to say to persons of a secular mind-set who feel that “science” and “humanism” have failed them in their quest for identity and meaning. In fact, one of the most amazing phenomena of our so-called “age of science” is the burgeoning occultistic and pseudosupernaturalistic cults and practices so commonly seen as the age of modernity fades into the post-modern era.⁸ Much of this attraction comes from these movement’s supposed ability to predict or even control the future.

The proliferation of astrologers, seers, mediums, and other later-day “prophes” can be directly attributed to the widespread dissatisfaction with present circumstances, the foreboding about what is going to happen in the year 2000, and the wistful desire of many to know the future. And this makes the understanding of the book of Revelation and the presentation of its truths to the secular-minded person of vital interest to the church, since the book itself, by its own admission (1:1, 10, 19), does deal with what is going to happen in the future.⁹

The task of sharing Revelation’s message itself, however, is not as easy as it seems, especially when the tremendous gap between the world of those who originally read its contents and the scientific mind-set of the contemporary world which is seeking to grapple with its own identity becomes apparent.

To bridge this gap and to communicate the message of the book of Revelation to secular persons requires a two-fold preparation. First, we must be familiar with the foundational message to be communicated, and secondly with the culture we are attempting to address. We must learn to communicate the gospel in Revelation in thought patterns intelligible to the people we are trying to reach in order to be effective in witnessing to them. Thus, the church which seeks to evangelize the secular world must understand it in order to evaluate it, resist its evils, and at the same time speak coherently and relevantly to it.¹⁰

Our study will deal first with the basic aspects of the message of Revelation. Second, we will take up the issue of the mind-set of the

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secular person and the world within which it works in order to find the hooks upon which to hang the truths of the book of Revelation. Third, we will suggest some specific ways in which the passages of this prophecy can be used to meet secular minds in such a way as to lead those persons to be confronted by the claims of Christ and to make a decision for Him.

The Foundational Message of Revelation

The Centrality of Christ. However we decide to interpret the book of Revelation, or whatever our eschatological scheme may be, we can agree that the person of Christ is of supreme importance in its message. Even in the chapters where signs and symbols seem uppermost, where the cataclysmic judgments of God eclipse all other interests, the person of Christ remains the central focus (see for example, 4-5; 14:6-20; 19:11-21). Christ is inextricably involved in the events that are affecting the world. He is the Arbiter of the destiny of both the church and the cosmos.¹¹

The structure of the book itself emphasizes the importance of Christ for this apocalyptic prophecy. After the introductory section (1:1-8), the very first vision the apostle John sees is not the terrifying and destructive forces of evil attempting to obliterate the name of God, His people, and His church. Rather, John first sees Christ standing in the middle of seven golden lampstands, watching over His church (1:9-20).

The significance of this vision is reflected by the literary pattern of thought and expression found in this book. It begins with what it considers the most important. In this case it becomes obvious that Christ is central to everything that will occur in the prophecy, since the vision appears first in the narrative of prophetic events. As a matter of fact, it might be said that everything that follows Revelation 1:9-20 in the Apocalypse is related in some way or another to the first vision of Christ.¹²

The significance of the reference to the heavenly sanctuary should not be missed here. The presence of God dwells there, and it is from there He brings salvation to His people. The fact that Christ is walking among these lampstands indicates His constant vigilance for the purity and safety of His people and His church. There is nothing which takes place in regard to His people that Christ does not know or care about. There is an assurance that this world is not out of control, moving disconsolately to chaos. Human beings need not fear the future because no force, however destructive or Satanic, can eternally overcome the person who is protected by God. This truth removes the fear of our past,

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present, and future. This is the significance of Christ having the seven stars in his right hand (1:16,20).

Christ uses his right hand to reassure John that he need not fear (1:17). He need not fear anything that he is about to see because Christ lives forever and is forever working through the circumstances of this world to do His will and save His people who hold firmly to His hand. The future and the authority of the message is confirmed by God Himself, and, therefore, is sure. What God has said will come to pass. At the same time believers who know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior are assured that God can and will save them from any destructive force which appear on this earth. Hence, our future is sure because it is grounded in God, who never changes. We do not have to worry about what is going to happen.

Redemption. Christ's centrality to the book of Revelation underscores three great themes which are relevant to every human being. The first is the theme of redemption.¹³ Redemption reminds us that God really does care about each individual, since Christ willingly died for our sins so that we might have life. He made us priests in His kingdom so that we might tell others. Someone loves us in spite of ourselves. We do have value, and it does matter whether we live or die (1:5-6).

Judgment. The second is the theme of judgment. Regardless of how it may appear at the moment, men and women will have to stand responsible for their actions. But, this is not a time for believers to fear. While Christ must bring destruction to those who are destroying His people (11:18), He also provides His people with their eternal inheritance (cf. Matt 25:34). Furthermore, God provides the ability and power for all to become ethical people, power for permanent character change, since there will be no immoral people in His kingdom (21:6-8). In other words, all the injustices we endure in this life will ultimately be made right by God (18:6-8; 19:1-3).

Eternal Kingdom. Closely related to the previous two themes is the third, in which Christ again, because of His great love for us, will establish His kingdom. This means a new earth in which relationships with God, each other, and the natural world will once more be in balance (chaps 21-22). This kingdom will be one in which we will live without fear and enjoy the fruits of eternal life. The promised kingdom tells us that human life has a goal and purpose.

The Moral Purpose of Prophecy. The fact that Christ is the center of Revelation brings to light more clearly the very purpose of prophecy. While it is important to understand what the symbols mean, how they fit together, and what implications these have for our understanding of future events, the book of Revelation was not, as has

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been already stated, simply to tell us about last-day events. The prophecies also provide us with an opportunity for spiritual growth.

The apostle Peter provides a clue to explain the ultimate purpose of prophecy (2 Pet 1:19-21). We are told we should pay attention to prophecy “until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” Turning to Revelation 22:16, we find that the Morning Star is none other than Christ Himself. The implications of this are significant. The main objective of prophecy is not to foretell the future, although that is a part of the process, but rather to lead us to Christ and to reproduce His character in our hearts so that we will be like Him and have confidence that He can do what He said He could.¹⁴

This is what may be termed the “moral purpose of prophecy.”¹⁵ In other words, studying and understanding prophecy should lead us to live an ethical life in which permanent character change is not only possible, but is accomplished through the operation of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5-8). The saints, as represented in the apocalyptic prophecy, are moral, ethical people who are like Christ, because they have been changed by Him. They now inherit the kingdom prepared for them because they have God’s name (character) inscribed, as it were, within them, and they can now see Him face to face (22:1-5).

The foundational theme of the book of Revelation is the centrality of Christ. In His love Christ brings redemption, judgment in favor of His people, and the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. These great truths should lead us to character change, because prophecy always has a moral objective. Now that we have a clearer understanding of the basic message of Revelation, let us turn our attention to the second part of our task: to understand the secular culture we are trying to reach.

The Secular Mind

The age that we live in can be characterized as an age of hopelessness and dissatisfaction. For the first time this century children will probably make less money than their parents, bringing with it a probable decrease in standards of living. Education is a given rather than a goal. As such it produces a certain amount of pessimism, since it is not providing the opportunities for financial stability, growth and security it once did.¹⁶

Contemporary society is overwhelmingly self-absorbed. At the same time, however, it exhibits a lack of self-esteem. This may be attributed in part to the media’s portrayal of violence, its lack of morality, and its promotion of promiscuous sex, which results in making the exploitation of men, women, and children appear as the norm for human living. We

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are continually and graphically reminded that if someone stands in our way, we can eliminate him or use him for our own advancement without having to take responsibility for the moral implications of our actions. Consequently, human life is degraded and devalued and means virtually nothing unless we can exploit it to our own advantage.

It should not surprise us, then, that there is a strong feeling of abandonment, alienation, and loneliness in this present generation. Latch key kids, for example, have endured life without family or friends, or have been victims of physical and sexual abuse and other such horrors. These conditions have resulted in a tendency towards agnosticism, cynicism, relativism, and pluralism in secular thinking.¹⁷ It is little wonder that this generation is seeking its own identity in things other than their parents' value systems, value systems which have resulted in problems of abuse and have produced the necessary conditions which actually encourage a pathologically low self-esteem and an uncertainty as to what it means to be human in the contemporary mind. These patterns of thought continue to fuel the search for identity in today's world.

The modern mind (baby boomers)¹⁸ optimistically believed that science had all the answers and lived comfortably in the economic growth and development that it appeared to bring. Post-modern minds (baby busters or the X-generation)¹⁹ have become pessimistically disillusioned with the answers to life's questions that science and scientific method/research have given.

The hopelessness and helplessness of life for secular persons have driven them in several important directions. They have abandoned the idea of universal truths and form their world view by consensus. They reject absolutes, opting for the rightness of the varying decisions made by society. All interpretation for them is really misinterpretation, since each individual is right in what he/she decides to believe.

This generation can be termed post-materialist, because it has discovered that things do not give identity. It emphasizes the spiritual and more human side of life, because life for them means more than the test-tube discoveries of science. There is a continual search for self-esteem, as the X-generation believes the individual is not merely an animal, but a personal being who needs to be in touch with a reality which lies outside and within the self, and in relationship with others.²⁰

The secular mind-set and thinking processes have raised a number of significant questions along the lines of existence, meaning, purpose, and spirituality of human life. These include such queries as, "Is there anything I can believe in?" "Who am I?" "Does it matter who I am?" "If I die, would anyone really miss me or even care?" "Is everyday work to

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make money all there is to life?” “What is the meaning and purpose of life?” “What is its goal?”

These questions touch on the heart of the human quest for personal identity, existence, and survival. These are the questions which must be answered by Christians in order to speak effectively to the secular mind. The answers, however, cannot come in the context of a sterile scientific formula or by an intellectual emphasis upon the meaning of symbolic language, because these are the very things the secular mind rejects as being irrelevant answers to the questions they are asking.

Consequently, their concerns must be answered within the context of a spiritual and ethical emphasis upon character development and the corresponding power to accomplish this development. Sharing from the book of Revelation, we must be cognizant of the deep needs of the secular person. The truth which can change lives permanently and give personal identity must be shared in a manner to meet felt needs.

The secular person must see the relevancy of prophecy for the individual life, and how to live it now. It is not so much the dragons and beasts and other symbols, as important as those are in the whole scheme of preaching Revelation, which are the most critical to share when first working with secular people. Rather, we must show how a person can be changed into a moral person by the power of Christ. The latter will open the door to share the former.

It is the emphasis upon the centrality of Christ and the moral purpose of prophecy in the book of Revelation which provides the key to preaching its truths in today's world. The prophecy does have answers to the questions raised by the secular person.

Revelation: The Answers to the Questions

In attempting to reach the secular mind, we need to exercise an “intentional” patience. This means that we must wait for the right question to be asked. Then we must answer it with the appropriate response from the book of Revelation. The prompter of the right questions is the spirituality and peace which should grace the life of the consistent Christian who lives what he/she believes and teaches. This challenges some of the fundamental presuppositions of the secular mind-set and its inability to find identity. It is the stepping-stone of our own personal story which leads the secular person to the real bridge to destiny: His story or Christ's story. Story telling—relating our own spiritual experience—is the context through which the post-modern person finds identity.

The book of Revelation is more than adequate to deal with the foundational questions raised by the secular person. Those individual

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questions can be grouped into four basic categories: (1) the knowledge of absolute truth; (2) the meaning of/in life; (3) identity; and (4) purpose. These fundamental categories are all touched on by the book of Revelation.

The knowledge of absolute truth is not possible according to the secular mind; hence the question “Is there anything I can believe in?”. The book of Revelation does provide an answer to this question. The description of God as the Alpha and Omega (indicating that He is the beginning and the end, and encompassing everything between, 1:8; 21:6) and the declaration that He is the One who is, was, and is to come (1:8) affirms that there is definitely something and Someone to believe in this world. God is the one who holds the keys of history past, present and future. He commands John to write the things he has seen, because they are to happen shortly. A study of history will confirm the great prophecies given in this book, providing a basis for saying there is absolute truth, because what God says will come true, does come true.

The primary concern of Revelation, however, is not with social and economic conditions, but with the spiritual interpretation of life, one of the primary quests of the contemporary person.²¹ Revelation presents the two acts of God which give meaning to human existence—creation and redemption—with an overwhelming emphasis on the absolute truth of the latter.²²

If God does not exist as Absolute Truth, then we must acknowledge all is lost, and God has abandoned His world to the destructive forces of evil. But God has not done such. In order to cure the problem of evil, however, He must provide a way to stop humankind from endlessly producing the means of their own destruction and release them from the tyranny of demonic forces (see for example, Rev 15-16, 19, 20, 21, 22).²³ And this is precisely the truth that the book of Revelation is attempting to get across. God has limited what evil can do. We can fully believe in this, because He sent His Son to die for us that we might have life.

The Scriptural emphasis upon the creation of the world by a personal, omnipotent God who superintends the cosmos explains the order and design in the universe. It also provides the answer to the question, “Who am I?”²⁴ This creator God, often referred to in Revelation, reminds us that we mean something to Someone. Creation by God gives personal identity over the modern world view which perceives the human being as a biological organism struggling for survival. The book of Revelation reminds us that we are the crowning act of creation and as such, we have intrinsic value.

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The secular world also sees us as the pawns of circumstances, consequently, we have no responsibility for our acts of violence against each other. Persons who stand in our way we crush so that we may make our mark on the world. This leads us to view each other as “things” to be conquered, rather than as human beings with value. Someone is good only as long as we can use them.

But Revelation reminds us that we are ethical beings, initiators of our own actions and fully accountable for their results. Because God treats us as human beings created in His own image, we should treat others the same. People are not to be used or abused so we may get our own way. Rather, they are to be seen as they really are—created by God and valuable no matter what. The truth that Someone cares is illustrated in the Revelation by Christ’s walking among the lampstands, keeping close watch over everything that happens.

Revelation also teaches us that in order to be independent we must be dependent. Autonomy is not a noble characteristic, as held by the secular thinker. We live in connection with each other and with God. Our needs are met by Him; He provides for us. We need not work continually to acquire things which are supposed to give us identity. We are valuable because we are God’s. Humans are the creation of a personal God and made to reflect His character, which is the norm for value and concepts of good and evil. Thus, Revelation’s world view accords great meaning to human existence, great worth to human life, great responsibility for human choice, and great importance to human character.²⁵

Personal identity and purpose in life are interrelated, both needs of which the prophecies of John speak. The former is confirmed by the fact that the Lamb who holds the scroll in His hand is the Lamb who was slain for us from the beginning of the world (5:6-14). Our value cannot be underestimated at this point. Does it matter if we die? For the book of Revelation, the answer is an overwhelming “yes.” Does anyone care? Again, the answer is an overwhelming “yes.” God cared enough not only to die for us but to live for us in heaven. He cared enough to warn us of His approaching judgment so we might be ready. He cared enough to give us the invitation to come into His city (18:1-4; 20:11-15; 22:11-17).

He gives direction to our lives by making us priests in his kingdom with the expressed purpose of sharing His love not only here but also forever (1:5-6). Ultimately, we will go where He goes, and live where He lives. We are here for a purpose, and we must fulfill that purpose. The ultimate goal of life is to see God face to face because we are like Him (22:4). We have become so, not because of who we are, but because of who He is. Such a perspective can give a secular person real hope, hope for something better, hope for permanent change, hope for the future.

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Conclusion

Dragons, beasts, plagues, the mark of the beast, the number 666, and trumpets can be and are relevant to the secular mind and can be shared with evangelistic fervor and power. But it must be done from a felt needs approach which takes into account both the message of the book of Revelation and the cultural milieu of the secular world.

The emphasis should be upon Christ, who is the center of the Revelation. It is He who is in control, who is absolute truth, who provides redemption after creation and who leads us to permanent ethical change. It is Christ who gives us our value, not what we or others think.

We need to return to the emphasis upon the moral purpose of prophecy. Our preaching should not deal primarily with the meaning of every symbol, although that is certainly a part of the message. It should especially deal with the change in ethical behavior which Christ brings to every believer. Studying the prophecies should lead to character formation and not simply intellectual formulation. The approach to reach the secular mind, should not be on the mechanics of prophecy, but on its life-changing message.

Secular persons need to know that there is absolute truth, that they personally are valuable, that it does matter if they die, that Someone does care for them, that there is more to life than being identified by things, and that their lives may have purpose and can make a difference in this world. They need to hear about the spiritual side of life, which in turn promotes an ethical lifestyle. These are all issues which Revelation addresses. And this is the message we must proclaim. Let everyone who is thirsty come and drink freely of the water of life (22:17).

Notes

1 Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), p. 17. Furthermore, Morris reminds us that "More commentaries have surely been written and a greater variety of interpretations published about this book than any other in the canon of Scripture." Hence the book is either greatly sought or greatly feared.

2 Barclay, *The Revelation of John, Vol 1* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 20.

3 G. R. Beasley-Murray, ed, *The Book of Revelation in The New Century Bible*, ed. by Matthew Black (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1974), p. 45.

4 Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 197-199.

5 Barclay, p. 1.

6 Morris, p. 20.

7 A secular or secular-minded person in this study is understood to have a mind-set that has little connection with or understanding of a Christian world view or of Christianity itself.

8 There have been a number of recent works describing this phenomenon. See for example, Thomas Oden, *After Modernity, What?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1993), esp. pp. 13-20 and Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1, Prolegomena* (Unpublished manuscript), pp. 237-305. While the age of modernity might well be called the age of empirical truth, i.e. that absolute truth can only be gained by what one can

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observe in a laboratory, the age of post-modernity might be termed an age of a quest for renewed interpersonal relationships and spiritual fulfillment (Oden, pp. 195-199). Sensing the frustration of ever increasing isolation from human relationships the sterility of technology has produced in its wake, the post-modern world is turning more and more towards introspection, personal spirituality, and interpersonal relationships, marking a return to the key elements which help to make life fulfilling that were eclipsed when science determined the direction of life and world views.

9 Morris, pp. 17-18.

10 Beatrice Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse with Implications for Character Education* (Washington, D.C.: University of America Press, 1983), pp. 203-204. In fact, most missionary training, including language, cultural, historical, religious and world view studies of the culture, is done for the purpose of preparing the missionary to diagnose the ills that afflict it and find in the alien culture hooks to hang the gospel on (ibid.).

11 Tenney, pp. 29, 117.

12 See for example the description of the seven churches in Rev 2-3. Each church's ill finds its remedy in one of the specific characteristics describing Christ in 1:9-20. Again, the second coming of Christ described in Rev 14:14-20 likewise is connected with this first image of Christ as well as the Rider (Christ) on the white horse in Rev 19:11-21. The connecting thread of these examples, then, appears to be Christ as He appears in the initial vision.

13 Tenney, pp. 29-30.

14 See Rom 4:20-21. This is the basic definition of faith. We believe that God has the power to do what He said He could do. This was the kind of faith credited to Abraham as righteousness.

15 This term was coined by Louis Were in his book *The Moral Purpose of Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1981). The moral purpose of prophecy refers to the intent of Bible prophecy (under the Holy Spirit) to bring about changes in the ethical behavior of the reader.

16 Gulley, *Prolegomena*, 301-302.

17 For more information and explanation of the phenomena which characterize the post-modern mind, see Norman Geisler, *The Apologetic Importance of John's Gospel*, James Sire, *Worldviews in Sociological Perspective*, and Norman Gulley, *The Challenge of Postmodernity to Evangelical Theology*, (all these papers are unpublished manuscripts presented at ETS 1996 Southeastern Regional Meetings, March 15-16, University of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama).

18 Baby boomers are the post WW2 children born between 1945 and 1965. They make up one of the largest groups in American society and will become the largest retiree group in the next century. They are now middle-aged and probably one of the most wealthy of all groups.

19 Baby busters, or the X-generation, are those children born between 1961 and 1981. They are those who are just finishing college and entering the work force. They have had all the economic advantages provided by their parents and are most interested in their own identity rather than financial security.

20 See Steve Clinton, "Apologetic Methods and Post-Modernism," an unpublished paper presented at the 1996 ETS Southeast Regional Meetings, March 15-16, University of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama, and Gulley, *Prolegomena*, pp. 242-257.

21 Tenney, p. 23.

22 Neall, p. 203.

23 G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 295-296.

24 Neall, pp. 196-197.

25 Neall, pp. 184, 205-206.

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Judgment as Covenant Review¹

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Chapters seven and eight of the biblical book of Daniel chronicle what could be called the battle of the little big horn. The horn, which represents a human power, is described as “little” because it originates “from (being) a little one” (*mišš^e’irāh*; Dan 8:9). But it grows to become greater than the powers which precede it (Dan 7:20). After stunning expansion on the horizontal, earthly plane, the big “little horn” dares to thrust vertically against heaven itself (Dan 8:9-12).² But the upward-goring colossus of contumacy³ is no match for “the Most High,” who “is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals” (Dan 4:17; cf. vss. 25, 32; 5:21).⁴ The horn’s celestial aspirations are peremptorily perforated by a heavenly judgment (Dan 7:9-14, 22, 26) and a restoration of God’s sanctuary (Dan 8:14; cf. vs. 25), which condemn the horn and break its power.

The apocalyptic vision just described raises a number of important questions, such as the precise identification of the horn power and the relationship between Daniel 7, where the horn arises from the head of a monster resembling a Tyrannosaurus Rex (vss. 7-8), and Daniel 8, where the horn simply sprouts from one of the four winds of heaven (vss. 8-9), i.e. from one of the four directions of the compass.⁵ But the question which I would like to explore here is this: What is the nature of the event in which the little big horn unsuccessfully makes its last stand? It is clear that the eschatological judgment in Daniel 7:9-14 and restoration of the sanctuary in 8:14 solve the problem of the horn. But what, more precisely, is the relationship between the judgment and the sanctuary restoration?

Judgment and Sanctuary Restoration

The divine judgment in Daniel 7 and the restoration of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 are *functionally equivalent* in that they both result in the horn's condemnation and free God's true people from its oppression. Thus the cleansing of the sanctuary functions as a judgment.⁶

In Daniel 7, an awesome judgment results in the condemnation of the "little horn" (vss. 11, 22, 26). But this final conclave also results in justice for the "holy ones of the Most High," and they receive "the kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven" (vs. 27). Thus the judgment is cosmic in scope and settles a dispute between the predatory horn and its prey, the "holy ones" (see vs. 25) over the question of who should have the dominion. The judgment not only condemns the horn; it also delivers the true people of God from oppression.⁷

In Daniel 8, it is the restoration of the sanctuary in verse 14 which addresses the problems caused by the "little horn." These problems, described in verses 10-12 and summarized in verse 13, include the removal of regular worship (*hattāmîd*), the setting up of the desolating sacrilege, damage to the sanctuary, and the trampling of the "host of heaven," i.e. persecution of God's true people by the horn power (cf. vs. 24). Just as the judgment in Daniel 7 involves two parties—the horn and the "holy ones"—so the restoration of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 solves a problem involving the same two parties, resulting in similar justice: The horn is broken (vs. 25) and, by implication, God's people are then freed from its oppression.⁸

Sanctuary Restoration and the Day of Atonement

On the ancient Israelite Day of Atonement (Lev 16), as in Daniel 8:14, restoration of God's sanctuary was connected with the condemnation of those who were disloyal to God and the affirmation of those who were loyal. Thus it appears that *the restoration of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 is the cosmic, eschatological equivalent of the ancient Israelite Day of Atonement.*

Daniel 8:14 is cryptic: "Until two thousand three hundred days (lit. "evening-morning");⁹ then the sanctuary shall be justified" (trans. R. Gane). When the sanctuary is restored in the sense that it is "justified" (*nişdaq*), the "little horn" is "broken, and not by human hands" (Dan 8:25). As mentioned above, the demise of the horn benefits God's people. What kind of restoration of a sanctuary would have these kinds of effects?

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Most scholars interpret the restoration of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 as the purification and rededication (Hanukkah) of the Jerusalem temple in the time of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), who is described by 1 Maccabees 1-6 as desecrating the temple and persecuting the Jewish people.¹⁰ But this view does not do justice to the magnitude of the solution provided by the eschatological restoration of the sanctuary. In Daniel 8, this event not only benefits the sanctuary as a comprehensive remedy to the diabolical depredations of the “little horn”; it results in the downfall of the horn power itself. In the context of the Maccabean hypothesis, this would be roughly equivalent to the toppling of the Seleucid empire by means of the temple restoration which culminated with Hanukkah. The fact that this causal relation did not appear in the Maccabean era supports Jesus’ view that the “desolating sacrilege” of the “little horn” power was to be set up after his time (Matt 24:15; Mk 13:14; cf. Dan 8:11-13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).¹¹

Psalm 79:1 suggests another kind of event which could necessitate the restoration of God’s sanctuary. This verse reads: “O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.” Thus the destruction of Solomon’s temple by the Babylonians, referred to by Ps 79:1, and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans (A.D. 70) would have involved the defilement of these temples located in Jerusalem. In Daniel 8 the former event could not be in view because the “little horn” was still in the future when Daniel saw the vision, and he had the vision after the Babylonians had already destroyed Jerusalem. But the latter event occurred not only after the time of Daniel, but after Jesus’ life on earth (see above). However, in Daniel 8 the restoration of the sanctuary results in the demise of the power which defiled it. The Roman empire is now long gone, and the temple in Jerusalem has not been rebuilt. So it could hardly be said that the restoration of that temple resulted in the decline and fall of the Roman empire.

We have eliminated some potential ancient fulfillments, thereby raising the probability that Daniel 8:14 refers to God’s sanctuary in heaven (see Ps 11:4; Heb 7-10), because no temple of God remains on earth. At this point we can ask again: what kind of restoration of God’s sanctuary would condemn the wicked and affirm the righteous? A viable answer is: a restoration like that which occurred on the ancient Israelite Day of Atonement. The rituals, which were unique to this day (Lev 16), had three major effects:

1. The sanctuary was cleansed from the ritual impurities (pl. of *tum’āh*) and sins of the Israelites (Lev 16:16, 19, 33). The sins belonged to two categories: non-rebellious sins (pl. of *ḥaṭṭāt*) had been left at the

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sanctuary when they were removed from repentant Israelites who brought sacrifices during the year (cf. e.g. Lev 4:26,31,35).¹² Rebellious sins (pl. of *pešaʿ*) had reached the sanctuary automatically when the sins occurred (cf. Lev 20:3; Num 19:13, 20).

2. Faithful Israelites who had brought sacrifices for sin during the year and who obeyed God's commands to practice self-denial and to abstain from work on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29) received final cleansing (Lev 16:30) from sins for which they had already gained forgiveness during the year (cf. Lev 4:26, 31, 35).¹³ The cleansing of the sanctuary cleansed them because their sins no longer defiled the sanctuary¹⁴ and their atonement, i.e. reconciliation to God, was now complete.

3. Unfaithful Israelites who showed their disloyalty by disobeying God's commands to practice self-denial and to abstain from work on the great Day were sentenced to divinely inflicted extirpation¹⁵ and destruction, respectively (Lev 23:29, 30). Persons who had failed to have the proper remedies for sins or ritual impurities applied to them during the year or who had committed rebellious, "high-handed" sins for which no sacrificial atonement was available were already condemned before the Day of Atonement (Lev 5:1; Lev 20:3; Num 15:30-31; 19:13, 20). Even though rebellious sins affected the sanctuary and had to be removed from it, those who committed them received no benefit from this cleansing. Leviticus 16:30 refers to Israelites receiving cleansing only from non-rebellious sins (pl. of *ḥaṭṭāṭ*).

The rituals of the Day of Atonement which cleansed the sanctuary benefited the loyal people of God and condemned those who rebelled against him. Thus it is clear that this was a judgment event, as recognized by rabbinic tradition.¹⁶ This event is paralleled by the eschatological restoration of the sanctuary predicted in Daniel 8:14.¹⁷ The fact that the ancient Day of Atonement cleansing was a judgment event correlates with the fact that the justification of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 functions as a judgment which parallels the judgment in Daniel 7.

The parallel between the ancient Day of Atonement and its end-time counterpart must be qualified. The yearly Day of Atonement brought reconciliation between the Israelites and their deity to an awesome high, but the restoration of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 is in another league. It is not simply a ceremonial day officiated by an Israelite high priest; it is a one-time eschatological climax to a cosmic struggle over lordship and worship.

Sanctuary Defilements as Metaphors

Defilements which must be removed from a sanctuary are *metaphors for responsibility* which God assumes when he forgives guilty people, purifies those who have been impure, and permits rebellious individuals to dwell among his true people until they are judged.

The parallel shown above between the Daniel 8:14 restoration of the sanctuary and the Day of Atonement cleansing raises some potentially productive questions which we will deal with in order:

1. Why does Daniel 8:14 refer to justifying (root *šdq*) the sanctuary rather than atoning (root *kpr*; Lev 16:16-18, 20, 27, 32-33) for it, i.e. purging it, or cleansing (root *ṭhr*; vs. 19; cf. vs. 30) it, as in Leviticus 16?

2. Why do sins of repentant people defile the sanctuary when they are forgiven?

3. Why do sins of rebellious individuals who belong to the nominal people of God defile the sanctuary in a manner which short-circuits the sacrificial process set up by God?

The semantic range of the root *šdq*, “justify,” which appears in the Niphal verb in Daniel 8:14, overlaps with that of the root *kpr*, “atone” (Lev 16), as shown by the synonymous parallelism in Daniel 9:24: “to make atonement (*kpr*) for iniquity, to bring everlasting righteousness (*šdq*).”¹⁸ A similar relationship exists between *šdq* and *ṭhr*, as shown by Job 4:17, where the words from these roots are functional equivalents in synonymous parallelism:

Can mortals be righteous (root *šdq*) before God?
Can human beings be pure (root *ṭhr*) before their Maker?

The question is: can a person be morally vindicated before God? Thus the concepts of justness/righteousness and purity overlap¹⁹ in the area of vindication, which is a legal concept.

Since the atonement/cleansing of the Israelite sanctuary removed abstract evils rather than mere physical dirtiness, and since this cleansing functioned as a kind of judgment (see above), “cleansing” in Leviticus 16 appears to be a metaphor for “vindication.” If so, Daniel 8:14 would simply refer to the same kind of vindication in a more overtly legal way, using the verb *šdq*, “justify.” This possibility is confirmed by the answer to our second question.

Confessed Sins Defiled. In Israel, sins of repentant people defiled the sanctuary when they were forgiven, and the sanctuary had to be cleansed from these defilements on the Day of Atonement. What are these defilements, and why did they have to be cleansed from the sanctuary? The key to unpacking the metaphors of defilement and

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cleansing is found by comparison with a narrative passage which employs another term for vindication: *nāqî*, which means “clean.”

In 2 Samuel 14, a wise woman of Tekoa appealed to David to save her son from the capital punishment which he deserved for murdering his brother. When David hesitated to overrule Israelite law administered by clan justice (2 Sam 14:7, 11; cf. Num 35:16-21), the woman offered: “The blame *‘āwōn*)²⁰ is on me, my lord the king, and on my father’s house, but the king and his throne are clean” (vs. 9; tran.. R. Gane). *The woman understood that if David as judge pardoned a murderer who was condemned by Israelite law to capital punishment* (Exod 21:12; Lev 24:17; cf. Gen 9:6), *he would take moral responsibility upon himself.*²¹ *A judge is morally responsible to society and to God for his judgments.*²² *But the woman offered to bear the blame so that the king and his throne could be legally “clean” (*nāqî*), i.e. vindicated, free from blame with regard to the case.*²³ The “throne” here refers to the authority and justice which the king represented, the integrity of which was essential for holding the nation together.²⁴

Although the woman’s story was a juridical parable designed to influence David’s treatment of Absalom (see 2 Sam 14:1-3), David thought he was judging a real case and his interaction with the woman reflects real-life dynamics of justice and mercy.²⁵ Now compare Daniel 8:14: “Unto two thousand three hundred days (lit. “evening-morning”), then shall the sanctuary be justified” (trans. R. Gane). Since God’s throne is at his sanctuary (Jer 17:12), the sanctuary here represents the equivalent of David’s “throne” in 2 Samuel 14:9: God’s authority and justice.²⁶ Just as David and his justice needed to be legally “clean” (*nāqî*; 2 Sam 14:9), so God’s justice, represented by his sanctuary, must be “justified” (*niṭdaq*; Dan 8:14). To reinforce the fact that the Hebrew roots used in 2 Samuel 14:9 and Daniel 8:14 are functionally synonymous in legal contexts, compare Exod 23:7: “Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent (*nāqî*) and those in the right (*ṣadîq*), for I will not acquit (*‘aṣdîq*) the guilty.”

So in Daniel 8:14, God’s justice must be justified. Justified from what? In 2 Samuel 14, forgiveness of a guilty person would have sullied David’s reputation as a just and righteous judge if the woman had not taken the blame herself. Similarly, God and his sanctuary would need justification not only as a result of the defaming depredations of the “little horn” (Dan 7-8),²⁷ but also because God forgives guilty people (cf. Exod 34:7), calls them “holy ones of the Most High,” and gives them the dominion of this world (Dan 7:22,27). God has no woman of Tekoa to take the blame. He must bear the blame for forgiveness himself.

Now we can begin to understand in what sense the sins of the Israelites defiled the ancient sanctuary when they were forgiven. It was

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a matter of theodicy. When a person sinned, he/she bore the blame himself/herself (Lev 5:1) until or unless he/she brought an offering to atone for that sin, at which time the blame (*ʿawōn*) was taken by God when he showed mercy by granting forgiveness (Exod 34:7). To reinforce the idea that God takes blame when he forgives, the Israelite priests as God's agents had blame (*ʿawōn*) transferred to them when they ate the meat of purification offerings which atoned for the people (Lev 10:17). Since God took blame when he extended mercy, his justice was called into question. This effect on God was represented as defilement.

Rebellious Sinners. In ancient Israel, there was another way in which God's justice could be called into question: If he allowed rebellious individuals to go unpunished and continue to enjoy the blessings that came with belonging to his chosen people.²⁸ Thus the Psalmist was distressed by the unchecked prosperity of the wicked (Ps 73:2-9), whose ease contrasted with the difficulty which he experienced even though he was innocent (vss. 12-14). The wicked, like the Danielic "little horn," "set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues range over the earth" (vs. 9; cf. Dan 7:8, 11, 20, 25), raising the question: "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" (vs. 11). The Psalmist says he struggled to understand "until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end" (vs. 17). The sanctuary is the locus of theodicy.

The Day of Atonement dealt with the problem of doubt regarding God's justice by accomplishing two things:

1. It ensured that those who had already been forgiven were sincere in their loyalty to God, as shown by their obedience in practicing self-denial and abstaining from work, thereby humbling themselves before God and putting aside all other activities.

2. It sentenced those who were disloyal to divine punishment by which they would be cut off from the Israelite community.

The Day of Atonement vindicated God's justice, as represented by the cleansing of the sanctuary, and ensured that the Israelite community would be pure in that it would consist entirely of loyal Israelites. God's character and the moral state of his people in relation to himself were interdependent.²⁹

Since Daniel 8:14 uses the term *šdq*, "justify," it keys in to the concept of theodicy more transparently than does Leviticus, which employs ritual metaphorical expressions of defilement and cleansing. However, once the connection between Daniel 8 and Leviticus is grasped, Leviticus provides rich detail regarding the function of divine mercy and justice within a covenant community.

Judgment as Covenant Review

In Daniel 7-8 the “little horn” and the “holy ones” are judged on the basis of their relationship with God. The issues involved in this judgment are clarified by comparison with the Day of Atonement, during which the high priest approached the Shekinah enthroned over the ark of the covenant (Lev 16:12-16; cf. Exod 25:22; 2 Ki 19:15). The Day of Atonement rituals played a vital role in maintaining the covenant between God and the Israelites because it made possible God’s continued presence among them in his sanctuary despite their faultiness (see Lev 16:16). The importance of God’s presence for the covenant is indicated by Moses’ petition for restoration of that presence following the golden calf episode (Exod 33:12-16). For Moses, full restoration of the covenant necessarily included the divine presence.

Leviticus does not say what would happen to the Israelites if the Day of Atonement cleansing should be neglected. However, Ezekiel graphically depicts YHWH’s withdrawal from his temple when the accumulated sins of the people became too great (Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23).³⁰ When the temple was abandoned by God, it was soon destroyed, along with Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. The nation could not survive without God’s presence, and God’s presence would not remain forever if the people failed to be separated from their sins.

In light of the evidence presented thus far, it is clear that the Day of Atonement functioned as a judgment which reviewed and renewed the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites. This yearly covenant review was necessary for the divine-human relationship to continue.³¹

Cleansing the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement involved review of human works which indicated loyalty or disloyalty to God and to his law, which governed covenant relationships with him. Similarly, human works are relevant in the awesome judgment convened before the “Ancient of Days,” in which books are opened (Dan 7:10). Since this investigation results in the horn’s condemnation (vss. 11, 22, 26), the scope of the investigation must include review of the evil works of the horn. But because the *result* of the judgment affects two parties—the horn and the holy ones—the possibility is raised that the *investigation* of the judgment could consider the works of the “holy ones” as well as the works of the horn.³² It is true, of course, that condemnation of the horn resulting from review of its works would benefit the oppressed “holy ones” even if their works are not investigated. But the fact that the “holy ones” can be identified as such and judged worthy to receive the dominion suggests that their works are relevant in the judgment.

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What kind of works pertaining to the “holy ones” would be relevant in the judgment? As we have seen, the Daniel 7 judgment parallels the Daniel 8 restoration of the sanctuary, which parallels the ancient Day of Atonement. On this day, two kinds of works of the faithful were relevant:

1. Works of repentance through sacrifices which they had brought during the year. Israelites who had not gained forgiveness through sacrifice during the year remained culpable (see Lev 5:1) and could not receive cleansing on the Day of Atonement.

2. Works of continuing loyalty by humbling themselves and keeping Sabbath on the Day of Atonement.

The question on the Day of Atonement was not whether the Israelites had ever sinned. All have sinned (cf. Rom 3:23), and distinctions between people cannot be made on this basis. The question was whether they had accepted the provision for forgiveness which God offered them through sacrifice and whether they continued to be rehabilitated in their loyalty to him.³³

Pardon is a valuable gift, but without transformation of attitude and ongoing reconciliation to God, as demonstrated by obedience to him, it is ultimately useless. This is illustrated by the tragic rebellion of Absalom after David freed him from the threat of punishment in response to the appeal of the woman of Tekoa.

Solomon seems to have learned from his father’s experience with Absalom. When Solomon became king after his brother Adonijah had attempted to take the throne, Adonijah begged for mercy (1 Ki 1:51). Solomon sent a message in reply: “If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die” (vs. 52). Thus, Solomon granted mercy, but in order to maintain his forgiven state, Adonijah had to continue the attitude of submission in which he was forgiven. When he failed in this regard, Solomon ordered his immediate execution (vss. 23-25). So Adonijah lost his pardon by breaking its condition. Shimei, who had cursed David (2 Sam 16:5-13), met a similar fate when he broke the condition which Solomon laid on him (1 Kgs 2:36-46; cf. vss. 8-9).

Forgiveness Involves Moral Change. The New Testament refers to the need for change following forgiveness. Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery: “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again” (Jn 8:11). He also told a parable about an unjust steward who was forgiven but repudiated his pardon when he failed to extend forgiveness to his fellow servant (Matt 18:23-34). According to Jesus, forgiveness which involves no moral change and which cannot reproduce itself for the benefit of others is not true forgiveness of the kind which God gives.

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According to the New Testament, human beings are not left on their own to change themselves. Because Christ gives peace with God (Rom 5:1), his love, the basic attitude of his law, is poured into human hearts through his Spirit (Rom 5:5; cf. Matt 22:36-40). Thus on-going obedience is regarded as a gift of grace bought by the blood of Christ and received through faith. Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph 2:8). The relevance of works in judgment (cf. Eccl 12:14) does not contradict this, because true faith necessarily produces good works (James 2:26; Gal 5:6). Thus, works demonstrate the genuineness of faith.

For those who are forgiven and remain reconciled, judgment reaffirms assurance; it does not take it away. On the Day of Atonement the Israelite high priest did not cleanse the sanctuary by wiping off bloodstains from earlier sacrifices; rather, he placed more blood (Lev 16:14-19) in several of the same places (cf. Lev 4:6-7, 17-18, 25, 30, 34), reaffirming the forgiveness already granted through blood.

The “Little Horn.” The idea that the Day of Atonement judged the covenant community (see Lev 16:16, 19) raises a question: If the eschatological judgment portrayed in Daniel 7 and 8 functions like the Day of Atonement, how does the “little horn” come under the scope of such a covenant review?

It is possible that the “little horn” is an apostate power which would once have been faithful to God but subsequently fell away, just as individuals who belonged to the Israelite community but rebelled were judged and condemned (see above). Alternatively, the horn could come under the umbrella of the covenant simply because it makes a hypocritical profession of faith.³⁴ Such a conclusion could be reached through identification of the entity to which the horn symbol refers. But even without such identification there is enough evidence in Daniel 7-8 to show that the horn is involved in matters pertaining to God’s covenant.

The horn appears as an intruder who attempts a corporate takeover of the covenant and the blessings that go with it. In Daniel 7:26-27, judgment by the heavenly court results in the dominion of the horn being taken away from it and given to the “holy ones of the Most High.” It is clear that God gives them the dominion because they are his people. “The meek shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5; cf. Ps 37:11) for the same reason that Canaan was promised to Abraham: because they have a covenant relationship with him. The fact that the “little horn” tries to take the dominion of this earth indicates that it attempts to usurp the covenant blessings.

Although the horn uses coercive force against the “holy ones” (Dan 7:25; 8:24), it is not simply another wicked political/military power like

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the previous human powers depicted in Daniel 7 and 8. Its ambitions transcend the sphere of secular politics, as shown by Daniel 7:25, where the horn “shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law (*zimmîn wedāt*),” i.e. God’s covenant law and worship. In Daniel 8:11-13, the horn takes away “the regularity” (*hattāmîd*), i.e. regular worship of God by those who are in a covenant relationship with him, and sets up in its place a “desolating sacrilege.” Thus the horn attempts to replace God’s covenant system of worship with an alternative.

That the activity of the “little horn” would affect God’s sanctuary and thereby bring it within the scope of the eschatological judgment is indicated by comparison with Leviticus 20:1-3, in which the ancient Israelite sanctuary was defiled when an Israelite or a resident alien who came to dwell within the borders of the land of Israel participated in the foreign cult of Molech worship in place of legitimate worship of YHWH. Defilement of the sanctuary was more severe, of course, if foreign cult objects interfering with true worship were introduced into the sanctuary itself, as occurred in the times of King Manasseh (2 Ki 21:7) and Ezekiel (Ezek 8). Similarly, the divine sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:14 would be defiled when the “little horn” interfered with the covenant by causing people to participate in worship involving the “desolating sacrilege” instead of the regular worship of YHWH (vss. 11-13).

In Daniel 8:12, 13, the attack on God’s antitypical worship system by the “little horn” power is called *pešaʿ*, “transgression,” the same term for rebellious sin which appears in the context of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:16, 21). The “little horn” is particularly guilty because it does not merely disregard part of God’s sacrificial system (cf. Num 19:13, 20) and participate in an alternate system (cf. Lev 20:3); it removes part of God’s system, i.e. the “regularity” (so-called “daily”), and sets up an alternate system (Dan 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11). Thus the horn would come under the jurisdiction of a court which reviews covenant status.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the judgment of Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 represent complementary aspects of the same event, in which God will make a final review of his covenant connection with human beings, reaffirming his true followers and rejecting an oppressive usurper. This event is the cosmic, eschatological equivalent of the ancient Day of Atonement, which not only condemned rebellious individuals, but reaffirmed the forgiveness of those who had shown their repentance through sacrifice. In the end-time judgment, as

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on the Day of Atonement, God is shown to be just even when he grants mercy to those whom he forgives.

Notes

¹Much of the research for this paper is part of a larger project moving toward publication in the form of a book tentatively entitled, *The Day of Atonement and Theodicy*

²See W Shea, "Spatial Dimensions in the Vision of Daniel 8," in F. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel* (Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 2:507-519.

³Cp the Hurrian myth of Ullikummi, in which the deity Kumarbi attempts to remove Tessub as king of the gods by impregnating a rock, which gives birth to a basalt stone called Ullikummi. This stone grows up like a colossal shaft into the sky in order to threaten Tessub. The gods contemplate the possibility of cutting off Ullikummi at his base with a copper cutting tool (cf. Dan 8:25—"But he shall be broken, and not by human hands"), but we do not know the conclusion of the titanic struggle because the end of the text is broken away. See H. Hoffner, Jr., transl. and G. Beckman, ed., *Hittite Myths* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 52-61.

⁴New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is cited in Scripture references.

⁵See W Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, rev. ed., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 1:50-52.

⁶On the functional equivalence of these events within the structure of Daniel 7-8, see J Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews Univ. Press, 1987), 29-30.

⁷Compare the book of Judges, in which God provided justice for his repentant people by defeating foreign oppressors See R. Gane, *God's Faulty Heroes* Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996, 37.

⁸Cf Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 149.

⁹For the idea that evenings and mornings comprise days, see Gen 1 Cf. S. Schwantes, "Ereb Böqer of Daniel 8:14 Re-Examined," in F. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel*, 462-474.

¹⁰See eg. L. Hartman and A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible Series, (New York: Doubleday, 1978).

¹¹For other problems with the Maccabean hypothesis, see Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 31-66 Additional evidence against the Maccabean view is found by comparing Daniel 2 and 7 with the Akkadian "Dynastic Prophecy," published by A.K. Grayson (*Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1975], pp. 24-37). This text shows the Babylonian perception of the empires which ruled that area: Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Macedonia. As I pointed out in a paper entitled "Akkadian *Ex Eventu* Prophecies and the Genre 'Apocalypse'" (Society of Biblical Literature, national meeting, Anaheim, 1989), if J. Montgomery is correct that Dan 1-6 are of Babylonian provenance (*The Book of Daniel* [International Critical Commentary series, New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1927; repr. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979], p. 90), we would expect these chapters to share the same perception of the empires which ruled Babylonia. Thus, starting with Babylon, the four empires in Dan 2 would be: Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, and "X" (unnamed). The same would be true in Dan 7, where the four empires parallel those of Dan 2. Since the "little horn" in Dan 7 originates from the fourth empire (vss. 7-8), it must come from the unnamed empire which follows the Seleucid Macedonian empire. Therefore the "little horn" cannot be the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

¹²Detailed discussion of this dynamic and the terminology which indicates it will appear in my book on the Day of Atonement and theodicy

¹³On the two phases of atonement, see R Gane, "Ritual Dynamic Structure: Systems Theory and Ritual Syntax Applied to Selected Ancient Israelite, Babylonian and Hittite Festival Days," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Berkeley (1992), 172-176; see also R. Gane, "Ritual Dynamic Structure in the Ancient Israelite 'Day of Purgations,'" paper presented at the Adventist Theological Society/Evangelical Theological Society national meeting, Washington, D.C., 1993, and subsequently published in microform by the Theological Research Exchange Network.

¹⁴See J Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible series, (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1056; R. Davidson, The Good News of Yom Kippur, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2 (1991), 6-7.

¹⁵On the divine penalty expressed by the verb *krt* as the extirpation of a person's line of descendants, see D Wold, "The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty *Kareth*," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California at Berkeley, 1978.

¹⁶According to *Mishnah* Roš Haššanah 1:1-2 (cp *Babylonian Talmud* Ros° Has°s°anah 16b), the Day of Atonement on Tishri 10 was a day of judgment, but judgment also took place at other times,

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including especially the “new year” of the first day of Tishri (so-called “feast of trumpets”; Lev 23:23-25). But although the *šerū’ah*, “(trumpet) blast,” of Tishri 1 most likely acclaimed YHWH as king (cf. Num 23:21) and therefore announced the coming of his judgment, there is no biblical evidence that judgment actually began until the Day of Atonement.

¹⁷That Daniel 8:14 refers to an event like the Day of Atonement has been recognized since antiquity. The Septuagint translates *nišdaq*, “shall be justified,” in Daniel 8:14 as *katharisthēsetai*, “shall be cleansed,” thereby alluding to the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. For a discussion of this LXX rendering, see N.-E. Andreasen, “Translation of *Nišdaq/Katharisthēsetai* in Daniel 8:14,” in F. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel*, 475-496. Rashi begins his comment on Daniel 8:14 by using Day of Atonement language: “The iniquity of Israel will be atoned for ...” Jacques Doukhan has discussed a number of factors in Daniel 8 which point to the Day of Atonement, including the fact that Daniel 8 uses the imagery of a ram and a goat (vss. 3-8), the same kinds of animals used for sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:5-6; Doukhan, 25-30).

¹⁸Doukhan, 29

¹⁹On the overlapping semantic ranges in Jb 4:17, see Andreasen, 483-485

²⁰For the idea that *‘awōn* in this kind of context refers to culpability cp Gen 4:13; 19:15; Lev 5:1; Num 14:34; See F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 731. Cf. B. Schwartz, “The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. Wright, D. N. Freedman and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 10-15.

²¹J Hoffjizer describes this as the usual interpretation (referring to Keil, Klostermann, Thenius-Löhr, Budde, Dhorme, Schulz, Hertzberg, de Groot, etc.) and then unconvincingly argues against it, concluding that the woman of Tekoa, like Abigail (1 Sam 25:24), acknowledged her inferior status by confessing guilt in order to plead for forgiveness for a guilty relative (“David and the Tekoite Woman,” *Vetus Testamentum* 20 [1970], 424-428). This idea may work in the case of Abigail, when she pleaded with David to refrain from seeking vengeance on Nabal. But the woman of Tekoa clearly contrasted her blame with David’s cleanness, i.e. lack of culpability (2 Sam 14:9). Because she would bear it, he would not. This implies that if she did not bear it, he would. As recognized by the usual interpretation, the potential for David to bear this blame could only arise from his involvement in the case as judge. Another unconvincing departure from the usual interpretation is that of McCarter, who finds vs. 9 to be “isolated and disruptive in its present location” and says that David simply ignored the words of the woman recorded in this verse (McCarter, 347). H. McKeating raises the possibility that the woman’s appeal to David may have been to ensure that the law should be applied normally in view of a threat by the clan to apply it over-rigorously (“The Development of the Law on Homicide in Ancient Israel,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25 [1975], 50-52). However, the evidence in 2 Sam 14 indicates that the woman was pleading for leniency instead of the normal legal consequences.

²²E Bellefontaine, “Customary Law and Chieftainship: Judicial Aspects of 2 Samuel 14.4-21,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 38 (1987), 62.

²³See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 667

²⁴Contrast Judg 21:25

²⁵See U Simon, “The Poor Man’s Ewe-Lamb: An Example of a Juridical Parable,” *Biblica* 48 (1967), 220-221.

²⁶Compare the way we speak of “the White House,” referring to the US. presidency and its reputation.

²⁷Cp Lev 20:3 and Num 19:13,20, which warn that wanton sins of Israelites or resident aliens living in the land of Israel automatically defile the Israelite sanctuary.

²⁸There are two basic differences between this kind of case and that which involves forgiveness:

(1) Whereas forgiveness is a definite act, simply allowing the guilty to go unpunished would be a kind of negligence

(2) People who receive forgiveness admit their mistakes and desire reconciliation. They can be rehabilitated as loyal citizens. Rebellious individuals, on the other hand, try to get away with their faults without admitting them so that they can continue their disloyal course of action.

²⁹Cp J. Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly ‘Picture of Dorian Gray,’” *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976), 390-399 (see now *Leviticus 1-16*, 254-261) in which Milgrom argues that in the priestly theodicy expressed by purification offerings, the state of the sanctuary (defiled or pure) reflected the state of the Israelites. I agree that we are dealing with theodicy here and that the state of the Israelites interacted with that of the sanctuary. However, unlike Milgrom, I do not apply the automatic dynamic of defilement (Lev 20:3; Num 19:13, 20) to expiable cases because this dynamic is only attested in those cases (same vss.) of wanton sin for which the penalty was extirpation and no sacrificial expiation was available.

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³⁰See G Hasel, "Studies in Biblical Atonement II: The Day of Atonement," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. A. Wallenkampf (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald, 1981), 119; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 258; B. Schwartz "The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. Wright, D. N. Freedman and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 21.

The idea that YHWH could abandon his people was paralleled outside Israel. For example, the Moabite stone refers to the god Chemosh becoming angry with the Moabites so that he allowed them to be dominated by the Israelites (J. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 320.

³¹Psalms 50 also connects the ideas of judgment and covenant. In this Psalm, God's judgment is depicted as a theophany (vss. 1-4). He promises to deliver his faithful people (vss. 15, 23), who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice (vs. 5). However, he rejects those who take his covenant on their lips (vs. 16) but cast his words behind them (vs. 17) by keeping company with thieves and adulterers, speaking evil and slandering (vss. 18-20). Here, as on the Day of Atonement, God differentiates between faithful and merely nominal members of the covenant community on the basis of faithfulness to him and to his commands.

³²Cf Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 149.

³³As a yearly review of divine-human relationships, the Day of Atonement was not unique in the ancient Near East. On the fifth day of the Babylonian new year festival of spring (Aki-tu festival), after the Esagila temple and the Ezida cella were purged of demonic impurities, the king approached (the image of) Marduk in the Esagila without his crown and royal insignia. The high priest humiliated the king before Marduk by striking his cheek, pulling him by the ears and making him kneel down to the ground. The king affirmed his righteousness by intoning the words:

I did [not] sin, lord of the countries. I was not neglectful (of the requirements) of your godship. [I did not] destroy Babylon; I did not command its overthrow [I did not . . .] the temple Esagil, I did not forget its rites. [I did not] rain blows on the cheek of a subordinate . . . I did [not] humiliate them. [I watched out] for Babylon; I did not smash its walls . . . (Pritchard, ed., 334).

After this speech, the high priest expressed the favor of Marduk toward him, following which the king received his crown and insignia and was struck again by the high priest to make tears flow as an omen of Marduk's favor. For similarities and differences between this ritual and the Israelite Day of Atonement, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1068-1069; R. Gane, "Schedules for Deities: Macrostructure of Israelite, Babylonian, and Hittite Sancta Purification Days," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, forthcoming. For analysis of all rituals of the fifth day of this Babylonian festival, see Gane, "Ritual Dynamic Structure . . .," 229-275. Another parallel which in some ways is even more striking is found in the earlier Sumerian Nanshe Hymn, dated from about 2000 B.C., which describes a New Year celebration in which contracts of persons employed by the temple of Nanshe were reviewed in terms of their ritual and ethical behavior during the previous year and their presence at the temple on the New Year (W. Heimpel, "The Nanshe Hymn," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 33 [1981], 65-119). As in Israel on the Day of Atonement, the status of persons within the divinely benefited community was judged on the basis of loyalty which they demonstrated toward a deity and his/her personal moral standards. While the Babylonian and Sumerian events were similar to the Day of Atonement in several respects, neither of them included consideration of forgiveness earlier received. This element seems to be unique to the Israelite Day of Atonement, which correlates with the fact that among ancient Near Eastern rituals, only in Israelite sacrifices was blood applied to the sanctuary/temple as part of an atonement process.

³⁴Cp Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 144-146.

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History and Eschatology in the Book of Daniel

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Daniel is something of a bipolar book. Its first six chapters cluster around the history of the Neo-Babylonian empire and the early Persian rule in Babylon. The last six chapters of the book give an apocalyptic outline that ends with the great eschatological climax. Thus it is appropriate to examine both subjects in a survey of Daniel. That makes our approach here threefold. First, history on its own terms, then the link between history and eschatology, and finally, eschatology on its own terms.

Historical Survey

I begin this study with a brief review of the present status of the historical chapters with regard to their historicity when evaluated by extra-biblical documents.

The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Year of Jehoiakim. The two major historical problems in Daniel 1 were resolved with the publication of the first 13 years of Nebuchadnezzar's Chronicles by D. J. Wiseman in 1956. The last half of the entry for the year 605 states, "at that time Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole of_Hatti-country". The designation Hatti or Hittite country includes all of Syria and Palestine. Even the Philistine city of Ashkelon was located in that region. In 597 Nebuchadnezzar marched to Hatti land and attacked "the city of Judah," i.e., Jerusalem. Thus the kingdom of Judah was included in all of the territory conquered in 605. Jehoiakim's third year, the date given for this conquest in Daniel 1:1, can be reconciled with this date by interpreting it according to the standard Judahite practices of accession year reckoning and their fall to fall calendar.

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The Plain of Dura. Even though we do not have an extra-biblical text which refers directly to the events that took place on the Plain of Dura according to Daniel 3, extra-biblical information has given us a better understanding of the background of that event.

The geographical location has been identified by noting that the Babylonian word for "wall" is dur. An Aramaic article has been added to this word to make it Dura. We do not need to locate a city, river or canal called Dura, for the "plain of the wall" is located right at Babylon itself. Old Babylon was enclosed by a wall about a mile square. Nebuchadnezzar added to this a new eastern quarter that was enclosed by a wall six or seven miles long. The area enclosed between these two walls was only partly built up, and a lot of it was still open space. That is where the great image was erected, in this plain of the wall. It probably was a statue of Marduk, the god of Babylon, rather than of Nebuchadnezzar. On that basis one may suggest approximately where it was located. All of the gates of Babylon were named for gods, and the Marduk gate was located in the middle of the east side of the inner city. The officials listed in Daniel 3 would thus have proceeded out through that gate and stood before the great image that faced west towards that gate. Why would it face west? Because that was where his temple was located, along with his great temple tower or ziggurat. The height of this image has been ridiculed by critics, but in actuality it almost shrinks into insignificance when its 60 cubits or 90 feet are compared with the 300 foot elevation of his temple tower.

Seven Years of Madness. As for Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of insanity, recorded in Daniel 4, there may possibly have been a cuneiform text which recorded it, but unfortunately it is so badly damaged that the connection is not entirely clear. A few years ago A. K. Grayson of the University of Toronto published a text from the British Museum that describes some very strange actions of Nebuchadnezzar. The text says that he paid no attention to the temples of Babylon or even the members of his own family. He went off to some place that is not described in the legible portions of the text. That meant his son Amel-Marduk, the biblical Evil Merodach, had to take over the reins of government. Eventually Nebuchadnezzar came back to the city and lifted up his hands in prayer to his god when he entered the great Ishtar gate. There is a rule of cuneiform studies that the tablet is always broken at the climax of the story, and sad to say, this interesting text that might be related to Daniel 4 follows that rule. Perhaps some day a duplicate of this text may be found that is not so badly damaged.

Belshazzar and Nabonidus. The illumination of Daniel five has taken four progressive steps, each one confirming ever more securely

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the historicity of the narrative about the fall of Babylon and Belshazzar. Knowledge of Belshazzar as a ruler in antiquity was not preserved by the Greek or Roman historians, so prior to 1861 Daniel was the only primary source from antiquity that referred to him. In that year the first text mentioning Belshazzar was published. Since that time there has been a slow but steady publication of a modest corpus mentioning him.

The second step in this line was taken by Sidney Smith in 1924, when he published the text known as the Verse Account of Nabonidus. It mentions that when Nabonidus went off to spend a prolonged time at Tema in Arabia, he "entrusted the kingship" to Belshazzar. The third step came when C. J. Gadd published the Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus, which mentioned that the senior king spent ten years living in Arabia. Daniel obviously knew of this prolonged absence, since he dated two of his prophecies to the first and third years of Belshazzar.

The fourth and final step in connecting Daniel 5 with Babylonian history was taken when it was noted how close the correlation is between this chapter and the Nabonidus Chronicle that describes the fall of Babylon. If Nabonidus was in the city that night he should have put in an appearance at the banquet, but he is never mentioned there. The Chronicle tells us where he was. He was out in the field fighting Cyrus' other division near the Tigris River. Thus Daniel says that Belshazzar, one coregent with one division of the army, was in the city the night that it fell, while the Chronicle says that Nabonidus, the senior coregent, was out in the field with the other division of his army. The fit is perfect and could only have been known by a contemporary in the 6th century B. C. Any pseudo-Daniel writing in the 2nd century B. C. would never have known details this precise, since they were not preserved in any other source.

Darius the Mede. The final historical chapter in Daniel is chapter 6. It describes the early Persian period in Babylon that involves the obscure ruler named Darius the Mede. His name appears to be a Babylonian throne name for Ugbaru, the general who conquered Babylon for Cyrus. He ruled there briefly and the Nabonidus Chronicle notes, in harmony with Daniel, that he installed governors in Babylon, an action taken by Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel. I have spilled entirely too much ink over this character and what we still lack is a contemporary text identifying him in that post more specifically.

We can summarize this overview of the historical chapters of Daniel by stating that with each discovery of historical documents from the Neo-Babylonian period, more illumination has been shed upon the historical chapters of Daniel, confirming their historicity in so far as they address events that are mentioned in Daniel

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Inaccurate History and Unreal Eschatology

One reason for emphasizing the historicity of the historical chapters of Daniel is to link them with a very real eschatology. If the history of Daniel is accurate, then its eschatology should be real, too. If the history in Daniel is inaccurate, then there are not sound grounds for accepting its eschatology. This is demonstrated clearly in the recent *Hermenia* commentary on Daniel by J. J. Collins. He makes a great effort to invalidate the historical chapters of Daniel because of his adoption of the Maccabean hypothesis. This leads him in the wrong direction for eschatology. One example is his interpretation of the stone kingdom in Daniel 2, on p. 171 of his commentary.

First, he mentions that Josephus avoided identifying the stone for fear of offending his Roman readers. Second, he mentions that Jerome identified the stone as Christ with his not being cut out with hands referring to the virgin birth. He cites Jerome to the effect that Porphyry identified the stone as the Jewish people. The messianic interpretation is also found in the writings of the Rabbis, he observes. NT writers apply the image of the stone to Christ. Others have applied it to the Church. Those are all of the interpretations that Collins mentions. He does not tell us which one he prefers, probably because he does not accept any of them, taking this instead as a misguided application to the destruction of the Seleucid kingdom in the 2nd century B. C. There is a massive amount of literature that Collins does not mention which identifies this stone kingdom as the final eschatological kingdom of glory which Christ will set up at His Second Coming. Froom, in volume 4 of his series on prophetic interpretation, notes forty-five Millerite interpreters between 1831 and 1844 who held the stone to be the establishment of the great final kingdom. Twenty-nine non-millerite interpreters from the same period held the same opinion. In the 17th and 18th centuries the ratio is 13 to 1 in favor of the final kingdom of God over Christ's spiritual kingdom at the Cross. I thought that the historical critical methodology was supposed to lead to a consideration, or at least mention, of all possibilities. What we have here is an illustration of how a false interpretation of history leads to a false conclusion about eschatology. Or perhaps the latter has produced the former.

The Link between True History and Real Eschatology

It is interesting to see how the text of Daniel links the history of his own time to the final eschatological kingdom of God. There are at least four examples of this in the book. The first comes from a comparison of Daniel 2:37-38 with Daniel 7:13-14. The first passage is the beginning

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of Daniel's explanation of the great image to Nebuchadnezzar. There he says, "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might and the glory, and into whose hand he has given the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air."

This can be compared to the conclusion to the heavenly court scene in Daniel 7:14. There the Son of Man receives, "dominion, glory, and kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him." The second, third, and fourth kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7 are not described in these terms. In Daniel 2 we have the sons of men who are subject to Nebuchadnezzar, whereas it is the Son of Man to whom all peoples are subject in Daniel 7. The words are the same in Aramaic, except that the former is plural and the latter is singular. The kingdom and the glory are common to both kings, but the might and power of the earthly monarch has been replaced by the dominion of the Son of Man. No longer will there be a need for the might and power of earthly armies in that heavenly kingdom.

Both of these kings rule over three things. Nebuchadnezzar's rule is so inclusive that he even rules over the birds and the beasts, along with the sons of men. The Son of Man also rules over three groups, but they are all groups of people, emphasizing the fact that the Son of Man's kingdom goes even beyond that which Nebuchadnezzar possessed. It is interesting to note that Daniel 7 does not use the identification of "sons of men" for those who are ruled. In the singular that title is reserved for the great future ruler, identified in the gospels as Christ.

Thus there is a parallel here between the first kingdom in Daniel 2 and the last kingdom in Daniel 7, except that the latter is much greater and grander than the former. The former has been extended and expanded and glorified in the latter. There is a sense, therefore, in which Nebuchadnezzar is a kind of messianic figure here, even though he is but a faint shadow of the great final kingdom to come.

It is interesting to note that this parallelism is set in a larger parallel which covers the entire Aramaic section of the book of Daniel. In a landmark study the French scholar Lenglet noted the chiasmic construction of Daniel 2-7. Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 are prophecies about world kingdoms. Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 are historical episodes about the persecution of the Jews in Babylon. In the first instance it is Daniel's three friends who are cast into the fiery furnace. In the parallel case it is Daniel who is cast into the lion's den. Daniel 4 and 5 also talk about the same thing, judgments upon individual Babylonian kings, Nebuchadnezzar in the first instance and Belshazzar in the second. Thus the literary construction here is A:B:C::C:B:A. As one who held

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the title of king of Chiasms at the Seminary for fourteen years, I would be delinquent if I did not call at least one of these cases to your attention this evening. Within this larger parallel construction there is a parallel between the kingdom with which Daniel 2 begins and the one with which Daniel 7 ends, and they stand at opposite ends of this overall section of the book.

There is a major contrast between these two kingdoms, however, with respect to time. Daniel goes on to tell Nebuchadnezzar that there would be another kingdom after his in verse 39, the silver kingdom of the Persians. In the parallel position in Daniel 7:14b, the length of the Son of Man's kingdom is described, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. The Neo-Babylonian empire lasted for a mere 70 years while that of the Son of Man will go on for ever and ever and ever. Daniel related the first to a contemporary king, but he prophesied of the latter in a vision about the great future king.

Son of the Gods and Son of Man. An element in Daniel 3 can also be compared with Daniel 7. Daniel 3 is the narrative which describes how the three Hebrew worthies were cast into the fiery furnace. In order to see if the fired up brick kiln was doing its job, Nebuchadnezzar bent down to sight into the mouth of the kiln. While he had his soldiers throw three men into the fire, when he looked in he saw a fourth, and the fourth he describes as "a son of the gods". This is an accurate translation of the original Aramaic, and we need not expect that Nebuchadnezzar recognized the fourth as the Messiah, for he was still in his unconverted state at this time. What he did recognize was that the fourth figure was different from those of the normal men and that it was a divine-like being.

For comparison, we come back to Daniel 7:9-14. When Daniel first looked in vision into the heavenly court he saw the Ancient of Days, God the Father, sitting upon his throne, and he was surrounded by all the host of the angels. This was normal and to be expected, for heaven is where God dwells, and the angels join Him there. In the second scene of this view, however, Daniel sees "one like a son of man." That too is the accurate translation of the original. This is a description, whereas in the New Testament it is used as a title. What does this description mean? It means that when Daniel looked into heaven he saw God and the angels whom he would normally expect to see there, but then he saw another being that looked like a man. He was a special Son of Man, but nonetheless he looked like a man.

In the former case Nebuchadnezzar saw a divine-like being who would normally belong to the realms of God present in the realms of man. In the latter case Daniel saw a human-like being that would

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normally belong to the realms of this earth in heaven. The two pictures are inter-related. In the former case a divine-like being came from heaven to rescue the three Hebrew worthies from the fire. In the latter case a human like being who once walked upon the dusty trails of Galilee now stands before the throne of God in heaven to rescue all of the earthly saints of the Most High from this earth by receiving them and transporting them to His kingdom.

Belshazzar and Christ as Coregents. A third case of a connection between history and eschatology may be suggested by relating the dateline of Daniel 7 to the contents of that vision. This vision was given in the first year of Belshazzar. Why would God pick out that specific year in which to make known the future history of the world and the kingdom of God? What happened in the first year of Belshazzar? That was the year in which Belshazzar was established as coregent with his father Nabonidus. What does that have to do with the contents of the vision? While coregencies were well known and used in Egypt, they were extraordinarily uncommon in the kingdoms of Mesopotamia. Thus God chose the year in which a rare and unusual coregency was established here on earth to talk about a coregency in heaven. That is what we have in Daniel 7:9-14. The Ancient of Days sits upon his throne conducting the court scene as an earthly monarch would. But then the Son of Man is brought to Him, and He is awarded the kingdom as the result of the judgment. Thus, in essence, the heavenly king has placed another king and coregent, the Son of Man, on the throne with him. Thus the faint shadow of the establishment of an earthly coregency becomes the occasion upon which the heavenly coregency is spelled out in a way never done before. The earthly example before the people provided them with some further explanation of what was to happen in the divine realm.

I have suspended a discussion of the fourth case of this kind of relationship between history and eschatology until a more general description of the place of the Messiah in apocalyptic can be given.

Classical Prophecy, Apocalyptic, and Apocalyptic Eschatology

There are some narratives in the book of Daniel that are better defined as classical prophecy rather than apocalyptic. Chapter 4 is an example of this. There Daniel delivers a prophecy, an interpretation of the king's dream, to the king. In that interpretation Daniel tells the king about a judgment that is going to fall upon him unless he repents. Nebuchadnezzar ignores the exhortation and continues on his willful way. A year later the judgment falls upon him, and he is exiled to live among the animals of the desert as a mad man. This is similar in basic

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nature to the messages that Isaiah and Jeremiah and other prophets gave to the rulers and people of their own times.

Messiah as Sacrifice. The prophecy of Daniel 9 bears some of these same characteristics. There are no symbols involved in this prophecy; it is a straight-forward didactic teaching about the future. The only vision with which it can be connected is one that was given ten years earlier. The prophecy not only answers the petitions in Daniel's prayer, but it reveals more of the future of God's people on their land. This prophecy does not carry the basic characteristics that have been identified with apocalyptic. If there is any eschatology here, it is an eschatology of the nation of Judea, not a final eschatology of the world. As all historicist and futurist interpreters agree, this prophecy focuses upon the coming of the Messiah and his fate once he was to come. He was to be cut off or killed, and that death was to provide an atonement and an everlasting righteousness that would stem from it. The central picture of the prophecy of Daniel 9 is, therefore, that of the suffering and dying Messiah. The Messiah as Sacrifice.

Messiah as High Priest. The symbolism of Daniel 8 is apocalyptic, but that apocalyptic is incomplete, in that it does not provide a final eschatology. The length of the struggle of the prophecy extends to the end of the 2300 days. During that period of time come the Persian ram, the Greek goat, the four horns of the divided Greece, and the conquests of Rome to the south and the east and the glorious land. Then the prophecy makes a transition that we refer to as the vertical dimension of apocalyptic, for it takes us into the sanctuary in heaven. There we see the prince carrying out the daily ministry for his people here on earth. In other words, he has been ministering the benefits of his atoning sacrifice to the people on earth who have responded to his call. The picture here at the climax of Daniel 8 focuses upon Christ as our great high priest.

Messiah as King. With Daniel 7 we come to apocalyptic that ends with a great eschatological climax. The rise and fall of nations are reviewed then God's answer to these transitory earthly governments is given in the heavenly court scene that I have described above. There the Son of Man is confirmed as the eternal king over all of the saved of all ages, the Saints of the Most High, as they are described at the end of the chapter. The picture given of Christ here is that of King.

There are thus three interrelated pictures of Christ in these three prophecies in the heart of the book of Daniel. In Daniel 9 the picture is Christ as sacrifice. In Daniel 8 the picture is Christ as priest, and in Daniel 7 the picture is Christ as king. There is something wrong with this order, however, and that is that they are reversed according to our modern way of thinking. We would have written them in chronological

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order with the sacrifice first, the priest second, and the king third. But Daniel didn't write in English in the 20th century A. D. He wrote in Hebrew and Aramaic in the 6th century B. C. A common way of thinking at that time was to reason from effect back to cause. We reason from cause to effect. We need to put ourselves in Daniel's sandals to see how people of his time thought and how God spoke to them.

A simple illustration of this type of thinking can be illustrated in Jesus saying, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." There is nothing wrong with this statement except that from our point of view it is inverted. Our heart, our motives, is the source from which our laying up treasure in heaven comes. But Jesus said it the other way around; he reasoned, for his audience, from effect back to cause. That type of approach is common in the Old Testament, though not exclusive. That happens to be what we have here in Daniel 7, 8, and 9.

Let us review the pictures: Daniel 9 is in the past tense; that was when Jesus died. Daniel 8 is in the present tense, for now is when Jesus sends to us all the aid of heaven from his sanctuary. Daniel 7 climaxes in the future, when He will reign over his glorious, future, literal, and physical kingdom. We wait for that day. From these pictures of Jesus we draw out spiritual experience. From Daniel 9 we get atonement and justification. From Daniel 8 we get intercession and sanctification. From Daniel 7 we receive the final glorification.

Three prophecies, three pictures of Jesus, three tenses to salvation, and different types of prophecies. Daniel 9 is most like classical prophecy. Daniel 8 is true apocalyptic but without the final eschaton. Daniel 7 is apocalyptic throughout, climaxing in the final eschatological kingdom God.

The Final Case Linking History and Eschatology: Daniel 10-12

The final major prophecy of the book of Daniel covers the final three chapters of the book. The body of the prophecy is found in Daniel 11. The introduction or prologue to the prophecy is found in chapter 10. The epilogue to the prophecy is found in chapter 12. Chapter 12 is not a separate prophecy split off, as some would like to see it; it is well integrated with what is given in Daniel 11. Daniel simply follows the standard approach of giving the prophetic description of events first and then the dates that are connected with them. The same order is followed, for example, in Daniel 7 and 8, where the dates come last, as they do in Daniel 12.

Michael and Cambyses. Our concentration here is not on Daniel 11, a very difficult prophecy at best, but upon the historical

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introduction to the prophecy in Daniel 10 and its links with the eschatology of the prophecy which is found in the first four verses of Daniel 12, which actually form the conclusion of Daniel 11. Our concentration here is upon the figure of Michael, because Michael is involved in history in Daniel 10 and He is involved in eschatology in chapter 12. Chapter 10 begins with Daniel praying, mourning, and fasting for three weeks. He does not state what the problem is, but by connecting the date on the chapter, the 3rd year of Cyrus, with Ezra chapter 4, it is possible to estimate that the problem is that the Samaritans had stymied the rebuilding of the temple. The Samaritans had sued at court, and the court that they probably sued at was Babylon, since this province was known at this time as "Babylon and Beyond the River." It was not until the imperial reorganization of 520 that the two parts of this province were separated. In Babylon they found an ear ready to cooperate with them, for the prince of the kingdom of Persia was the power assisting the throne there. This prince was Cambyses. Both Daniel and Ezra avoid mentioning him by name. He was hated in the ancient world because of his intolerance for religions other than his own Zoroastrianism. He was hated in Persia, where an imitator of the brother he had murdered tried to take over. He was hated in Egypt, where he burnt temples and killed the Apis bull. He probably died a suicide. Modern historians of ancient Iran have tried to refurbish his image, but it does not refurbish very well.

I take the minority view that the prince of the kingdom of Persia is not a demon but Cambyses. He was the prince of the kingdom of Persia in the third year of Cyrus, and he acted like a demon, whether he was motivated by one or not. Gabriel tells Daniel that he had teamed up with Michael to work on Cambyses to bring about a resolution of the affair, but to no avail. They had struggled with him for three weeks, but still the crown prince had not changed his mind in acceding to the request of the Samaritans to put a permanent halt to the rebuilding of the temple. After Gabriel gave Daniel the prophecy that follows, he said that he was going back to join Michael in continuing to work on the prince of Persia. Unfortunately, they had a madman to work with, and the outcome still was not favorable to the Jews. As we eventually find out in Jude 9 and Revelation 12, Michael is identified with Christ. Here in Daniel we are only told that he is the chief of the angels who has charge over the people of God in that time. The name Michael is used especially in passages of the Bible where some controversy is involved, either local and historical or eschatological, and Michael leads the forces of God in the controversy. So he did here in the time of Daniel under the Persian kingdom.

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At the other end of the pole, Michael reappears in the eschaton. After all the earthly review of kings has passed by, Michael will finally stand up during the final time of trouble and he will defend his people through that final time . Once again, for one final time, Michael will do battle with the demons of this earth, as he did originally with Satan and his angels in heaven, according to Revelation 12.

Michael Stands Up. There is a chronological spectrum here. There is protology going back even before the creation, when Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and his angels and they were cast out of heaven. Then there are the intervening historical cases, in the time of Moses and in the time of Daniel, when Michael did battle again in local historical settings. Then there is the final eschatological battle that will take place when Michael stands up.

The verb “to stand up” here has a dual meaning. Michael stands up in Daniel 12:1 because the various aspects of his ministry in heaven are finished. That phase of his work is complete. But more specifically the verb to stand up is used through the course of Daniel 11 to signify when new rulers arise, when they ascend to the throne, when they take over the rule. Each one of them had their chance, but now it is the turn for Michael to stand up and take rule over the final kingdom of the saints of the Most High. The citizens of that kingdom of Michael come from two great groups, those who are living in the time of trouble and are delivered from it, and those who sleep in the dust of the earth until they awake to meet Michael their king, the Son of Man who will rule over them for ever and ever.

At that time the righteous will shine like the stars forever, and the brightest star of all will be Michael, the Son of Man, king over all, without end.

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Exegesis of Matthew 24:21–35: “This Generation” and the Structure of Matthew 23–25

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The identity of “this generation” in Matthew 24:21-35 and its connection with the discourse of Matthew 23-25 as a whole has eluded a satisfactory explanation.* If it was Christ’s purpose to give the reader some specific information on the events addressed in His discourse, it must be admitted that the history of the diverse interpretations of this passage suggests that some cues have been missed somewhere. Appeals made to the parallel passages in Mark and Luke have neither clarified the meaning in their own contexts, nor have they provided help in Matthew’s.

The text itself stands firm philologically, and there is little if any difficulty with terminology; therefore, the problem would seem to be one of interpretation. An exhaustive coverage of the available material on this topic is beyond the limitations of this study and would be unnecessary. Our objective is to obtain exegetical meaning and interpretation, rather than the most logical choice between competing views. Our methodology, therefore, will be an analysis of the literary and historical contexts of the passage. An exegesis of the disputed words and phrases of this passage will also be presented as a basis for further understanding.

Gospel of Matthew: Historical Background

Authorship. This Gospel, like the other three, is anonymous. However, the title (“According to Matthew”) goes back to at least the second century A.D., perhaps as early as A.D. 125. It is sometimes

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suggested that the use of the name Matthew instead of Levi (in the list of the twelve) with the addition of the title “tax collector” (Matt 10:3) serve as autobiographical touches. In any case, it is the unanimous tradition of the church as far back as the early second century that the apostle Matthew was the author of this gospel, and there is little reason to question it.¹

. This Gospel is written from the standpoint of showing the major events in the life of Jesus to have met prophetic fulfillment. The five discourses within the book indicate it was intended to serve as a teaching manual for the church. It also served an apologetic function to answer questions raised by antagonists. Its Jewish flavor, along with the touches of universalism, as well as the fact that it is written in Greek, suggest it was written for Hellenistic Jews in the Diaspora. Since the earliest clear knowledge of Matthew comes from Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria (ca. A.D. 110), Antioch may have been both the location of his readers as well as the place where the Gospel was written.²

Date. The dating of the Gospel of Matthew is intimately tied to the Synoptic problem. It also ties in more specifically with our passage in Matthew 24, in that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is involved. If predictive prophecy, and more particularly the predictive power of Jesus, is denied, the dating of the Synoptics is viewed as late with the exception of Mark, who, on the basis of the two-source hypothesis, is able to see the destruction of Jerusalem coming a few years in advance. However, a growing number of scholars have moved to the Griesback hypothesis of Matthean priority, and this, along with an allowance for predictive prophecy,³ would suggest an earlier date. If Matthew was written first, and Luke ends the book of Acts with the house arrest of Paul in the early 60's A.D., with his own Gospel being even earlier, then Matthew was probably written sometime in the early 50's.

Establishment of the Text. The passage to be exegeted (Matt 24:21-35) will be taken from the Greek text of the third edition of the United Bible Societies version. The only variant in this passage that affects the establishment of the text is the omission of the word *phōnēs* (sound/voice) from qualifying *salpiggos* (trumpet) in verse 31,⁴ which has no effect on the reading. The reading with this omission in the Greek text is given a B rating.

The Context of Matthew 24:21-35

The overall context of this passage falls within the third part of the book, which deals with Jesus' ministry beyond the Jordan and in Jerusalem. Jesus had foretold His death (Matt 16:21), and this sets the

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tone for much of the remainder of the book. The trip from Galilee to Jerusalem (Matt 19-20) consists of confrontations with friends, enemies, and would-be disciples, the blessing of children, parables told, a further prediction of his death, and the healing of two blind men. Upon approaching Jerusalem, Jesus makes His triumphal entry into the city, followed by the casting out of the traders from the Temple and the healing of a number of people (Matt 21:1-17). After Jesus curses the fig tree, He is once again confronted on the issue of His authority, this time by the chief priests and elders, after which He tells a parable which openly reveals the lost condition of His religious hearers (Matt 21:18-46). Matthew 22 consists of the parable of the wedding feast, followed by a series of confrontations by the religious leaders, whom Jesus leaves speechless.

The immediate setting of our passage lies in a discourse covering Matthew 23-25, of which the first portion (chap. 23) takes place in the Temple. Jesus tells His listeners to observe the things the scribes and Pharisees tell them but not to do as they do, giving them several examples (Matt 23:1-7). He also gives some specific instructions, contrary to their practice, for His own followers (Matt 23:8-12). Verses 13-36 are a series of woes or judgments against the scribes and Pharisees. Behind the Greek onomatopoeic interjection *ouai* (woe/alas) is the Hebrew *hōy* (ah, alas), the background of which seems to be laments for the dead, but which in the prophetic literature of the OT is a means of prophetic denunciation. The word is frequently followed by the preposition “to” plus a suffix, and has a tendency to occur in series, addressed usually to Yahweh’s so-called people who have separated themselves from Him by their godless conduct. If the woe oracles go back to the cry of lament for the dead, then they are tantamount to a prediction of death, that is, a judgment from God.⁵

This is precisely what we have here in this series of seven or eight woes to the scribes and Pharisees. The woes are followed by the second person plural form of the personal pronoun “you” in the dative case (*humin*, to you). The issues addressed are the reprehensible conduct of these groups of people. That judgment is involved is further indicated at the end of the last woe by such phrases as “fill up the measure [of the guilt] of your fathers” and “how can you escape the sentence [that is, judgment] (*kriseōs*) of Gehenna” in verses 32-33, as well as “all these things shall come upon this generation” in verse 36. Jesus ends this part of the discourse with a final judgment on Jerusalem and the Temple itself by saying, “your house is left unto you desolate” (vss. 37-39).⁶

Matthew 24 opens with an extra-discoursal section when Jesus leaves the Temple for the last time, His disciples with Him. Prompted

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by Jesus' last statement in the Temple, the disciples point out its magnificent buildings. Jesus responds by saying that the Temple will soon be destroyed. A short time later they ask him two questions: the first regarding the timing of that event; the second regarding His coming and the end of the age (Matt 24:1-3). Jesus continues the discourse by responding to these questions while with the disciples on the Mount of Olives. Interestingly, when in vision Ezekiel saw "the glory of the Lord" depart from the first Temple before its destruction in 586 B.C. It stood over the mountain to the east of the city (Ezek 11:23), the same mountain which was also called the Mount of Olives (cf. 2 Sam 15:30; Zech 14:4), where Jesus sat after He left the Temple for the last time before its destruction in A.D. 70. The theme of judgment, which was the major focus of the first part of the discourse, thus continues into the second part as well.

The next section (verses 4-14) consists of signs of events to come. These deal with false messiahs, wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, false prophets, lawlessness, the lack of and the enduring of faith, and the preaching of the gospel to all the world. Whether these signs deal with events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Second Coming, or both, depends on the outcome of the exegesis of verses 21-35; therefore, we will reserve comment until after this has been done.

The section immediately preceding our passage focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem (vss. 15-20). The phrase "abomination of desolation" (*to bedlugmates erēmōseōs*), which was mentioned by Daniel the prophet (vs. 15), has been interpreted in a number of ways, but with the exception of the view that it is the Antichrist, the suggested identifications are related to the days of the Roman Empire (statues of Pilate, Caligula, Vespasian, or Titus, the invading armies of Rome, or the atrocities of the Zealots).⁷ The phrasing of Matthew 12:15 is quite close to Daniel's expression in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11.⁸ The latter two references (that is, Dan 11:31, and especially 12:11, where it is exactly the same as in the LXX, ms. 88⁸⁸), has the most going for it in terms of exactness of expression, and would thus seem to fit the Antichrist interpretation. However, the context as a whole in Matthew's record would indicate some aspect of the destruction of Jerusalem,⁹ and this connects it with the context of Daniel 9:27.

The contexts of both Daniel 9:26-27 and Matthew 25:15-16 would suggest the view that it was the atrocities of the Zealots which best fits the meaning of the "abomination of desolation." In the former, the phrase "upon the wing of abominations shall come a desolator" (vs. 27) would seem to indicate that the desolation was the result of the

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abominations of the Jewish people.¹⁰ In the latter (Matt 24:15-16) the order to flee Judea (and Jerusalem) when the abomination of desolation was seen to be standing in the holy place would seem rather unnecessary if it was only the setting up of statues of various Roman emperors or officials in the Temple that was meant. On the other hand, it would have been too late to flee if the Roman armies were already in the Holy Place, since historically speaking, it was all over by that point. It would seem that the best interpretation historically is that when the Christian Jews, who dwelt in Jerusalem, saw the Zealots make a fortress out of the Temple (Josephus *Wars* IV. 3. 7), they fled to Pella (Eusebius *HE* iii. 32). It was thus the perversion of the use of the original intention of the Temple as a place of worship—the culmination of a long history of religious perversion (cf. Matt 23:37-38),— which was the abomination that brought about the desolation (or the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple) by the Roman armies.

Moving now to Matthew 24:36-39, the context immediately after our passage, we meet with the statement that the exact timing of the coming of Jesus is known only by the Father, but that it will occur in times similar to those of Noah's day. Matthew 24:40-25:46 concludes the discourse with a series of illustrations and parables encouraging the disciples of Christ to be ready at all times and indicates what they are to be doing while waiting for His return.

The Exegesis of Matthew 24:21-35

We have seen that the section immediately before this passage focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem, and the section immediately after it focuses on the Second Coming. Verse 21 says, "For then there will be a great tribulation [*thlipsis*] which has not been from the beginning of the world until now nor ever will be." The question is: When does this tribulation occur? Is it in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem or with the events leading up to the Second Coming? The temporal adverb *tote* can be conjunctive or disjunctive, meaning "at that time" or "then" (next, afterward), as it does in English, so it is of little help in making a distinction.

The wording of this verse reflects Daniel 12:1, which reads in the Greek Septuagint (LXX, Theodotion), ". . . and there will be a time of tribulation, such tribulation [*thlipsis*] which has not been from the time that there was a nation on the earth until that time." C. H. Dodd has shown that when the NT writers quote phrases or sentences from the OT, it is an indication of the whole OT context.¹¹ The context of this verse is Daniel 11:40-12:2, which is at the end of the fourth prophetic outline of Daniel. Here we are told that although there will be this

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unparalleled time of tribulation, Michael the prince will stand up on behalf of His people and will save everyone who is found “written in the book.” This is followed in verse 2 by the resurrection of the dead. On this basis, we should be justified in concluding that the shift of emphasis from the destruction of Jerusalem to that of the Second Coming in this part of Matthew 24 occurs at verse 21 rather than at verse 29, which is often assumed. Therefore, the great tribulation depicted in Matthew appears to be an event connected with those leading up to the Second Coming rather than with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Verses 22-26 have been applied by commentators to both the destruction of Jerusalem and events connected with the Second Coming. Since we have seen, however, that verse 21 is dependent on the context of Daniel 12:1, which indicates a focus on events in connection with the Second Coming, the following verses should also. The days (of the tribulation) being cut short for the sake of the elect in verse 22 is, therefore, more universal in scope than it would be in a context connected with the destruction of Jerusalem. The false messiahs and prophets, their deception of even the elect, as well as the warnings against running here and there to look for the Messiah, could apply quite well to either context. In fact, the seeking of the Messiah in the wilderness (verse 26) fits extremely well in the first century A.D. Again, however, context would indicate events leading up to the Second Coming. This is explicit in verse 27, where the focus is on the *coming* (*parousia*) of the Son of man, with the additional emphasis both here and in verse 28 that when this happens it will be obvious to everyone.

The following three verses (vss. 29-31) are universally seen as a description of events leading up to the Second Coming. Verse 29 begins with the phrase: “But immediately after the tribulation of those days. . .”. The tribulation (cf. vs. 21), has been seen by some as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus a transition to events connected with the Second Coming proposed here in verse 29. We have seen above, however, that the tribulation is rather to be connected to events leading up to the Second Coming. Thus, the focus is on same event from verse 21 onward and, therefore, there is no transition at verse 29.

The celestial events mentioned in this verse have a long history in the OT in connection with “the day of the Lord [Yahweh]” (for example, Amos 8:9; Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15). In these places there is a dual application of “the day of the Lord,” first focusing on the local, national judgment of God in the days of the prophet or relatively soon after, and then jumping to the universal end-time judgment. The same kind of imagery is used here and in Revelation 6:12-17 in connection with the Second Coming or universal “day of the Lord.” The focus on the Son of

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man coming in the clouds of heaven together with the angels (vss. 30-31; cf. the parallel imagery in Matt 13:37-41), also contributes to emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ in this section.

The next section (vss. 32-35) is the crux of the problem in this discourse. A parable (budding fig tree) is introduced to illustrate the seriousness of what Jesus has been saying. It is similar in some respects to the illustration in verse 28, although it is introduced in that verse without drawing a comparison as is done here. More specifically, the comparison in verse 33 focuses on an event: “when-ever you see all these things, know that . . . is near [even] at the doors.” The ellipsis in this last clause can be supplied by either “he” or “it” (ἐστίν), depending on whether the event spoken about is the Second Coming or the destruction of Jerusalem. This is followed in verse 34 by saying: “Truly I say to you that this generation will certainly not come to an end until all these things happen,” and then in verse 35 by a statement of the impossibility of the failure of Jesus’ words.

The phrase “these things” or “all these things” (*panta tauta*, vs. 33) is used a number of times in Matthew (4:9; 6:32-33; 13:34, 51; 19:20; 23:36; 24:2, 3), always referring to something just before it. Thus, it would seem that since verses 21-31 focus on the Second Coming, verses 32-35 should likewise. This creates the problem of having “this generation,” that is, the one to which Jesus’ hearers belonged, alive at the Second Coming. Since over nineteen hundred years have elapsed since then, it would seem that Jesus was mistaken, and we have an unfulfilled prophecy. Some seeking to get around this difficult problem have interpreted the word “generation (*genea*)” with the meaning “race,” “nation,” or “kind,” so as to suggest that the Jewish race/nation or mankind would not pass away before Christ’s return. However, the phrase “this generation” always means the people alive at a particular time and would have been understood as such by Jesus’ hearers. Matthew also uses it in this sense a number of other times (11:16; 12:41, 42-45; 23:36) in the book.

Thus, the question is: What are “all these things” which are to take place before “this generation” comes to an end? Although the section immediately before this would suggest the Second Coming, Jesus is responding to a question posed to Him by His disciples. The context of that question in verses 1-3 is the destruction of Jerusalem; therefore, that destruction, and not the Second Coming, is the focus of verses 32-35.¹² Then, the ellipsis which we left in verse 33 should be translated “it” instead of “He.” In essence, we have the following: the disciples ask, “When will these things be [that is, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple]?” Jesus responds, “this generation will not come to an end before all these things happen.” By contrast, in regard to their second

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question concerning the Second Coming, He answered, “of that day and hour no one knows . . . but the Father” (vs. 36).

Since the destruction of Jerusalem occurred within the generation of the disciples, this section (vss. 32-35) does not constitute an unfulfilled prophecy, and the charge that Jesus was mistaken is unsubstantiated. Although the order of the elements (in chap. 24) alternates back and forth between two distinct and separate events, this is not such a strange phenomenon when answering distinct and separate questions. It would seem, therefore, that there is no problem in this section regarding “this generation” unless one insists, contrary to the overall context, that the event concerned is the Second Coming. While the phrase “these things” usually refers to that which comes immediately before it, since it is used here in reference to a specific event within a series of two, an alternation between the two events is possible without losing track of the original referent. We shall now look at this passage in terms of the overall structure of the discourse.

The Literary Structure of Chapters 23-25

As we have seen, the extra-discoursal material in Matthew 24:1-3 appears to be the key for solving the problem of “this generation” (vs. 34). It is now necessary to see if this same section can contribute to an understanding of the discourse as a whole in terms of structure. Unlike the other discourses of the book (chaps. 5-7, 10, 13, and 18), in which there is only an introduction and conclusion (5:1-2; 7:28-29; 10:1-4; 11:1; 13:1-2; 51-53; 18:1-2; 19:1), the discourse in chapters 23-25 has besides these elements (23:1; 26:1a) an extra-discoursal narrative (24:1-3). This in itself suggests a distinct and unique function.

In response to Jesus’ remarks (23:37-39), the disciples showed Him the magnificent temple buildings. Whereupon Jesus predicted their destruction. In private, they later asked him two questions: (1) “When will these things be?” and (2) “What [will be] the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” These questions referred to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming, respectively. The last question, which may sound like two questions, is actually one. The second “and” is exegetical, that is, the second element is a further explanation of the first. Thus, “the sign of Your coming” is equivalent to “the end of the age.”

Chapter 23 may be seen as a prologue focusing on a series of judgments addressed to God’s so-called people for their godless behavior and ultimately emphasizing the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. We have already seen the connection between “these things”/ “all these things” (*panta tauta*)” and “this generation” (*genea*

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hautē)” in Matthew 24:32-35 with that of 24:1-3. This same connection with Matthew 24:1-3 can be made with Matthew 23:36, the last woe oracle, which states that “all these things (*panta tauta*) will come upon this generation (*genean tautēn*).” Thus, there is a literary link between the prologue (Matt 23), the extra-discoursal section (Matt 24:1-3), and Matthew 24:32-35.

Moving now to the section of verses in Matthew 24:4-14, we find that at least verses 4-8 also focus on events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem. Although the description of events is general and could fit at any time in history from the first century A.D. until the Second Coming, there are two literary cues that would seem to confirm our suggestion. In verse 6, we are told that “the end (*telos*) is not yet,” suggesting that this section is *not* focusing on the Second Coming = the end of the age. Further, it states in verse 8 that “all these things (*panta tauta*) are [only] the beginning of birth pains.” Again, there is the connection with verses 1-3 and the destruction of Jerusalem by the phrase “all these things.”

The opposite seems to be the case for verses 9-14. In verse 9 Christ says, “they will deliver you up to tribulation (*thlipsin*),” and although, as in verses 4-8, most of these events seem general and applicable to almost any time, the tribulation (verses 21, 29) is connected with events leading up to the Second Coming. This is further confirmed by the use of the term “the end (*telos*)” in verses 13 (cf. 10:22) and 14 in connection with the one who endures to the end and the preaching of the gospel to the whole world before the end comes.

As we have seen above, the next section (Matt 24:15-20), focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem. A further connection can also be seen between “your house is left to you desolate (*erēmos*)” in 23:38 and “the abomination of desolation (*erēmōseōs*)” of 24:15.

Matthew 24:21-31 focuses on the Second Coming. Literary relationships can be seen between “the sign (*sēmeion*) of the Son of man” in verse 30 and “the sign of Your coming” in the extra-discourse (vs. 3). “The coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man” in verses 27 and 30 (the latter with the synonym *erchomenon*, coming) also link with “Your coming and the end of the age” in verse 3.

We have already looked at the literary relationships between Matthew 24:32-25 and other sections. Moving to the next section (Matt 24:36-39), we note the focus is on the Second Coming (*parousia*). The remainder of the discourse can be considered an epilogue consisting of illustrations and parables focusing on the theme of being ready for the Second Coming and what one should do while waiting.¹³ In each of these (Matt 24:40-42; 43-44; 45-51; Matt 25:1-13; 14-30; 31-46) the phrase Son of man/lord/bridegroom is coming/comes/came/will come

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occurs, each time using a form of *erchouai* (come) a verb which in these instances is parallel to *parousia* (coming, cf. 24:27, 30), and in one instance the verb *hēkō* (come) in 24:50.

In sum the structure of the discourse of Matthew 23-25 appears to be as follows:

- Introduction (23:1)
- Prologue (23:2-39) Woe Oracles — Destruction of Jerusalem
- Extra-Discoursal (24:1-3) — Two Questions (A & B)
 - A (24:4-8) Destruction of Jerusalem
 - B (24:9-14) Second Coming
 - A' (24:15-20) Destruction of Jerusalem
 - B' (24:21-31) Second Coming
 - A'' (24:32-35) Destruction of Jerusalem
 - B'' (24:36-39) Second Coming
- Epilogue (24:40-25:46) Be Ready - Second Coming
- Conclusion (26:1a)

Recently, it has been suggested that this discourse has a chiasmic structure.¹⁴ Our study need not preclude that, but may be seen as complementing it, though a few modifications are necessary.

A few observations on the parallel passages in Mark and Luke might be in order at this point. Hans LaRondelle¹⁵ has recently suggested that both Mark and Matthew present this discourse from the dual fulfillment perspective which is characteristic of the classical prophets of the OT, while Luke presents his version in historical succession, as is typical of apocalyptic.¹⁶ While in general this is a good observation, I would modify it somewhat (in terms of Matthew), on the basis of our present study.

The disciples, according to both Mark and Luke, appear to ask two questions about the same event, and both under the rubric of “(all) these things:” (1) “when will these things be? and (2) what (will be) the sign when (all) these things are going to be fulfilled/to take place?” Mark then follows by blending the events of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming, as is typical of classical prophecy, while Luke separates the two events by the phrase “. . . until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,” as is characteristic of apocalyptic (cf. Rev 11:2).

While in one respect one could still view the discourse in Matthew as classical prophecy in the sense that the destruction of Jerusalem is a local manifestation of the day of the Lord which then jumps to the universal day of the Lord with the Second Coming, the fact that the disciples ask two very clear and distinct questions in Matthew

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and Jesus makes two distinct answers (the alternating structure) would cause one to move away from that interpretation. This would seem to be even clearer on the basis of Matthean priority. Looked at from that perspective, Matthew presented our Lord's discourse first, with a rather distinct structure. Luke followed, presenting it in apocalyptic style, with Mark last, in terms of classical prophecy.

Summary

Throughout the history of the interpretation of this discourse, the phrase "this generation" has generated a number of interpretations. The most prominent have been that it refers to (1) the generation of those who heard it, (2) the Jewish race or nation, (3) mankind or the human race, and (4) the generation alive when the event takes place. The most natural meaning is the first. However, if the event referred to is the Second Coming, it would suggest that Jesus was mistaken and we are left with an unfulfilled prophecy. Even though the phrase "all these things" and with it "this generation" seems to refer naturally to the immediate preceding section, it was found that the context would indicate that it refers back to the question of the disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem in the extra-discoursal section in Matthew 24:1-3.

Building on this, we propose with supporting evidence that the two questions of the disciples are the key to the structure of the entire discourse, and that it divides up neatly into alternating sections dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming.¹⁷

Notes

* This is a creative article tackling a hard verse in a fruitful way. It will appear radical to many, and some may question whether *JATS* should publish it. We do not publish it as an attempt to change church doctrine or general SDA thought. Ray's fundamental point may be sound. Furthermore, while his thesis may be novel, it is not at odds with any fundamental belief of the church and is within the exegetical scope allowed to ATS members. This paper is a valuable attempt to solve the puzzle of a difficult text and give an exegetically sound answer to a question many of us have been asked. Readers are invited to critique the paper and discuss it. —The Editor

1 D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 33, and D. A. Hagner, "Matthew, Gospel According to," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1986), 3: 287.

2 Guthrie, pp. 25-29, Hagner, p. 287 and E. F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 174.

3 G. F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Lincoln, NE: College View Printers, 1985), pp. 54-56 and Hagner, pp. 281, 287.

4 The fact that φωνῆς appears both before and after σάλπιγγος as well as in the combinations πεγᾶλης φωνῆς and σάλπιγγος καὶ φωνῆς in various manuscripts perhaps indicates its secondary character.

5 H. Zobel, "Hōy," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 3: 359-364.

6 There are only two Greek MSS which omit ἔρεμος. These are B and L. In addition, it is omitted by one lectionary (184), at least one MS from each of the following ancient versions: Old Latin, Syriac, and

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Coptic (both Sahidic and Bohairic), as well as by the Church Fathers Irenaeus^{1st}, Origen, and Cyril.

7 A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint), p. 348.

8 Dan 9:27 LXX⁸⁸ φ βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων; Dan 11:31 LXX⁸⁸ βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως and LXX^φ βδέλυγμα ἡφανισμένον; and Dan 12:11 LXX⁸⁸ τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως and LXX^φ βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως.

9 One could hardly flee (verses 15b-20) from the Antichrist except in a spiritual sense.

10 W. H. Shea, *Daniel and the Judgment* (unpublished Manuscript, 1980), pp. 87-88; “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27,” *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. F. D. Holbrook. (Washington, D. C.: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), p. 97.

11 C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Collins, 1952), pp. 126-133.

12 F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), pp. 227-228.

13 Matt 24:48 χρονίζει and 25:19 χρονίζοντος all suggest a delay before the Second Coming. Thus, there seems to be a further emphasis on the separation between the events in this discourse.

14 J. S. Kidder, “‘This Generation’ in Matthew 24:34,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21 (1983): 203-209.

15 H. K. LaRondelle, “Did Jesus Intend to Return in the First Century?,” *Ministry* 56 (May 1983): 10-13.

16 In Mark and Luke, the “this generation” in relation to “all these things” must contextually also relate to the question(s) of the disciples which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. In Luke, this section is also removed from the previous one by its setting in narrative form (“and he told them a parable”).

17 It is recognized that the conclusions offered here differ from those of Ellen G. White. However, it should not be construed that this study is a repudiation of her thoughts on the subject. Since her comments on this discourse do not exhaust the meaning of the biblical text, the above is presented in the hope that it offers some additional light on a rather difficult section of Scripture. She writes, “At the close of the great papal persecution, Christ declared, the sun would be darkened, and the moon should not give her light. Next, the stars should fall from heaven. . . . he says of those who see these signs, ‘This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled’” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 632). The fact that those who saw the signs to which she seems to refer are long dead should lead us to question whether we have correctly understood her guidance. In harmony with this paper, she also writes, “Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of the two events. . . . In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves” (p. 628). I agree with Mrs. White that “This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth’s history” (p. 628). This exegesis simply shows that the primary meaning of “this generation” was those who would see the destruction of Jerusalem. As Mrs. White writes of the entire passage, “But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days” (p. 631). In truth, the difference between her comments and my own are similar to the differences in the synoptic writers’ accounts of Jesus’ words about the future: differing slightly in emphasis and detail, but faithful and true and profitable.

[This paper has been reformulated from old files without formatting, but maintains the original pagination—despite the resulting odd page breaks.]
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Apocalypse Not Yet

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At midnight, in less than a year, we will enter not only a new year, a new decade, and a new century, but also a new millennium. This doesn't happen very often. The last time a new millennium began, feudal lords and bishops ruled Europe. That was centuries before Gutenberg invented printing with movable type or Columbus discovered a new world. The millennium before that began when Jesus was a small boy.

So what is the significance of a new millennium? Since a lot happened in each preceding millennium, we assume that the new one will be packed with more discoveries, inventions, wars, disasters, and many other kinds of change, some good and some bad. On the other hand, can we be sure that this millennium will be a millennium? With exponentially expanding population growth and the problems that go with it, will the human race self-destruct within the next century or so? Will some sadistic Saddam end the world as we know it by vaporizing us in a nuclear holocaust or by bombarding our ecosystems with malicious microbes? Or will Christ come a second time and set up the eternal kingdom which ancient prophets predicted?

For those who believe that Christ will come to right all wrongs, each new millennium brings promise, challenge, hope. Will this new period be the last one to be filled with sorrow, sighing, pain, and death? When we pray for the needs of those around us, afflicted by life-threatening illnesses, accidents, depression, broken relationships, and financial distress, we can be easily prompted to cry out to God: "Enough is enough, Lord! Don't come in the year two thousand and something. Come sooner—come now!" It's time to go home.

Wanting the present era to end can easily lead to speculation. Thus, futurologists have been citing all kinds of evidence that apocalyptic

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events will occur within the next few years. Such prognostication is based on factors as diverse as interpretation of the tunnels in the Great Pyramid to arrive at the year 1998 for the beginning of the millennial age, a prophecy of Nostradamus (1503-1566) in which the seventh millennium arrives in A.D. 2000, and a rare configuration of the planets in our solar system on May 4, 2000.¹

Some people are not content with passive speculation. Their proactive approach to eschatology involves attempts to trigger final events. For example, in the 1970s a Christian minister fire-bombed the El Aqsa mosque on the temple mount in Jerusalem, hoping to pave the way for the building of a third Jewish temple in that location. He believed that such a temple is part of God's eschatological plan, so he wanted to help God make some progress. Fortunately for the fragile peace of Jerusalem, his "Christianity in action" did not succeed. When I went to Jerusalem shortly thereafter, the mosque was undergoing a costly restoration.

More costly was the apocalyptic guruitis of the Branch Davidians. Their leader specialized in eisegeting himself into biblical apocalyptic prophecy and attempting to live out the results in a self-centered, aggressive, and idiosyncratic way. On a trip to Waco in December of 1997, my wife and I saw what is left of the gruesome outcome as we visited the burned out foundations of the facility. A sign marks the underground spot where most of the women and children died. A bulletin board placed by surviving Branch Davidians attacks the leadership of David Koresh by citing lengthy quotations from Ellen White.

For Christians who want the apocalypse now, or at least very soon, there are several kinds of biblically related approaches to calculating the time of Christ's coming. These are based upon factors such as millennial expectations, jubilee calculations, and biblical time prophecies. In this essay, I will investigate the hermeneutical validity of some millennial and jubilee approaches, including the theory of 6,000 years preceding the Millennium. In the following remarks, I will examine some interpretations of biblical time prophecies, including to some extent the traditional SDA approach to the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, and I will ponder the question of our proximity to Christ's return.

Millennial Expectations

A *Time* magazine article by Roger Rosenblatt summarized the year 1997 as "The Year Emotions Ruled." Rosenblatt referred to a theory which links the present excitability of society with the end of the twentieth century:

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The “apocalypse now” theory has to do with the odd historical fact that people get exceptionally nervous as they near the end of any era. There were witch-hunts in the 1690’s, episodes of hysteria in the 1890s. In our own time, one has only to reach back a couple of years to recall large-scale group fears induced by mention of the ozone layer, or by pandemics like toxic-shock syndrome, the Gulf War syndrome and the Ebola virus.²

A subsequent issue of *Time* printed an excerpt of a letter from Janet Bollero in Argentina, reacting to the article:

Rosenblatt’s article was good, but I hardly believe that in 1997 people were driven by “apocalyptic, fin-de-siècle anxieties about the approaching millennium.” It is true that people get touchy when encountering the finale of a century, and even more so at the end of a millennium, but violence, insane mass hysteria, suicides, murders and a highly emotional society are not produced by the end of a period of time; they lie in human nature.³

Bollero is right, of course. We should not blame too much on the impending millennium. This does not exclude the fact that events are often shaped or even precipitated by human perceptions, of which millennial hyperventilation can be one among others. But we should keep clearly in mind that although we measure our lives by units of time, transition from one unit to another possesses no intrinsic causality. In fact, as Einstein taught us, time itself has no inherent existence; it exists only in relation to other phenomena. This does not mean that time is unimportant. When God set up the cyclical movements of our cosmos (Gen 1, esp. vss. 3-5,14-19), He created time for Planet Earth, and He expects us to keep the Sabbath during a certain period of time. But time itself does not do anything.

It is true that cyber-damage may be caused when computer clocks set themselves back a century on January 1, 2000. J & H Marsh & McLennan are offering an insurance policy to companies facing such “millennial calendar meltdown.”⁴ But this problem results from the way in which computer clocks work, not from the new time period itself.

When our calendars flip from 1999 to 2000, we will be a little older. That’s all. It’s like the odometer on your car when it turns from 99,999 to 100,000 miles. Your car experiences no renewal just because you are looking at zeros instead of nines. You may make this an opportunity for renewal if you choose to give your car a tune-up, have the engine rebuilt, or trade it in. But going the extra mile has no inherent value in this instance.

We can experience renewal in the year 2000 if we choose to make it an opportunity to become not only a little older, but a little wiser as

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well. If we pause at the dawn of a new era to look over the days and years of our lives and of our heritage, reflecting on the way God has led us, we will be better prepared to sail with confidence into the uncharted waters of the twenty-first century.

Thus far we have been talking about millennial expectations in general. But for centuries people have seen something special about a seventh millennium. For example, in the apocryphal book of 2 Enoch (32:2-33:2), written by an Alexandrian Jew in the first century A.D.,

the world exists for a total of seven days of a thousand years each, and the Lord decrees that the seventh constitutes a penultimate sabbath, to be followed by the endless eighth day of eternal bliss. No Messiah is integrated into this millennial picture, but the implicit use of the canonical theme that “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday” (Ps. 90:4), with the consequent specification of a future era of explicitly millennial dimensions, is noteworthy.⁵

This view is based upon a combination of two ideas:

1. The sabbatical principle of six working days followed by a Sabbath day (Exod 20:8-11).
2. The concept that for God one day = 1000 years. This comes from Psalm 90:4—“For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.”⁶

The idea of 2 Enoch is weakened by the fact that Ps 90:4, attributed to Moses, is a poetic description of the timelessness of God, not a precise statement of an eschatological formula such as one day = one thousand years. Furthermore, the Hebrew Bible does not connect this idea with the sabbatical cycle.

While the New Testament does not explicitly connect the concepts of millennium and Sabbath, it comes tantalizingly close to that idea. 2 Peter 3:8 refers to Psalm 90:4 in an eschatological context. I quote from verse 7 to the beginning of verse 10:

But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief . . .

Peter’s point in referring to “one day is like a thousand years” is that “The Lord is not slow about his promise.” Notice that he also says: “and a thousand years are like one day.” He is not formulating precise

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eschatological chronology. Nevertheless, the passage is eschatological and therefore closer than Psalm 90:4 to the concept of an eschatological millennium.

Revelation 20 is the real foundation of Christian millennialism. According to Revelation 20:4-6, God's people will enjoy 1,000 years of reigning with Christ in heaven following his Second Coming. For some Christians who have taken this to be a literal period of 1,000 years and who have accepted the eschatological description as authoritative, this passage has encouraged the division of human history according to millennia: a Great Week of 7,000 years, including six millennia of sin, followed by The Millennium, which is a Great Sabbath.

It is true that Revelation 20 does not explicitly connect the millennium with the sabbatical principle. But from the description of the life which God's people will enjoy during the Millennium, it is clear that they will have entered into God's "rest" (cf. Heb 4). Thus, it is easy to see how this millennium could be regarded as constituting one big Sabbath. For the idea that the sabbatical principle should be applicable to a period of time longer than a day, there is biblical precedent in the Sabbatical and Jubilee years prescribed in Leviticus 25.

Belief in a literal Millennium was widespread in early Christianity. Some Christians, such as the author of the early second century Epistle of Barnabas⁷ and Irenaeus (c. 130-200),⁸ believed in 6,000 years preceding the Millennium. Important for them was the historical basis of the sabbatical principle: Just as God made the world in six days, they thought He would bring His purposes in the present era to completion in 6,000 years.

Medieval Christian thinking on the topic of the Millennium was dominated by Augustine, who abandoned earlier Christian millennialism and used instead a spiritualizing/mystical hermeneutic to argue that the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 represented the time period from Christ's first coming to the end of the present era.⁹ In A.D. 999, this view was undoubtedly part of the impetus for extensive preparations in Europe for Christ's return.¹⁰

In Europe generally a sort of mass hysteria progressively took hold as the year end approached . . . Some men forgave each other their debts; husbands and wives rashly confessed their infidelities; convicts were released from prison . . . fields were left fallow, and buildings went unrepaired by their owners . . . The confessionals did a roaring trade as people put their spiritual life in order . . . Many who had lived in sin promptly got married. Huge bands of pilgrims set out for the Holy Land with the hope of arriving in time to meet Christ in Jerusalem . . . mobs called for the execution of suspected sorcerers . . . On the night of 31 December, Gerbert celebrated mass in the Basilica of St

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Peter's in Rome. The packed congregation believed this might be the last mass they would ever attend. When the mass had been said, a deathly silence fell over the congregation—but they waited in vain.¹¹

The great disappointment of A.D. 1000 was hard on Augustine's interpretation. But the older idea that the present age will terminate after six millennia has survived to the present day. But now an additional belief is added, namely, the concept that the six millennia are almost completely in the past. For example, Ellen White wrote:

“The great controversy between Christ and Satan, that has been carried forward for nearly six thousand years, is soon to close.”¹²

That Ellen White appears to endorse the 6,000 year interpretation is significant. While the Bible provides the raw material which raises the possibility of this view, the Bible does not say that six millennia precede the Millennium of Revelation 20, nor does Ellen White explicitly state this. She fixes no terminal dates, but simply warns that humn history is about to run out.¹³

If Christ is to come after 6,000 years, it could appear at first glance that we should prepare to meet him on January 1, 2000. But there are several factors that make this kind of date-setting invalid:

1. When we reach the year 2000, we will reach it according to our calendar, which is an artificial construct. There is nothing intrinsically 2000 about the year 2000. People number years in different ways, even today. For example, the year 2000 will begin in the Jewish year 5760 and the Chinese year 4637. Even if we accept the Christian calendar, in which we count our years as A.D., “the year of our Lord,” we should take into account the fact that the numbering system is faulty because Christ was not born at the beginning of a year numbered as “0.” Because there was no zero year, the year 2000 will actually be only the 1999th year of the so-called Christian era. The 2000th year will begin in the year 2001. Moreover, Christ must have been born earlier than the beginning of the era which bears his name because his birth occurred sometime before Herod died in 4 B.C. So we are already more than 2000 years from Christ's birth.

2. Modern Christians who believe that the 6,000 years are almost finished clearly accept the idea that the world is about 6,000 years old. But we don't have an exact date for Creation. By calculating life spans included in the biblical genealogies and by assuming that there are four millennia before Christ and two millennia after Christ,¹⁴ the Irish Protestant Archbishop Ussher (1581-1656) developed a theory in which he placed Creation at 4004 B.C. But are the genealogies complete, or

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were there some gaps? Moreover, can we accept a date for Creation which is based partly on the 6,000 year theory as support for the same 6,000 year theory? This is called circular reasoning. Another wrinkle to be taken into account is the fact that the Septuagint's chronology is a millennium and a half longer between Creation and Abraham than the chronology of the Hebrew Bible, which was used by Ussher.¹⁵

As we know, the age of the earth is disputed within Adventism. The complexity of the discussion grows by leaps and bounds when extra-biblical evidence is introduced. Historians of the ancient Near East such as Siegfried Horn have wanted a few thousand more years in order to account for Egyptian and Mesopotamian chronology. Geologists have had difficulty reconciling 6,000 years with the geologic column. In any case, it is clear that we don't have a firm date for Creation.

3. According to at least some forms of the 6,000 year theory, there are 6,000 years *of sin* on earth, followed by 1,000 years of heavenly rest as a prelude to a perfect eternity. But when did sin on earth begin? Presumably we are talking about Adam and Eve's fall into sin, but even if we had an exact date for Creation, we don't know exactly when the Fall occurred. We can narrow it down by the fact that Adam was 130 years old when Eve gave birth to Seth (Gen 5:3). Since Genesis 4:25, which reports the birth of Seth, is placed after the description of Cain's murder of Abel, we have the impression that the time during which Cain and Abel grew up together must be fitted into the 130 years before Seth was born. Adam and Eve fell into sin before Cain was conceived, sometime earlier in Adam's first 130 years. But that still leaves some potential leeway between Adam's creation and the time of his first sin.

We cannot set the date of the Second Coming on the basis of millennial theory. There are too many variables.

Although Ellen White accepted 6,000 years as the approximate age of the world since creation, she did not attempt to set a date for Christ's Second Coming on this basis. She vigorously opposed date-setting. For example, in *The Great Controversy* she stated:

The more frequently a definite time is set for the second advent, and the more widely it is taught, the better it suits the purposes of Satan. After the time has passed, he excites ridicule and contempt of its advocates, and thus casts reproach upon the great advent movement of 1843 and 1844. Those who persist in this error will at last fix upon a date too far in the future for the coming of Christ. Thus they will be led to rest in a false security, and many will not be undeceived until it is too late.¹⁶

Adventists usually view Ellen White's statements regarding an approximate 6,000 year age of the earth as primarily relevant to

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questions of Creation and human origin. However, Ed Reid argues, in his book *Even at the Door*,¹⁷ that the importance of the “great week of time” is primarily eschatological, to show that time before Christ’s coming has almost run out. But in fact, Ellen White said that Christ could have come already. For example, in 1883 she reflected thus:

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward.¹⁸

The fact that Ellen White believed Christ could have come years before 1883 implies that she understood the 6,000 years as a round number referring to roughly six millennia. If the 6,000 years were a rigidly precise figure, Christ could have only one option for the time of His Second Coming.

Since Ellen White’s references to 6,000 years have to do with eschatology, it is tempting to suggest that the period is simply a figurative way to refer to the duration of the present era. This interpretation would allow for a longer chronology which could harmonize more easily with extra-biblical data. However, Ellen White did choose 6,000 years, when she could easily have referred to 8,000 or 12,000 years. There is no clear warrant for taking her expressions figuratively in this context. While her 6,000 year period appears to be a round number, its flexibility measures in a few centuries, not in millennia. The difficulties with extrabiblical evidence remain.

Jubilee Calculations

In the early 1980s, I received in the mail a rather elaborate exposition which attempted to establish the date of Christ’s Second Coming on the basis of Jubilee cycles. As I recall, Christ was supposed to come very soon after forty Jubilee periods of fifty years each. I forget how the writer established the idea that there should be forty Jubilee periods, but it had something to do with the number forty in the Bible, such as a particular instance of “forty days and forty nights.”

The theory which I have just described took known biblical data—the jubilee cycle and the number forty—and made a connection to which the Bible does not even allude. Why not seventy jubilee cycles or some other number used in the Bible? Because the writer was trying to arrive at a foregone conclusion, namely, that the terminal point must

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be within a few years of the time when he wrote. The writer introduced the number forty even though the number is foreign to the jubilees of the Bible. This is a form of eisegesis. If the writer had chosen the number forty because Ali Baba had forty thieves, the validity of his hermeneutic would have been approximately the same.

Another assumption by the writer was the point of commencement for his forty jubilees. But since the Bible does not give a starting date for counting a fixed time period which terminates at the Second Coming, the assumption had no biblical basis.

One reason why jubilee reckoning has been so popular among eschatological eisegetes is the flexibility of this approach. Like millennia, jubilees are cyclical. But rather than recurring every 1,000 years, they come along every half century. So if one jubilee year turns out to be wrong, we can catch the next one before too long.

Jubilees encourage multiplication, because their cycles consist of multiplied years. According to Leviticus 25:8-10, a jubilee cycle consists of seven sabbatical year cycles lasting a total of 49 years, that is, 7 x 7 years, plus the jubilee year in the 50th year (Lev 25:8-10). Moreover, there is biblical precedent for multiplying jubilees. Ben Zion Wacholder, a Jewish scholar, has pointed out that the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24-27 consist not only of seventy sabbatical year cycles, but also ten jubilee cycles.¹⁹ This may shed some light on an enigma in SDA prophetic interpretation. Daniel 9:25 indicates that the seventy prophetic weeks (490 years) begin with a 49-year period, referred to as "seven weeks." Attempts to identify the event which was to occur at the end of the 49 years have not resulted in a definitive conclusion. Perhaps the point is not so much the event but rather the 49 years itself, which shows that the 490 year period is divisible by 49-year jubilee cycles.

Why 49-year jubilee cycles? It is true that the jubilee year is the fiftieth year of an individual cycle, but when cycles are placed next to each other it appears that the jubilee year must be counted as the first year of the following cycle. This is a minority opinion of Rabbi Judah, recorded in the Babylonian Talmud.²⁰ The advantage of this view is that it allows for continuation of the sabbatical year cycles without necessitating eight years between sabbatical years due to insertion of the jubilee year.

Whereas Leviticus 25 prescribes jubilees for freedom and release of individual Israelites, Daniel 9:24-27 alludes to a larger jubilee-type period which was to culminate in some kind of release for the entire nation. This is jubilee typology. But the Bible does not go the next step by using an even larger jubilee time period to prophesy freedom for the entire world at the Second Coming of Christ. The fact that the Second

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Coming will result in freedom was not missed by Ellen White, who described events connected with Christ's Coming as follows:

Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest. I saw the pious slave rise in triumph and victory and shake off the chains that bound him, while his wicked master was in confusion and knew not what to do; for the wicked could not understand the words of the voice of God. Soon appeared the great white cloud...²¹

But no "great jubilee" or "jubilee of jubilees" spans the time until that precise point, like a rainbow with a pot of gold waiting for us at the end.

The idea that there may be large jubilee periods is an ancient idea. But a valid extension of jubilees to the date of Christ's Second Coming has never been established. When the Eschaton failed to materialize in October of 1987, recalculation conveniently pointed to 1991, then 1994, then 1996-1998,²² and the end of this apocalyptic equivocation is not yet in sight. We are reminded of a passage in the Babylonian Talmud, which states that the son of David will come after not less than 85 jubilees. "R. Hanan b. Tahlifa says after 7000 years and R. Abba the son of Raba says after 5000 years. R. Jahocachua says 2000 years; Barakhja and R. Dosa, 600 years; Jose the Galilean 60 years or three generations; R. Akiba 40 years and Rabbi three generations."²³ When speculation like this begins, there is no end to it.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have found that a date for the end of the present era, which we associate with the Second Coming of Christ, cannot be set on the basis of millennial or jubilee approaches.²⁴ When we come up to a particular date such as the year 2000, we cannot say that the apocalypse is "now." We must admit that it is "not yet." Attempts at precise date-setting involve eisegetical assumptions that wipe out their hermeneutical validity. Thus, we must take seriously Jesus' statement: "But about that day and hour²⁵ no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matt. 24:36). Jesus encouraged us to follow signs of the imminence of His coming (vss. 32-33), but he warned that "you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour" (vs. 44).

¹Stephen Skinner, *Millennium Prophecies* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1997), 24-25, 28-29, 94-95.

²*Time* (December 22, 1997), 65.

³*Time* (January 19, 1998), 4.

⁴*Time* (January 12, 1998), 28.

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⁵J. W. Montgomery, "Millennium," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3:357. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 451, translates this passage as follows: "And I blessed the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, on which he rested from all his works. God shows Enoch the age of this world, its existence of seven thousand years, and the eighth thousand is the end, neither years, nor months, nor weeks, nor days. And I appointed the eighth day also, that the eighth day should be the first-created after my work, and that *the first seven* revolve in the form of the seventh thousand, and that at the beginning of the eighth thousand there should be a time of not-counting, endless, with neither years nor months nor weeks nor days nor hours."

⁶NRSV here and in subsequent quotations unless otherwise specified.

⁷Section 15 of this work, as translated by J. B. Lightfoot in *Excluded Books of the New Testament* (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1927), 237-238.

⁸*Against Heresies*, book V, 28:3.

⁹Montgomery, 358-359.

¹⁰Skinner, 12.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 69.

¹²*The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 518.

¹³"The figure 6,000 is undoubtedly a rough approximation of the time from creation, as based on the Hebrew patriarchal chronology, to the present century, but the relation of this figure to the 6,000-year theory is purely coincidental." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, F. D. Nichol, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1953), 1:195.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 1:195.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1:180.

¹⁶*The Great Controversy*, 457.

¹⁷G. Edward Reid, *Even at the Door* (Published by the author, 1994), see especially 11-13, 107-169, 186-187, 227-228, 239-245.

¹⁸*Selected Messages* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:68.

¹⁹Ben Zion Wacholder, "Chronomessianism: The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975), 202-209.

²⁰Nedarim 61a.

²¹Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1945), 35 (cf. 286).

²²Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 23.

²³Sanhedrin 97b.

²⁴On the folly of trying to predict when Christ will return, see Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991).

²⁵That is, precise time.

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Apocalypse Now

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In the preceding essay we discussed expectations for the imminent return of Christ that are based upon millennial reckoning and jubilee calculations. Any attempt to set a definite date for Christ's return on the basis of these kinds of factors must introduce external assumptions into interpretation of the biblical text. Such a procedure is hermeneutically invalid; it flies in the face of Christ's statement that no one knows the precise time of His coming (Matt 24:36).

Biblical apocalyptic literature refers to a millennium only in Revelation 20 and alludes to a jubilee cycle only in Daniel 9. But there are a number of other time periods in biblical apocalypses, such as the "time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25), the "2300 evening morning" (Dan 8:14), the 1290 and 1335 days (Dan 12:11–12), the "five months" (Rev 9:10), and the 1260 days and "forty-two months" (Rev 12:6 and 13:5).

In this presentation we wish to address the implications of biblical time prophecies, especially the 2300 days, in regard to the imminence of Christ's return. Then I will consider our proximity to the Second Coming in light of the apparent delay following 1844.

Time Prophecies

The Second Coming is not given as the termination point of any biblical time prophecy. It is true that Daniel 12:12 pronounces a blessing on "those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days."¹ It is also true that William Miller interpreted the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 as a reference to the cleansing of the earth at Christ's coming, reading into the text his interpretation of

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“sanctuary” as “earth.” But the Bible does not present time prophecy as a way to pinpoint the precise time of the Second Coming. This has not deterred some eschatologists from attempting to suggest a date for the end of the present era on the basis of biblical time prophecy.

Here is an interesting example. In Daniel 12:6, Daniel asks: “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?” The answer given in the next verse is: “it would be for a time, two times, and a half a time.” Daniel heard this, but did not understand (vs. 8). So further elaboration was given in verses 11 and 12, referring to 1290 and 1335 days. I now quote from a recent book entitled *Milennium Prophecies*, by Stephen Skinner:

How should we reconcile these conflicting dates? It could be that after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 there were 1290 “days” times one and a half (“time, and a half”)? This would yield 1935 + 70, a beginning of apocalyptic events in 2005 AD . . . Using the same logic on 1335, the final resurrection of the dead should take place halfway through the year AD 2072, when the blessed who have waited will ascend to the stars.²

The idea that the 1290 and 1335 days should start from the destruction of the second temple in AD 70 is simply assumed. Why not start from something closer to Daniel’s time? The most remarkable twist of this eschatological eisegesis is its interpretation of the “time, times,³ and a half” to yield a multiplication factor of one and a half. While it is clear that Daniel is speaking of three and one half times, the modern futurologist takes the middle unit, “times,” in the mathematical meaning: “to multiply,” a meaning completely foreign to the Hebrew text. Then he adds the first and third units in the phrase: “time . . . and a half,” to arrive at “one and a half.” Then he multiplies 1290 and 1335 by one and a half and adds the results to 70 A.D., his assumed starting point. This is just playing games with the text.

We are comfortable criticizing the view just described. But what do we do when Dale Ratzlaff, in his book entitled *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, accuses us of using complicated eisegesis to support 1844, a key pillar of our sanctuary doctrine? Ratzlaff, a former denominational minister, knows that Seventh-day Adventists do not attempt to set a date for the Second Coming, as did William Miller, our ideological forebear. But Ratzlaff recognizes that the sanctuary doctrine is a crucial piece of our eschatology and soteriology.

The sanctuary doctrine affirms the imminence of Christ’s return because the pre-advent judgment in the heavenly sanctuary, beginning in 1844, is the phase of the salvation process which immediately precedes the Second Coming. It comes at the end of human history,

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after domination of God's people by Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Pagan Rome, and Papal Rome. While Christ did not come in 1844, at the end of the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, if this is the last date predicted in biblical apocalyptic literature, as we believe, Christ could come any time after 1844. As we noted in the previous essay, Ellen White believed that Christ could have come in her lifetime.⁴

Before launching his full discussion of the 2300 day prophecy, Ratzlaff describes and critiques various early Adventist attempts to unlock biblical time prophecies, some of which are enthusiastic speculations using wrong assumptions and wild proof texting. For example, as part of one of his "proofs" to establish 1843 as the year of Christ's coming, William Miller interpreted the number 666, which is the number of the beast in Revelation 13:18, as a time period under pagan Rome lasting from 158 B.C. to 508 A.D, when the so-called "daily" was taken away.⁵ Having discredited William Miller's hermeneutical reliability, Ratzlaff turns to our interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and the 2300 days, which grew out of William Miller's study. Ratzlaff regards our view on Daniel 8:14 as another example of wild proof-texting.

Ratzlaff encourages the Seventh-day Adventist church to abandon its sanctuary/judgment doctrine and to join evangelicals in proclaiming the true Gospel. He regards our sanctuary doctrine as a "sliver in the foot" which destroys spirituality and acceptance of grace through faith by promoting paranoid, perfectionistic legalism.⁶

Ratzlaff attacks the Seventh-day Adventist sanctuary doctrine from several angles. Aside from associating our interpretation of the 2300 day prophecy (Dan 8:14) with certain wild proof-texting of William Miller, he argues that our approach to the 2300 days is based on a series of unverified "assumptions." He attacks the credibility of Ellen White, upon whose authority our sanctuary doctrine must rest if it cannot be established from the Bible. He questions the integrity of Adventist treatment of doctrinal issues, and he points out that today some Adventists are theologically divided to the extent that they hold mutually exclusive positions. Perhaps most potent is the way in which Ratzlaff chronicles his personal exodus from the SDA church to illustrate his claim that our sanctuary doctrine is damaging and incompatible with biblical salvation theology.

No one can argue with Ratzlaff's experience. It is a fact that our sanctuary doctrine as understood by him has caused him pain. Many can resonate with him. In graduate school, as a student of an authority on Leviticus, I grappled with the sanctuary in the Hebrew text for eight years before I felt really comfortable remaining a Seventh-day Adventist. I am grateful to God that I had the opportunity to study

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deeply enough not only to have my questions answered, but also to get in touch with Jesus where He is now, in His sanctuary in heaven (Heb 7-10; cf. Ps 11:4).

I agree with Ratzlaff when he emphasizes the foundational nature of the sanctuary doctrine for Seventh-day Adventist theology. However, while his purpose is to argue for a thorough reformation of our theology by the removal of this doctrine, I find that sound exegesis points in the opposite direction: We should cherish the biblical teaching about the sanctuary because it accurately reflects righteousness by faith.

For his biblical objections to our sanctuary doctrine, Ratzlaff relies heavily on issues raised by Desmond Ford almost two decades ago. Ford's questions were good ones, and they have stimulated a lot of research, such as the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) seven-volume series, edited by Frank Holbrook. Ratzlaff acknowledges these works in his bibliography, but for some unexplained reason his discussion does not take their arguments into account. Thus his critique is more a reaction to the situation as it stood near the beginning of the 1980s than it is an accurate appraisal of current Adventist scholarship. We have more work to do, but we are making progress which Ratzlaff should recognize.

If Ratzlaff is arousing more interest in the sanctuary than the DARCOM series does, it is because his book is controversial and easily comprehended by non-scholarly readers. The DARCOM series is full of Hebrew and Greek exegesis which even our M.Div. students at the Seminary have difficulty following. In order to bridge the gap between scholars and lay people, we need more books like Clifford Goldstein's *1844 Made Simple*. There also needs to be more communication, open dialogue without fear of recrimination when tough questions are honestly addressed. I am not saying that we should not be accountable for what we teach and preach, but we do need some safe environments to learn from each other and grow together.

To support the idea that our sanctuary doctrine deserves to be studied rather than buried, I would like to suggest some possible answers to a few of the points which Ratzlaff has raised.

Twenty-three Hundred Days. Ratzlaff (p. 176) follows Ford in questioning our interpretation of "2300 days" in Daniel 8:14 on a number of grounds, including the fact that the Hebrew reads literally "evening morning 2300," which many scholars understand in light of verse 26 ("the evening and the morning") as 2300 half days, or 1150 full days. By comparing the syntax of Daniel 8:14, 26 with Hebrew expressions for time elsewhere, I have found that the number 2300 applies to both "evening" and "morning" as an abbreviation for "evenings 2300 and mornings 2300." Therefore, just as the expression

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“forty days and forty nights” (Gen 7:4,12, etc.) refers to forty full days, Daniel 8:14 refers to 2300 full days.

Atonement Not Completed at the Cross. Whereas the Adventist sanctuary doctrine indicates that atonement, in a certain sense, was not completed at the cross, Ratzlaff affirms the evangelical position that atonement was completed there (219-222). Adventists would agree that Christ’s death was the one and only atoning sacrificial death (Heb 9:28; cf. Jn 19:30—“It is finished”). All atonement, that is, reconciliation between sinners and their God, flows from Calvary. But was that the *end* of the atonement process? If atonement is relational, in that it deals with reconciliation between two parties, how can we receive atonement from a historical event which occurred almost two thousand years ago unless we experience a changed relationship with God on the basis of that event? As long as relationships are being healed, atonement is continuing. This concept agrees with the following biblical evidence:

1. Paul said: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished” (1 Cor 15:17-18). Christ’s resurrection, after His death on the cross, is essential for salvation.

2. In Hebrews 7-10, Christ ministers after His ascension as our High Priest in the true sanctuary in heaven, which was foreshadowed by the ancient Israelite sanctuary. There He appears “in the presence of God on our behalf” (Heb 9:24). Having obtained eternal redemption for us by His own blood (vs. 12), He uses His blood (cf. vs. 13—“sprinkling”) to “purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God” (vs. 14). In other words, Christ died to make abundant *provision* for the salvation of all human beings, and then He *distributes/applies* the transforming benefit. By way of analogy, Christ puts the money in the bank (by His death) and then He writes checks to people from that account (by His mediation). For us to receive the benefit of salvation, provision and distribution are both necessary.

3. In agreement with New Testament evidence for the way in which we are saved by Christ’s blood, ancient Israelite sacrifices for sin included personal involvement of sinners and priestly mediation as essential components. A common Israelite sinner was required to bring a female goat or sheep to the sanctuary, lean his/her hand on the head of the animal, and slay it. Then the priest applied its blood to the altar and burned its suet/fat on the altar (Lev 4:27-35). The ritual is summarized: “and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven” (Lev 4:31; RSV; cf. vs. 35).

Atonement was not completed by the slaughter of the animal at the hand of the sinner, which pointed forward to Christ’s death. Death provided the blood which made possible priestly mediation, an act

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which is called a work of “atonement.” Mediation was *part of* the atoning sacrifice. Since Christ’s sacrifice fulfills the meaning of the animal sacrifices (Jn 1:29), we should include Christ’s mediation as an essential part of His sacrifice rather than regarding it as a separate phase. Does the idea that atonement was not completed at the cross diminish the sacrifice and atonement of Christ? Absolutely not! We magnify what Christ is doing! Christ’s sacrifice and atonement are much bigger than they are commonly thought to be!

4. When an Israelite received complete forgiveness from God through a sacrifice which pointed forward to Christ’s sacrifice (for example, Lev 4:31, 35), that was not the end of the process of atonement. Atonement is larger than forgiveness. There was a further phase of atonement on the “Day of Atonement” (Lev 23:27-28). On this day, Israelites who had already been forgiven were now “cleansed” (Lev 16:30) through purification of the sanctuary from their sins (Lev 16:16,33-34). Until the Day of Atonement, forgiven sins affected God in the sense that He could be regarded as unjust because He had forgiven guilty sinners (cf. 2 Sam 14:9). But the Day of Atonement reaffirmed God’s forgiveness by vindicating the justice of His mercy. However, Israelites who were rebellious and/or failed to accept the provisions which He offered during the year and on the Day of Atonement were sentenced to divine punishment (see, Lev 20:3; Num 15:30-31; Num 19:13, 20; Lev 23:29, 30). So the Day of Atonement was a judgment which separated people who were disloyal to God from those who were loyal. Therefore the Day was an appropriate foreshadowing of an end-time judgment (Dan 7:9-14; cf. 8:14) which benefits God’s true people (Dan 7:22, 27) and condemns those who persist in opposition to God (Dan 7:11, 26; 8:25).

Faith, Works, and Judgment

Ratzlaff reacts to the Adventist teaching that we are judged on the basis of our works: “This teaching, perhaps more than any other, undermines the new covenant gospel of grace” (p. 210). What is the role of works in the context of the judgment?

First, the Bible is crystal clear regarding our salvation: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Whatever the purpose of the judgment, it cannot put salvation by works in place of salvation by grace through faith.

Adventists also teach that one purpose of the judgment is to vindicate God. But Romans 3:25-26 says that Christ’s sacrifice already proves that God is just when He justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

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There is no contradiction, however, because God is just when He justifies *those who have faith in Jesus* (cf. Eph 2:8). God cannot save a person who does not have true faith or who abandons faith after receiving forgiveness (cf. Jn 3:18; Col 1:23).

The judgment should identify God's true people on the basis of their faith. But since only God can read thoughts (cf. Ps 139:23), the judgment must use evidence for faith which can be witnessed by created beings if they are to be assured that God is just and that saved human beings will not continue to function as self-replicating moral viruses. Thus the judgment considers records of works (Eccl 12:14; cf. Dan 7:10) which show whether or not living faith exists (Jas 2:26; Gal 5:6). The point is not the works themselves, but whether or not a person has true faith.

The judgment is not about who has sinned. All have sinned (Rom 3:23), so distinctions between people cannot be made on this basis. The judgment is about who is forgiven. For those who are forgiven, it is to reaffirm their assurance, not to take it away. Compare the fact that on the Day of Atonement the Israelite high priest did not cleanse the sanctuary by wiping off bloodstains from earlier sacrifices. Rather, he placed more blood (Lev 16:14-19), representing Christ's blood, in several of the same places (cf. Lev 4:6-7,17-18,25,30,34), thereby reaffirming the forgiveness already granted.

Jesus expressed the need for a sinner to continue accepting forgiveness by maintaining loyalty to Him and His law of love. He said to the woman taken in adultery: "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (Jn 8:11). He also told a parable about an unjust steward who was forgiven but repudiated his pardon when he failed to extend forgiveness to his fellow servant (Matt 18:23-35).

Forgiveness which involves no moral change and which cannot reproduce itself for the benefit of others is not true forgiveness of the kind God gives. Fortunately for us, we are not left on our own to change ourselves. Christ gives us peace with God (Rom 5:1). His love, the basic attitude of His character and His law, is poured into our hearts through His Spirit (Rom 5:5; cf. 1 Jn 4:8; Matt 22:36-40). Thus genuine, ongoing obedience is a gift of grace bought by the blood of Christ and received through faith (cf. Jude 24).

We have pruned our eschatology radically since the days of William Miller, but it is by no means clear at this point that we should bury our understanding of the 2300 days as an unbiblical skeleton in our theological closet. Nevertheless, I am grateful to Ratzlaff for raising consciousness regarding the sanctuary and for clearly communicating an agenda for discussion. We didn't even have to pay him for his

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contribution. Hopefully we will shake off our complacency and return to the biblical text in a vigorous quest for answers. This is no time for apologetic dogmatism or suppression of frank inquiry. Our goal must be to understand the meaning inherent in scripture, regardless of our preconceptions. This kind of thinking requires open-mindedness, discipline, and willingness to test our ideas.

Imminence of Christ's Coming

Thus far, we have considered various approaches to eschatological time relevant to the question of when Christ will come again. The Seventh-day Adventist position on 1844 and Ellen White's acceptance of an approximate 6,000 year age of the earth are complementary, indicating Christ's imminent return sometime after 1844, after approximately six millennia of sin.

Some would say that the 6,000 years and 1844 can be accepted solely on the prophetic authority of Ellen White. This would not be such a problem for the 6,000 years because it is not a pillar doctrine, but it would be a problem for 1844. Can we have one of our pillars established on the basis of Ellen White alone, without full biblical support? But neither Ellen White nor the other pioneers based their interpretation of the prophecies and sanctuary doctrine on her visions.

My present position on the 6,000 years is that without Ellen White, I would regard the connection between the Millennium of Revelation 20 and the sabbatical cycle to be possible, but not clearly established. With regard to 1844, however, I am finding more and more biblical evidence which makes the connections involved in the Adventist interpretation. Like Ratzlaff, I had a hard time with the sanctuary doctrine, to the point that I wasn't sure where my relationship with the church was headed. But during the last decade and a half, as I have clawed my way through the details of the Hebrew text, I have been finding answers to my questions. Some answers come in unexpected places, such as the ancient Babylonian "Dynastic Prophecy," which shows that Babylon was superseded by Persia,⁷ not Media and then Persia, as many scholars hold in their attempt to show that the Hellenistic ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the "little horn" of Daniel 7 and 8.⁸

How many details regarding the sanctuary and the 2300 days do we need to know? As many as it takes to give us confidence. Confidence is an important practical matter for the Adventist church. At a recent Seminary faculty retreat, our speaker was Elder Robert Folkenberg, then President of the General Conference. I asked him why evangelism is not going ahead in developed countries as it is in the third world. He replied that in developed countries Seventh-day Adventists do not feel

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confident in what they believe, so they do not feel that they have something special to share with other people.

Besides 1844 and the 6,000 years, there are other “signs of the times” to indicate the imminence of Christ’s coming, as recorded in passages such as Matthew 24. Historians tell us that the world has been bad for a long time, and Ellen White said that Christ could have come in her day.⁹ In some ways the situation is better than it was, for example, in the days of slavery and apartheid or the Second World War. But in other ways there seems to be an inexorable downward spiral. There is no shortage of strife, suffering, and moral decay in perpetually replicating permutations. Partly through expanding electronic media, our world is becoming a cornucopia of concupiscence. The economic problems our leaders face are of biblical proportions. A pessimist could say that things couldn’t possibly get worse. An optimist could respond: “They surely will!” The situation could get a lot worse, and that could happen very quickly . . . or not so quickly. In any case, it appears that Christ could come any time.

Knowing that Christ could come any time does not authorize attempts to pinpoint the time the way stock market speculators attempt to calculate their opportunities. We cannot run the data into a computer and have it spit out the answer. God is going to come when He determines “it is done” (Rev 16:17). Peter said that we have the privilege of waiting for and even hastening “the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet 3:12), but we don’t have the power to trigger it, or even to start the “latter rain,” by what we do, even if we baptize vast numbers of people. Just as Christ’s coming and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost came by God’s initiative, so it will be with the “latter rain” of the Spirit and the Second Coming.

While 1844 implies a kind of imminence, we are left with the problem that it is now 1999, more than a century and a half since 1844. Time prophecy has ended, but we are still “doing time.” There is clearly a delay, as Jesus hinted there could be (Matt 24:45-51). Prophets such as Habakkuk and Peter indicated that apparent delays do not invalidate prophecy (Hab 2:3; 2 Pet 3:8-10). As the late Floyd Rittenhouse quoted to me (F. von Logau, via George Herbert, then Longfellow’s “Retribution”), “Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.”

A delay, but why this long? The idea that God needs over a century and a half to carry out His judgment challenges our credulity. Consequently, 1844 as the beginning of such a judgment can seem more than a trifle embarrassing. One of our most common explanations is that we had an opportunity to enter the heavenly Canaan, but we have been “wandering in the wilderness” due to our failure, just as the

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Israelites on the borders of literal Canaan turned away at Qadesh-Barnea. The failure most often cited is the unwillingness of the church to wholeheartedly embrace righteousness by faith in 1888. This may be true, but we can't go back to Qadesh-Barnea, or even Minneapolis, and relive them. It doesn't work that way. The Israelites had to go on, and so do we. They came to another opportunity to make a decision, but it wasn't in exactly the same place. Our past history instructs us so that, if we are willing, we do not need to make the same mistakes again. But we are always on the move if we are following God's leading.

Another factor, which may be complementary to the Qadesh-Barnea idea just mentioned, is God's desire to save as many as possible. Peter emphasizes this in the eschatological context to which I referred in my first article:

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance (2 Pet 3:8-9).

This concept is well represented in the Old Testament. For example, in Genesis 15, God told Abram that his descendants would be oppressed in another land for four hundred years (vs. 13), but that they would return "in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (vs. 16). So God kept His people uncomfortably waiting all that time because He was concerned about the Amorites, the western Semites who inhabited Canaan. Four hundred years was allotted for the benefit of a fairly small group of people. When we're talking about the entire population of Planet Earth, maybe 154 years since 1844 isn't such a long time after all.

Conclusion

We cannot set a date for the Second Coming on the basis of biblical time prophecies any more than we can predict Christ's return on the basis of millennial or jubilee cycles. But Daniel 8:14, as interpreted by Adventists, does indicate that we are living in the "last days." Nevertheless, while we long to see our Lord end the present age, we are troubled by His apparent delay. The reason is not completely clear to us, or it wouldn't be an apparent delay. However, we are comforted by the idea that God is doing things this way at least partially in order to save people who would not otherwise be saved.

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These days many people are waiting for “the apocalypse,” some kind of cataclysmic event which will end the present age. But this is not the biblical meaning of the word “apocalypse.” This word comes from Greek *apokalupsis*, which in Revelation 1:1 is the “revelation” of Jesus Christ (from and about Jesus Christ), which is contained in the book written by John on Patmos. The book of Revelation reveals a sweep of human history which moves forward inexorably from John’s time to the *eschaton* like a giant conveyor belt.¹⁰ In this sense, we have been in apocalyptic time all along. While the culmination is not yet, we are living in the apocalypse now.

Notes

¹NRSV here and in subsequent quotations unless otherwise indicated.

²Stephen Skinner, *Millennium Prophecies* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1997), 15.

³I.e., two times.

⁴*Selected Messages* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:68.

⁵Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (Sedona, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 1996), 76.

⁶The next few pages are from my response to Ratzlaff’s book published as “Our Cherished Doctrine” in *Adventist Today*, 6.2 (1998): 8-10.

⁷See A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1975), 24-37.

⁸L. F. Hartman and A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible 23 (1978), 147.

⁹See note 5, above.

¹⁰On cosmic sweep as a feature of apocalyptic literature, see Kenneth Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” *Symposium on Revelation—Book I, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*, Frank Holbrook, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 12-13.

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Channeled Apocalyptic: Intercepted Dispatches or Disinformation?

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Early in World War II, the British captured a German machine which translated coded messages. They called this machine “Enigma.” After months of work, cryptographers managed in 1940 to break the code. When they fed intercepted German transmissions into the machine, out came what seemed to be information about troop and supply movements. However, a great question remained: were these messages intercepted dispatches or disinformation? Were these authentic messages from the German High Command to the troops across Europe, or were the Germans leading the Allies into a trap?

Today, messages about the world’s end or rebirth are purportedly being “channeled” to the world through spirit mediums who call themselves “channelers.” “Spirits” claiming to be angels, aliens, even God the Father or Jesus Christ are sharing information about what will happen in the next few years. Again the question arises: are these intercepted dispatches or disinformation?

Given that these messages conflict in many ways with “the law” and “the testimony” (Is 8:20), our starting point, as Christians, must of course be that they are from “the father of lies” (Jn 8:44) or his cohorts, not from “ascended masters” or “archangels.” The adversary’s purpose is to deceive not only his faithful dupes, but “even the elect, if that were possible” (Matt 24:24). However, we know from our study of Revelation that the Accuser tends to work by *counterfeiting* God’s works, or the works he expects God to do. Like the magicians in Pharaoh’s court, he tries to mimic God’s acts, twisting them to his own use.

Church history reveals that the devil often counterfeits God’s deeds even before God’s real thing appears. For example, in this century, the

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fullness of the Latter Rain has yet to fall, yet it was on the first day of 1900 that Satan offered the Christian world “the gift of tongues,” so-called, and today his “signs and wonders” are sweeping the world, fooling hundreds of millions.

This does not mean, of course, that the devil is omniscient, or even pre-scient, but neither is he stupid. James 2:19 says, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” Why do they tremble? Is it because they know the Scriptures and know what is coming? Is it possible that based on their knowledge of Scripture and of the world’s condition, they know the time of Christ’s return is near, so they are preparing a disinformation campaign, preparing to deceive as many as possible?

Even though he does not have the benefit of the Holy Spirit leading him “into all truth” (Jn 16:13), “even the devil can quote Scripture.” We are told “he knows that his time is short” (Rev 12:12). From Scripture’s prophecies, and also from his intimate knowledge of how God has worked through history, he can estimate—whether accurately or not—when the end will come, what’s next on the prophetic time chart. He doesn’t need a Bible scholar to convince him of the validity of the “year/day principle”: he’s seen it in action. He can guess enough about what is to come to prepare a strategy for the final battles.

Why Is This Happening? We know the “Channeled Apocalyptic” coming from channelers around the world is not accurate—Satan is trying to deceive. However, we may well ask, why he is trying to deceive in this way at this time? Is he preparing people to be fooled by great deceptions he himself is about to spring on them, impersonations of Christ or other figures, fire from heaven, miraculous signs? Could he be preparing people to accept alternative explanations of what he believes God is about to do? Is he merely fanning the flames of “millennial fever” in hope that another great disappointment will lead multitudes to despair of Christ’s return? Or are these purported channelings of “spirit entities” by thousands of channelers no more than a hoax, a carnival trick?

Jesus warned us that “false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles” (Matt. 24:24), and we are seeing this prophecy fulfilled before our eyes. Indeed, the “prophecy business” probably has more practitioners now than at any time since the Black Plague devastated Europe in the 14th century.

What Should We Do? Should we study these “prophets,” these “channelers,” weighing their words, searching for grains of truth? Frankly, we shouldn’t; they don’t deserve it. Jesus also said, “Wherefore

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if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:6–7). There is no truth being “channeled” which we need to know. If there is any truth in these messages, it is merely part of the deception. We don’t need Satan to interpret prophecy for us. I’ve devoted many hours to researching this report, and I greatly wish I had instead spent those hours in the Word. Most of these “channelings” are warm, fuzzy nonsense, idiotic to anyone who can think logically, but despite that they can be seductive, even hypnotic. Unless one is filled with the Spirit and firmly grounded in the straight truths of Scripture—especially eschatology and the state of the dead—one can be seduced. Even those who are sound can pick up speculations which may become part of their expectation of what is to come. On the other hand, as God’s remnant people, we have an obligation to be ready to warn those who are making a mistake, and if we know whereof we speak, we are better able to present this warning

In this paper I’ll be focusing on New Age “channeling,” but including a brief look at two other deceptions which are impacting heavily on the Christian world: the supposedly “Christian” apparitions of Mary which are occurring with ever-greater frequency and the best-selling book *The Bible Code*. Mary’s messages also come through “channels,” albeit “Christian” ones. The Bible Code was purportedly placed in the Bible by God Himself—using a computer—and His “message” is now “channeled” with the aid of a computer. Another interesting source of millennial prophecy is the secular prophets, from Nostradamus to Edgar Cayce and Jeanne Dixon, but as they are not recent phenomena, they will not be included here. Charismatic prophecy and interpretations of tongues might also be included, but they are not often published and not all that influential at present.

The Same Old Lies

At heart, the “channeled” lies of the New Age spirit mediums are the same lies presented by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4–5). Why change a winning formula? “Ye shall not surely die” points to Satan’s most basic lie: “You are immortal; your soul is immortal; you cannot die.” Whether through continued existence in some “spirit world” or through reincarnation or some other explanation, the “channeled entities” agree

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that eternal death is impossible. Even “Christian” apparitions of Mary or Jesus or “the Archangel Michael” agree that we are immortal, though of course they assign the wicked to eternal torment. “For God doth know” is a blatant accusation that God is a liar: there is a difference between what He knows and what He has told us; His Word is not sure; we do not have “a more sure word of prophecy” (II Pet. 1:19). “Your eyes shall be opened” suggests the lie that this world is not the real world, but an illusion: the real world is a spirit world or another dimension, some nebulous Nirvana from which we’ve come and to which we will return. “Ye shall be as gods” is the lie that we are evolving toward godhead, an unwarranted pride and ambition similar to Satan’s own, revealed in Isaiah 14:14: “I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

“Knowing good and evil” is the Gnostic lie: there is some secret, esoteric knowledge, available only to adepts, which contradicts the plainly-revealed word of God. “Good and evil are complimentary and intertwined”; “without evil we would not recognize good”; “in every good there is a bit of evil, and in every evil a spot of good”; “good and evil are relative”; “there is no such thing as evil”; “there is no Law of God—God only wants you to love and be happy”—all of these are frequently channeled demonic lies. Satan’s lies from the Garden of Eden recur time after time in the “channeled” New Age writings.

Are These Lies New? If one studies New Age teachings within the context of the history of alternative religions, one discovers that very little of it is new. This discovery greatly decreases the impressiveness of the “channeled messages”—if some space alien is “channeling” as news some idea thrashed out a century ago, those who know their history grow skeptical. The great-grandfathers of the New Age were people like Franz Mesmer, who popularized hypnotic trances and spiritualist séances in 18th century France, and Emanuel Swedenborg, the 18th century Swedish scientist and mystic whose occultic and metaphysical ideas were based on “visions” written out in many books. Another influence was Freemasonry, which popularized ideas from medieval alchemy.

Literary Influences. One influence on New Age ideas not often considered is the teaching of literature to college students. Of the major Romantic poets of England in the early 19th century, William Blake’s ideas were based on Swedenborg’s; Wordsworth was a “worshipper of nature” and pantheist who believed children come from God with dim memories of life in heaven; Byron and Shelley were heavily involved with the occult; Keats believed in faerie-lore and was much influenced

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by Greek ideas; Coleridge wrote poems about spirit-beings and opium visions. In America a generation later, such Transcendentalist writers as Emerson and Thoreau combined the neo-platonic idea of the “world-soul” and Eastern ideas such as reincarnation and pantheism with nature worship. These immensely influential writers—especially Emerson—influenced both the 19th century liberalization of main-line Protestantism and the rise of spiritualism. Because they offered first-rate writing with spirituality but without Christianity, they were beloved by the intellectual elite which had turned away from the Bible. These English Romantics and American Transcendentalists were enjoying a wave of popularity in college English departments in the 60s and early 70s, when “Age of Aquarius” ideas were developing, and for those who had studied the literature, many of these ideas seemed familiar, even sanctioned.

Spiritualism. A generation after the Transcendentalists came modern spiritualism, beginning in 1848, with waves of popularity in the 1850s and 1870s. Spiritualism helped to accustom people to the use of mediums in trances to contact the dead and to “automatic writing,” whether with or without human assistance. In the early 1920s Sherlock Holmes’s creator Arthur Conan Doyle became an evangelist for spiritualism, and so did Episcopal bishop James Pike in the late 1960s. Pike even participated in séances on television, convincing millions of Christians that God must have been wrong when He said, “do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers . . . They prophesy lies to you” (Jer. 27:9–10).

Theosophy. Perhaps the most important influence on New Age “channelers” was Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophy, which went through several stages, all of which are still found in New Age ideas. Blavatsky’s first stage emphasized spiritualistic phenomena and the use of its power, and though she outgrew that, it is still seen in the current interest in “channeling” and in those “channelers” who channel the “spirits of the departed” from “beyond the veil.” In her second stage, Blavatsky turned to the religious myths of Egypt and Greece, to the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, and these too are extremely popular among some New Age groups. In her third stage, Blavatsky emphasized the Eastern religious traditions of reincarnation, meditation, and evolution toward godhead. This aspect of her teaching is perhaps the most influential today. Blavatsky’s work in India also encouraged a Westernization and reformation of Hinduism and Buddhism, trimming them of their obvious idolatry so that their ideas would be more acceptable to the Western mind. All of the Indian gurus who have become

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popular in the West, from Krishnamurti to Rajneesh, owe a good deal to Blavatsky.

Bailey and Ballard. Several early 20th century groups which evolved from Theosophy have also influenced New Age thought. Alice Bailey, who began the Full Moon Meditation movement, wrote many books which she claimed were “channeled” from the Tibetan master Djwal Kul, and these are still in print. Bailey’s work is not included here because she died in 1949, but she “channeled” a good deal about the Second Coming (as her “contact” wanted her to see it). The ‘I AM’ movement began in the 1930s, led by Gary Ballard. ‘I AM’ teaches that the goal of humanity is evolution toward “ascension” to join the “Ascended Masters” in the next world. These “Ascended Masters,” such as Jesus, Seth, and Saint Germain, are among the most popular “channeled entities.” (Indeed, there is much more interest today in such speakers than in departed relatives.)

New Thought. A final influence on New Age ideas is the New Thought movement, stemming from the “metaphysical” ideas of Phineas Quimby in the mid-19th century. New Thought denies the concept of “Ascended Masters” who direct our evolution, preferring instead to see our “positive thinking” as the power behind change, progress, and healing. However, like Theosophy, it teaches that there is an inner reality which transcends the “illusion” of what we see around us. Several New Thought groups claim to be Christian. Worth noting among these is the Unity School of Christianity, which claims that the entire Bible is an allegory of how we ourselves can become Christ. Many “channels” have been influenced by this group. Norman Vincent Peale, founder of the magazine *Guideposts*, helped to make these ideas acceptable to liberal Protestants. [The above background information is drawn in part from Richard Kyle’s *The Religious Fringe: A History of Alternative Religions in America*, chapters 4 and 8.]

New Age. “New Age” teachings include a wide variety of interests and influences, and the menu is very much *à la carte*. Among the frequently-found themes one finds in New Age literature are reincarnation, environmentalism, and apocalypticism—whether that be the end of the world, a new stage of human and world evolution, or some combination. While Christ is often mentioned favorably, Christianity is generally presented as a sad misunderstanding of Christ’s teachings which has caused untold misery. The primary religious influence is Eastern: sanitized versions of Hindu, Buddhist, and Zen beliefs. These, of course, being based on reincarnation and the gradual evolution of the human soul, are not often apocalyptic, so the

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“channeled” writings I’ll be quoting—which concentrate on apocalyptic themes—show less Eastern influence than most.

A great many fads are embraced by various New Age exponents—and they provide an income for thousands. Crystals of various sorts are sold and used for “healing.” The “auras” around people—glows of various colors—are read and analyzed and changed through magical movements. The “chakras”—inner sources of spiritual and physical energy—are adjusted and strengthened. Other forms of divination—tarot cards, the I-Ching, Celtic rune stones, bones—are consulted in the age-old search for knowledge of the future. There are also many kinds of massage available, ranging from the violent to the sexual to a sort where the body is never physically touched. There are aromatherapy, biofeedback, and past life regression (where under hypnosis one travels back to an earlier incarnation, usually as some famous person—though recently past lives as Indian medicine women have been popular). Many New Agers are also interested in Wicca—which purports to be an ancient worship of the earth. This is often combined with goddess worship, druidism, witchcraft, and even Satanism. These fads sometimes are referred to by “channeled spirits.”

Is Channeling a Hoax? In attempting to determine if “Channeled Apocalyptic” is intercepted dispatches or disinformation, there is another question we must ask: are authentic messages from demons being “channeled” or is “channeling” a hoax, a scam? As with faith healing and fortune-telling, probably many of the “channelers” are quacks. It’s relatively easy for a showman to work up a knowledge of New Age ideas, add a few of his own, develop an “entity” to “channel,” and fake a trance. If he can gain a little information about the audience, he’ll seem amazing. Practice makes perfect, and New Age adherents tend toward gullibility—they desperately want the “channel” to be “the real thing.” Although there is seldom much money to be gained, there is a certain demonic pleasure to be had in fooling an adoring audience, moving them to tears or laughter or donations.

Conscious or Trance Channeling? A book which examines this question is Michael F. Brown’s *The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age*, published this year by Harvard University Press. Brown, who holds an endowed chair in anthropology at Williams College, traveled the country interviewing and observing “channelers” and even participating in sessions. While he refuses to speculate on the source of their information, he concludes that many “channelers” definitely seem to be in a trance state while “channeling.”

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However, Brown also points out that there is disagreement over whether or not “trance channeling” is better than a new method which is being called “conscious channeling.” “Conscious Channeling” seems to be something like “speaking in tongues”: one is conscious, not in a trance, but one relaxes, lets go of oneself, and the words come to mind or mouth and need only be spoken or written. With “conscious channeling” there are no circus performances, no strange voices. The “channeler” can interrupt the “entity” to ask questions or comment and knows what is said. With genuine “trance channeling,” the “channeler” often utters embarrassing animal-like grunts and suffers from painful-looking facial contortions while entering the trance, seems “possessed,” and usually claims to have no memory of what was said during the trance. “Conscious channeling” is less exciting for the audience, but also less intimidating. A variation of “trance channeling” is “hypnotic channeling,” where a psychologist hypnotizes the “channel,” freeing the “channel’s spirit entity” to speak and be questioned.

Some of the “channels” quoted in what follows are recorded during a trance, after which a transcript is made (Sheldon Nidle is an example). Others simply type what seems to flow into their minds (as does Annie Kirkwood).

Propagation. I should point out that there are a great many “channeled” books in print, most published by small presses or self-published. A few become best-sellers, as with Annie Kirkwood’s *Mary’s Message to the World*, but most do not. There are several thousand channelers in this country, and probably several hundred thousand who buy their books or attend their channeling sessions. Channeling is an important part of the New Age Movement, but a great many people who follow New Age ideas are interested in, say, aromatherapy or the mother goddess and never read channeled books. What is more, given the Eastern flavor of many New Age ideas, it’s not surprising that only a small number of these books deal with end time events. “Channeled Apocalyptic” holds perhaps five percent of the channeled writing market.

Nevertheless, thanks to the influence of people like Shirley Maclaine, many people are learning what the evil one wants them to learn by reading these books. They are being prepared for something. For a deception? For a disappointment? Who knows?

A Channel for Every Audience. In studying “Channeled Apocalyptic,” it is interesting to note the way the deception is tailored to the audience by the great deceiver. For those interested in science fiction, “extraterrestrials” are “channeled”; for those who prefer an

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Asian slant, perhaps an ancient Tibetan lama. For those who have repudiated things Christian but harbor a sentimental fondness for Christ, “Jesus” has been “channeled” many times, as have “Michael,” “Gabriel,” and even “God.” (I don’t recall anyone “channeling” John or James or Paul or Isaiah: far too likely to say something “judgmental,” I suppose.) When Annie Kirkwood “channels” “Mary” or “Jesus,” they spout New Age ideas. When “Mary” appears to Catholic children, on the other hand, she tells them to say the rosary and promises to ask her Son to have mercy on them. When “Jesus” appears to Catholics, He asks them to honor His mother.

Sometimes “channels” try to expand their markets by “honoring,” as they say, several traditions. For example, Sheldon Nidle “channels” an alien from Sirius, but he also presents a universe which has a place for “ascended masters,” the “Christ presence,” “angels,” and more, trying to expand his audience. This avoids the potential embarrassment of someone saying, “The channel I saw last week said the Ascended Masters are in charge of this planet, but you say it’s aliens and that Ascended Masters don’t exist. Why should I believe you?”

So then, what are the spirits saying about the days to come? What is in store for the world, according to the “father of lies”?

A Time of Trouble / A Time of Growth

There is general agreement among the “spirit entities” that terrible times are coming, a time of trouble. Perhaps two-thirds of the world’s population will be killed, though non-Christian “channelers” say these can be reincarnated. Catholic “channelers” say God’s faithful people, who do what Mary asks, will be spared. Others say those who prepare for the changes by raising their “vibration level” or becoming “spiritually conscious” will survive.

Kryon. “Kryon” is an “entity” who “channels” information through Lee Carroll. His purpose on Earth at this time is to rearrange Earth’s magnetic energy grid—an enterprise which will have both disastrous and beneficial effects. It doesn’t matter if some are killed by this alignment, however. Kryon says, “Some will stay, and those who can’t will reincarnate and re-emerge with the correct alignment” (23).

Later he says, “1. Your millennium is coming to an end.

“2. It was prophesied in many cases that this would also be the end of all life on Earth, for a termination was in order . . . The preparation time . . . would have been another 1,000 years . . .

“3. *This has now been changed!* You will not be terminated. You will not necessarily go through horrible wars and planetary upheaval

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that would have culminated in you leaving by the year 2001. You have earned the right to stay and control your own destiny completely, *well into the first century of the new millennium*. This you have done yourselves by raising the vibration of the planet through thought consciousness over the last 60 years (at the eleventh hour, you might say)” (101). [All italics within quotes in this essay are in the works cited.] Note how this prepares readers to see the time of trouble God has promised not as His final call to repentance, but as the work of powerful spirits working in their behalf, calling them to “higher vibrations,” to efforts to transform the planet by thinking loving thoughts.

New Age Mary. Annie Kirkwood is neither a Catholic nor a Christian, but in her book *Mary’s Message to the World* she claims to “channel” both Mary and Jesus. Her “entities” spout New Age ideas with a thin Christian veneer which makes them more palatable to lapsed Catholics and marginal Christians. In Kirkwood’s best-selling book, Mary says, “The time is drawing near when you will be shaken and frightened, not because of any punishment, but to renew the land and the minds of mankind. The Earth will shake and will be moved by violent forces which will cause many to lose their physical lives” (2). Note again how this is presenting catastrophe—the widespread destruction of the wicked by the during the Last Plagues—as part of a retooling process, frightening but nothing to worry about. Satan is preparing people to say no when God calls. “There is a dividing and splitting of galaxies. . . . Now, the growth affects your solar system, and the planets will realign to new places and points. During this realignment, the Earth will be turned and shaken, and you will have many catastrophic events” (3).

Catholic Mary. In his book *The Final Hour*, Michael H. Brown, a devout Catholic, reports on “Marian apparitions” from around the world and relays what “Mary” is saying through the many people who are “channeling” her words. These speakers do not call themselves “channels,” but in effect they are. Brown calls them “seers.”

Brown writes, “we may indeed be living in what biblical scholars refer to as the apocalyptic or last times. . . . If so we’re not speaking about the end of the *world* but the end of an *era*—a period that will record radical change in the way we live, think, and believe, along with certain social, political, economic, and perhaps even geophysical upheavals” (11). He mentions that in the “apparitions” at La Salette, France, in 1846—note the date and consider what else was happening in the world at that time—“The Virgin also issued warnings about

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working on the Sabbath and about using Christ's name in vain" (16). Lucia, one of the women to whom "Mary" appeared at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917, reports that "Mary" said, "*The time is coming when the rigor of My Justice will punish the crimes of diverse nations. Some of them will be annihilated. At last the severity of My Justice will fall on those who want to destroy My Reign in souls*" (70). Could that include Christians who don't believe she is "Queen of Heaven"?

To Matous Lasuta of Turzovka, Czechoslovakia, Brown reports, "Mary" said, on June 1, 1958, "There would be earthquakes and even mountains would move. The air would be filled with demonlike forms that symbolized sin—terrifying humanity. [To New Age "channelers" these are not demons but helpful "aliens."] Then nature will calm down, . . . and a bright spot will appear—but the world will not be recognizable. Everything will be destroyed. It will be difficult to find life and living beings. God will punish the wicked and those who will have blasphemed Him" (109).

In an appearance to a nun in Akita, Japan, in 1973, "Mary said, "*Fire will fall from the sky and will wipe out a great part of humanity, the good as well as the bad, sparing neither priests nor faithful . . . The only weapons which will remain for you will be the Rosary and the Sign left by my Son*" (176). Note how those believing in Mary's power are being prepared to be unsurprised if faithful priests are killed in this tribulation.

In an "apparition" to Mafalda Caputo of Oliveto Citra, Italy, January 10, 1986, "Mary" said, "Mankind takes more command from the demon than from Jesus. The Madonna said Jesus is going to come down soon. A lot of nations could disappear from the world. That's why the Madonna has been appearing.' . . . it was emphasized that any possible chastisements would be not out of sheer heavenly anger but as a way of refreshing us" (301–302).

The Ecuadoran teenager Pachi said, following "Mary's" appearance to her, "Many cities are going to disappear. New York City will disappear" (320).

What Causes the Calamity? / What Can We Do?

There is general agreement among these "channeled spirit entities" that whatever causes this calamity, it is not the return of Christ and not the end of the world. Most attribute the calamity either to a natural event, such as a collision with a comet or a shift of the magnetic pole which melts the icecaps, or to the efforts of the spirit world to help us evolve. Most say we need changing. Many say our raised spiritual

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consciousness in this century has made the change possible or prevented our total destruction. Catholic channelers say the calamity is a chastisement for our sins which can be lessened or avoided if we repent and unite under the pope's leadership.

Kryon. In a sentence both chilling and delightfully ironic, the "entity" Kryon says, "There is no greater sign of enlightenment on a global level than (1) the desire for tolerance, (2) the desire for peace, and (3) the elimination of everything that gets in the way of number 1 and number 2" (26). And in the quest for "tolerance" and "peace," what would be "eliminated"? In the light of *The Great Controversy*, should we ask, perhaps, who would be "eliminated"? The "elimination," in the name of "tolerance," of those who are intolerant of sin in their own lives is a process which has plagued humanity and plagued the church since the days of Cain and Abel.

New Age Mary. Speaking through Annie Kirkwood, the New Age "Mary" says, "In the next few years you will see the hand of fate deal out some mighty blows to Earth. You will have earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, many large and damaging storms and tidal waves of unheard of proportions. Look for strange happenings in the sky, along with strange appearances of stars. The polar ice caps will begin to melt and break apart" (4). Sounds like Mary has been reading Matthew 24. "You will see religions begin to crumble and there will be derision amongst the church elders. The Catholic church will begin to lose much of its power. There will be a call for the unity of all religions as church leaders find their numbers falling. This is because many will begin to seek their knowledge through spiritual means and through the work of the mind. The churches which grow will be those who profess to the world the idea of the One God" (16). How should we respond to this call for unity? Trust your intuitions! "Mary" says, "Look into your heart to find answers which will come into your mind at the appropriate time. Have faith in your ability to hear the Truth as it is spoken" (5). Here we find the method of not only the New Age, but the Pentecostal churches: trust the inner voice.

This New Age "Mary" says we will receive help from "the world beyond": "It will be in these years that some of the aliens will suddenly appear to your world leaders and offer help. It will be as if the Angel of the Lord had come to help. But surely you who have the knowledge beforehand will see the workings of the whole Universe to save mankind.

"With a new attitude, your world leaders will be ready to hear of ways to save the populations and of the coming turning of the Earth.

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The extraterrestrials, as you call them, will be of much help, but still your leaders will not want to give any hint that these negotiations are transpiring.

“The people of the world will be in a mood of humbleness and genuine seeking of God. This is good, for through last-minute seeking, many will be spared their spiritual lives and advancement” (25).

What can we do? “Mary” says, “There are many preparations to be made. One is to love not only yourself, but the world” (102). She adds, “Total acceptance without criticism is needed to love unconditionally” (104). It is significant that “uncritical acceptance” is the virtually unanimous recommendation of “channelers.” By contrast, I John 4:1 says, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

The New Age “Mary” says, “Whether you pray facing the east or facing an altar, or on Saturday or Sunday, it is all worshi. . . The dogma and rituals are not as important as the worship which is done in your heart and mind. . . . All religions are manmade, inspired by the Creator. All words which have been written in the Holy Books have been written by men in unity with the Creator” (145).

“Taking up arms and fighting for your religion and your dogma is wrong, abusive, and ugly. . . . There is no chosen people or special chosen church. There are many chosen people and many churches. It is for each person to choose how he will worship his Creator. . . . Any religion is correct if it leads you to worship the Creator through your heart and mind” (146–147). I beg to differ. God’s Word says otherwise.

Washta. In Sheldon Nidle’s *You Are Becoming A Galactic Human*, the “channeled entity” is “Washta,” an extraterrestrial counselor from the Sirius system. Washta says, “When the collapse of the planet’s electrical and magnetic fields occurs, it will also allow all atoms on Earth to be changed. The atoms in your body will be modified to form a new body—a body that is semi-etheric—and the veil of consciousness around you will be removed. You will no longer be living in the limited 3rd-dimensional reality. You will now be human beings living in the reality of the galactic light. . . . As your atmosphere is compressed and all materials become denser, the big danger will be from nuclear materials since there is the possibility for either nuclear chain-reactions or huge and deadly radioactive explosions of fissionable materials. This compression of nuclear energy could possibly cause massive fire storms in addition to explosions around the planet, or nuclear chain reactions” (37).

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What can we do? Washta says, “Be prepared to act in unison for the good of humanity in thought and deed! For it will not take a huge number of humans, acting as a unified group around your globe, to bring this great energy of change and consciousness to the planet and allow it to be safely anchored in such a way that it supports everyone—even those who still sit in denial of it” (55).

What will this mean for God’s people? Washta says, “What we would say to those in the churches is that the clue to this whole process is the energy of love. If they are truly coming from an aspect of love and not just doing service to make a good appearance, then they can be a prototype for a true advocate group if their core is not based upon this pure spiritual and loving energy, however, and they cannot perceive Earth’s needy situation in a totally non-dogmatic, non-judgmental, and open way, then they are involved in a dogma, and are limiting their purposes. Religion is not meant to ignore present circumstances or prohibit change. It must be a helpmate for all times and all experiences, allowing an ever-increasing consciousness. . . .

“Many churches are now beginning to understand that they must address modern circumstances and expand their energy patterns so that they move out of their dogma and into a more open light. . . . However, if you wish to maintain yourselves as part of a spiritual group only (and not believe in extraterrestrials), we would ask that you to [*sic*] listen to the energies of the Spiritual Hierarchies themselves. These various angels, archangels and ascended masters will be leading spiritual groups towards unifying with planetary advocate groups” (199–200). That is to say, demons posing as aliens who have come to help us will be trying to “unite” us to “save the planet” from the coming judgment of God. Here we find the prophecies of Revelation from the opposing viewpoint.

Washta says, “The Galactic Federation now believes it is essential to alter the present make-up of governance on Earth to a nonhierarchical structure, since fully conscious humans are cooperative and will want to govern themselves in a democratic way” (214). “Nonhierarchical” is coded language. It means, “without God over us.”

The New Age often twists the gospel to fit its own message. I’m convinced that the devil’s favorite Bible verse is “God is love”—his minions certainly quote it often enough. However, he ignores “God is holy; God is just; God is righteous; God is jealous; God is our Substitute, and God is wrathful against those who harm His children.” Washta says, “The essence of the Christ light is love and compassion. When people are immersed in this white light energy and they use it as the

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source for all that they do in raising their consciousness, they will see that this energy has the capability to protect them from any dark vibrations” (222).

Catholic Mary. The “apparitions” of “Mary” appearing to Catholic “seers” are also, I believe, demonic voices, but they are deceiving people primarily by turning them from Christ to Mary. For the evil one, there’s no need to lead people further than that. Wherever they turn, if it is not to God, and God alone, he has them fooled. As “Mary” said to Lucia, one of the Fatima “seers,” *‘Jesus wishes to make use of you to have me acknowledged and loved, . . . ‘He wishes to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart . . . My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God’*” (38).

On April 12, 1947, “Mary” appeared to “Bruno Cornacchiola, a former Catholic who’d come under the spell of both Communists and anti-Catholic ‘christians,’ [and] plotted to stab the Pontiff and save the world from the ‘evils’ of the papacy, the ‘idolatry’ of communion with saints, and the ‘fraudulent’ idea that Mary was the Mother of God.” “Mary” said, *“‘I am she who is related to the Divine Trinity,’ . . . ‘I am the Virgin of Revelation. You persecute me, and now it is time to stop! Come and be part of the holy fold which is the celestial court on earth’ . . . She explained that Hail Marys said with love and faith were ‘like golden arrows that go straight to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.’ She pleaded for Christian unity, telling Bruno that there should be one flock and one shepherd”* (67).

“During the apparition, which lasted an hour and twenty minutes, she also confirmed the reality of her assumption into Heaven.”

Appearing in 1947 to Pierina Gilli, a nurse, in Montichiari, Italy, “Mary” said, *‘I wish the 13th of each month to be celebrated as the day of Mary. On the twelve preceding days, special prayers of preparation should be said. . . . My Divine Son, tired of continuing offenses, wanted to act according to His justice, so I placed myself as a mediatrix between Him and the human race, especially the consecrated souls. . . . I have interceded that He may be merciful once more. Therefore, I ask for prayer and penance to atone for these sins’*” (75–76). One thinks of the angel of Revelation twice telling John to bow to no one but God and wonders how anyone could be deceived by such a request. However, many people do not know their Bible that well, and many who do fail to receive it as God’s Word.

When “Mary” appeared as “Our Lady of All Nations” to a woman in Amsterdam named Ida, she said, *“‘I have come to tell this depraved and degenerated world, all of you unite. I will lead all the dispersed flock*

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back to one fold. . . then she pointed to a globe that looked like it was ready to burst. Indicating the sky eastward, where there were many stars, she said, 'That is where it will come from.'

"A meteor? A comet? An asteroid?"

" . . . She saw a rent that ran diagonally across the earth. Great misery and distress, she was told, were '*immanent.*' During an apparition on December 7, 1947, she saw thick clouds over Europe and titanic waves. '*They will first have to perish by the flood,*' the seer was told, which she was further informed would constitute the '*desolation*'" (77).

Michael H. Brown writes, "Two-thirds of mankind would be gone. . . . According to Mateus, the Virgin said that '*all my children will receive and carry the sign of the cross on their foreheads.* [So, is the "sign of the cross" the "mark of the beast"?) *This sign only my chosen ones will see. These chosen ones will be instructed by my angels how to conduct themselves. My faithful will be without any kind of fear during the most difficult hours*'" (109).

According to Conchita, one of the "visionaries" of the "Marian apparitions" at Garabandal, Spain, "the Chastisement [that is to say, the Seven Last Plagues] is conditional. . . . a terrific wave of heat will strike and no motor will be able to operate, presumably because of massive electromagnetic interference. The world would seem motionless, perhaps knocked for a moment out of orbit. . . . Desperate to quench their thirst, people will seek water but in many places it will have evaporated. . . . 'The Blessed Virgin,' Conchita informed interrogators, 'said in 1962 that there will be only two more popes after Paul VI'" (139–140).

When "Mary" appeared in the air to crowds above a Coptic Orthodox Church in Zeitun, Egypt, in 1968, Brown writes, "for the first time in Egyptian history, Catholics, Orthodox, and Moslems prayed together in public. The Moslems chanted from the Koran. '*Mary, God has chosen thee. And purified thee; He has chosen thee. Above all women.*' . . . The main message seemed to be ecumenism, . . ." (166–167). It's a frequent theme: one worldwide church under Mary.

When "Mary" appeared in Akita, Japan, in 1973, she said, "*I alone am able still to save you from the calamities which approach. Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.*" [178] She said that "People would be '*transported from one place to another*' by evil spirits and '*in all places there will be extraordinary wonders, because true faith has died and a false light shines on the world.*' . . .

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“On occasion, the dead will take on the form of righteous souls, and be brought back to life, preaching another Gospel contrary to that of the true Jesus Christ” (177–178).

“The earth will tremble in a most frightful way and all humanity will stagger,” [Mary] told Italian seer Elena Leonardi on April 1, 1976. ‘An unforeseen fire will descend over the whole earth, and a great part of humanity will be destroyed.’

Brown writes, “another visionary, the Yugoslavian known simply as ‘Julka.’ . . . saw various stages of chastisement, starting with a strong warm wind and ten claps of thunder that would strike with such force they would shudder throughout the world. It was like a terrific hurricane. She also envisioned the air afire and a series of earthquakes.

“The whole atmosphere of the earth, from the ground to the sky, was a gigantic sheet of flame,” according to Julka. After that the sun turned ‘red as blood’ and a great [188] darkness rose like a mist. In that darkness came a bright yellow light with Jesus enveloped in white clouds” (187–188).

Despite such visions, Brown stresses wherever possible that this punishment is conditional. He writes, “In locutions to Jelena Vasilij, Mary seemed to downplay the negative possibilities. ‘I have always said: Punishment will come about if the world is not converted. Call all mankind to conversion. Everything depends on your conversion’” (249). Consider the pressure such talk would put on the Catholic church and its allies to do everything possible to see that everyone follows this order.

One of the best known figures in the Marian movement was Father Stefano Gobbi, a mystic who received “locutions” from “Mary.” Brown writes that she said to Gobbi, “Satan had succeeded in waging war at the Church’s very summit, threatening, said Mary, ‘the rock on which the Church is founded.’

“Through the power of God she had let Satan fall under the illusion that he’d conquered the Church, when suddenly she obtained from God a great new hope, Pope John Paul II, ‘who had been prepared and formed by me.’ He was to be a stumbling block for all God’s enemies, ‘the rock against which the great division will take place.’ The Virgin was going to defeat Satan by drawing up her army from the simplest of believers” (256).

“My daughter,” said Mary to Jolanda Cimmino, ‘wear the rosary around your neck. It will protect you from the devil. He tempts you and often he takes on my resemblance, deceiving you, as it has already happened on other occasions.’

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“Satan, she said, was ‘*making fools of you*’” (303). Note that when “apparitions” accuse other apparitions of being demonic, it strengthens their own standing—surely a false apparition would not dare to call another false apparition false! But in fact, this is just one of the evil one’s tricks.

Finally, Brown reports a message from Jesus through Gianna Talone, of Scottsdale, Arizona: “On June 5, 1989, she was given this inspiring message by “Jesus”: ‘. . . *Through faith in Me and the One Who sent Me, trust, love, and prayer, all beauty and peace can be re-established, preventing chastisement! All goodness can be restored if you open your hearts and believe and practice what I teach you. The chastisement shall be a result of misbelief, lack of love, lack of faith, lack of respect and from the lack of your mercy!* To an anonymous Midwestern visionary known as Mariamante, Mary said, ‘*You will know by the sign in the heavens which is me that the time is at hand for the instantaneous conversion of the multitude. This I will accomplish through a tremendous outpouring of grace upon the earth given at the hands of God to me for this purpose. This will be the triumph of my Immaculate Heart of which I spoke at Fatima. You must do all that I tell you now. It is very important that you follow my instructions, as this will be an aid to many in softening their hearts in order to be receptive to such grace*’” (332–333). Frankly, I teach a lot of Catholic students who love Jesus and accept Him as their Savior, and I consider them my brothers and sisters. I know, though, that words such as these will lead many millions astray in the days to come.

The Golden Age to Come

There is general agreement among the “entities” being “channeled” that what will follow is a Golden Age, the beginning of the Age of Aquarius, perhaps, or the beginning of the millennial reign of the Church. It will be a time of peace and harmony and love because those who disagree have been converted or eliminated. We will no longer be subject to death or aging or suffering. We can be whatever we want to be merely by thinking ourselves that way. We will know much more than we know now and be able to do things which now seem miraculous. It is, in short, heaven on earth, but without Christ’s return and without His judgment of the wicked.

Kryon. According to the magnetic grid arranger Kryon, “As the grids adjust over the next years, you will be given more enlightenment. . . . For the first time you will be able to grasp completely the power that is available through the love energy, and use it for planetary

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healing” (23). He adds, “Tolerance is a key ingredient to enlightenment” (111).

New Age Mary. The New Age “Mary” channeled by Annie Kirkwood says, “Heaven is a state of mind. It is not a location, but a way of viewing the events around you. Heaven is wherever you are on the Earth plane or in spirit. Heaven is like a mood or mind-set” (175–176).

This “entity” says a good deal about the age to come. “Humanity will have communication with the spiritual world. New cells will come forth and you will be able to use more of your mind. Mankind will have powers that are not known now. There will be the ability to communicate with all worlds by your mind. Humans will be able to communicate with the animals in this method” (186).

Mary says, “It is time for an evolutionary period to come to Earth. The coming era in mankind’s life is a time of evolution. This will be a period of great growth in the species of man and many species of animal. . . . Man will change drastically. He will evolve into a new species” (243).

“Mary” says that during this Golden Age, a new sun will be added to the sky, and this will change our cells, so we will need less food. “Man will evolve into a more mental being. He will be able to hear sounds which are not presently heard. He will see through particles of light which are hidden to him now. With his mind, man will hear and speak. He will have better use of his psychic abilities. That which you call intuition will be strongly activated in all mankind” (243–244).

“New people will populate Earth. These people will be a new species of man, as I have told you. The new species will be more aware of the spirit and soul. He will be closer to the Divine, for he will retain a remembrance. All men will be considered brothers. Love and goodwill are elements which will be in vogue. Peace will be the rule of the day—peace with man, with nature, and with God.

“This will be the era of ‘one thousand years peace’ which has been foretold. Man will have declined in numbers and will abhor anything which will take away from the population. As there will be direct communication with the spirit world, much knowledge will be gained.”²⁵³ “The eating of flesh will abate and not be the problem it is now. There will be new animals, without intelligence, for the purpose of providing food” (252–253). In essence, what is being promised here is heaven without God’s law and so without God. Changed minds, changed spirits are promised, but given that they come from a liar, how are they to be judged?

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Washta. Washta, the alien from the Sirius system, agrees with the New Age “Mary entity.” “The new wondrous times that you are about to enter will allow the reclamation of your fully [*sic*] consciousness potential. This fact is forecast in the biblical revelations, and it is an age when you will talk and walk with all who have lived on your planet. . . .

“Yes, psychic abilities such as telepathy and telekinesis, clairaudience, clairvoyance, etc., are a former heritage of every human. You are also heir to new concepts about how you should empathetically relate to one another, and how these correct personal human relationships will determine constructive practices in governing your society in a peaceful and caring way. With these personal and societal changes will also come new technologies and a new science that can be safely known and applied. In effect, a whole new planet, a whole new galactic civilization and a whole new galactic human, are about to be born. . . . You are on the verge of these great changes and new beginnings because of our future ‘first contact’ landings on Earth. This Spiritual Hierarchy and Sirian-led first contact will enable your entire solar system to take its place in the Galactic Federation so you will become all that we have just described—a galactic civilization” (39-41). Again, these “first contact” landings are the appearances of demons masquerading as space aliens. These appearances have been prepared for by popular science fiction movies, and television series.

Washta goes on, “This transformation means that your body can rejuvenate itself and be virtually ageless. Your semi-etheric body will respond in many ways like a thought form because your mind will be able to change your body as easily as it changes thoughts. However to you, this body will appear and act as if it were still the original type of gross physical body that you have not” (58).

“You will also have the ability to communicate within your own being, with other people, plants and animals including Lady Gaia herself. You will also have full communication with those who have died in previous times as well as those who might today be called angels or archangels. In short, you will become both a being of spirit and a being of the physical” (70).

Catholic Mary. Michael H. Brown writes about the “Marian apparitions” to Catholics, “As Frère Michel points out, ‘she is not talking about the “end of the world” properly speaking, which is identified with the return of Christ in glory for the last judgment. This indicates only that we are entering the last great period of the world’s history, without being able to judge how long it will last.’”

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“Lucia herself never excluded the possibility of the secret relating, however, obliquely, to the return of Jesus”(154–155).

To Father Stefano Gobbi, “Mary” said, “*Even in this Second Coming, the Son will come to you through His mother,*” said Mary. . . . ‘*He will come to establish His kingdom in the world, after having defeated and annihilated His enemies*’” (259).

The Day of His Coming

There is general agreement among the “powers of the air” that the beginning of these things is already underway and will conclude sometime between the end of the century and 2013. The year 2000 is of course a portentous date, the millennium’s end. 2013 is probably a date which keeps recurring because the Maya Indians believed, on the basis of their convoluted calendar system, that the world would end on the equivalent of December 21, 2012. (New Agers who find this date significant ignore the fact that the Maya also believed the world was created on August 11, 3114 BC, some 5,100 years ago.) The date 2014 occurs several times in *The Bible Code*, but the actual Hebrew year stretches from 2013–2014.

Kryon. Kryon says, “My process will take ten to twelve Earth years to accomplish. From now through the year 2002 will be the gradual change. Around the year 1999 you should know exactly of what I am speaking” (23). “I depart on 12/31/2002 . . . All adjustments will be in place by this date. . . . [101] You will have at least 10 to 15 years after I leave to work within my finalized adjustments” (100–101). That is to say, Kryon predicts the elimination of most of humanity by 2012 to 2017.

Emmanuel. The “entity” calling itself “Emmanuel,” “channeled” by Pat Rodegast, says, about the person we might call the Anti-christ, “So the leader of the future must be an intuitive being, a world figure whom everyone respects, whose mind is clear because it is at the service of truth. This is a being of courage, of exciting ideas, of passion, and one who can laugh a great deal at the nonsense that seems to be now regarded as the stabilizing governmental practices of your country. A free soul will guide the world into the millennium.” Emmanuel sees this person taking power “By popular acclaim. . . . In eight to ten years” (the book was published in 1989). It is interesting to note the hedging of bets: “[Editors’ note: we hesitated to include this because Emmanuel seems to have his own interpretation of Earth time.]” (98–99). Evidently the “spirits” are not entirely trustworthy.

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John Paul II. It is not fair, perhaps, to include the Pope among these many “channels,” but his book *As the Third Millennium Draws Near*, in which he calls for the dedication of the last three years of this millennium to the members of the Trinity, is worth reading. He writes, “*Mary Most Holy*, the highly favored daughter of the Father [as in “This is my beloved son”], will appear before the eyes of believers as the perfect model of love toward both God and neighbor. . . . Her motherhood, . . . will be felt most intensely during this year as a loving and urgent invitation addressed to all the children of God so that they will return to the house of the Father when they hear her maternal voice: ‘Do whatever Christ tells you’ (cf. Jn 2:5).” This seems to be referring to 1999, near “the eve of the year 2000” (262). The “appearance” mentioned here may not refer specifically to an “apparition,” but it is widely believed that the Pope has access to some of the “secrets” Mary has entrusted to some of the “seers” of Fatima and other sites.]

Washta. According to Washta, the “counselor from Sirius,” “We are here to share the fact that your solar system is presently poised to enter a vast region of light called the photon belt sometime during a period between March of 1995 and December of 1996. This photon belt—a huge mass of light—will be the vehicle for your restoration to full consciousness and for the complete transformation of your DNA and chakra systems. These unbelievable changes will forever alter not only yourselves, but also your planet and your solar system. This is because the photon belt will move your solar system into a higher dimension (from 3rd to the 5th), allowing your planet, within the solar system, to move to a new position in space closer to the Sirius star system” (27).

“You will first enter through what is called the null zone. This procedure will take roughly 5 to 6 days to complete including approximately 3 days of total darkness. Following this action, you will move into the main part of the belt itself and experience unending daylight (24 hours a day). This journey normally lasts around 2,000 years and ends when your solar system exits at the other end of the belt by going through the null zone exit for the same 5 to 6 day period. . . .

“However, in this cycle, the Supreme Creator Force (God) has arranged for your solar system to enter an interdimensional rescue bubble that will thrust it out of the photon belt through the 5th dimension and into a position about three light years from the Sirian star system (at present Sirius is approximately 8.3 light years from Earth). This bubble will be reached around the years 2012–2013 AD. That period of [33] approximately 17 years (1996–2013 AD) will mark

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the end of your 24-hour daylight experience and bring the return of an approximate 12-hour daylight / 12-hour nighttime schedule” (30–33).

We should not take these dates too seriously, however. Washta says, “the exact moment for first contact has not yet been decided, nor a specific date set for the photon belt entry to begin. . . . However as you know, the time lines of the universe that you experience are not set in specific and total finalities” (53–54).

Catholic Mary. Michael H. Brown reports the apparition of Satan to Irish boys Tom Cliffe and Barry Buckley, August 22, 1985. “To their great relief the demon disappeared after a minute, but Mary warned that if the world did not improve, ‘*the devil will take over God’s Church in ten years.*’ Mankind had ten years to improve, Mary said in another message—meaning the deadline was somewhere around 1995” (279). I guess our probation has closed without our realizing it.

Brown also writes, of apparitions of “Mary” to Christina Gallagher, at Carns, Ireland, “Christina felt the chastisements would begin to unfold in 1992, perhaps invisibly at first, and would be completed by the year 2000, if not sooner” (283).

Brown writes, of the Canadian “seer” Jim Singer, “During his apparitions of the Light, he was told that something was coming in seven years, and since the particular apparition occurred on January 13, 1991, that meant 1997. It seemed to concern the final hour of Satan’s extended power. ‘*Three days remain for you, by your free will, to consecrate your hearts to Me, to enjoy My rewards and victory over the malefactor,*’ said the enigmatic message. ‘*Three days remain for you to allow the malefactor seven years of his particular aggression and oppression among you. . . . Only by your conversion and sincere love will you be protected*’” (325). This seems to suggest that the world will have only three days to unify as one church, or face seven years of tribulation.

“. . . [The Ecuadoran teenager] Pachi was told the beginning of the events in her secret would be just before a month of two full moons. There will be two full moons in September of 1993, July of 1996, and January of 1999” (325).

The Bible Code. The best-selling book *The Bible Code* offers several dates for catastrophic events, set out in the Bible by God’s own computer. Author Michael Drosnin writes, “I checked every year in the next hundred years. Only two years, 2000 and 2006, were clearly encoded with ‘World War.’”

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“The same two years were also encoded with ‘atomic holocaust.’ They were the only two years in the next hundred encoded with both ‘atomic holocaust’ and ‘World War.’

“There is no way to know whether the code is predicting a war in 2000 or 2006. The year 2000 is encoded twice, but 2006 is mathematically the best match. And there is, of course, no way to know if the danger is real” (123).

Drosnin writes, “The code seems to warn that over the next hundred years there will be a series of ‘great earthquakes’ around the world. Three years are clearly encoded with ‘the great terror’: 2000, 2014, and 2113. The distant year is the best match. [Note that 2014 is very close to 2012, the end of the Mayan calendar, which many New Age people think to be the time of the “great change.”]

“The long-envisioned Apocalypse, if real, will begin not in some mythical, far off land, but in real cities, in the real world.

“The United States, China, Japan, and Israel are all encoded with ‘great earthquake’ and years in the near future.’ [The Bible Code has “S.F. Calif.” and “1906” and “fire, earthquake” and “city consumed, destroyed” together.]

“Crossing ‘great earthquake,’ right below ‘L.A. Calif.,’ is the year 2010. And the same year, ‘5770’ in the Hebrew calendar, is encoded again with the name of the city, actually overlapping ‘fire, earthquake’” (138–141).

“The Bible code warns that a collision with the Earth may be a real danger.

“There are a series of near encounters indicated, right up to the time [the comet] Swift returns in 2126.

“But the first year clearly encoded with ‘comet’ is only 10 years away—‘5766,’ in the modern calendar 2006.

“Running across 2006 is a chilling statement: ‘Its path struck their dwelling.’ The warning that overlaps the year ends with the words ‘starlike object.’

“Right above 2006 is an apparent confirmation of the time: ‘Year predicted for the world’” (153).

“Other probabilities are encoded. Both ‘5770’ and ‘5772’—the years 2010 and 2012—also appear with ‘comet.’

“‘Days of horror’ runs across 2010. ‘Darkness’ and ‘gloom’ cross ‘comet’ right below.

“‘Earth annihilated’ states the hidden text right above the year 2012 (155).

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“[155] But where 2012 is encoded there is also a statement that the disaster will be prevented, that the comet will be blocked: ‘It will be crumbled, driven out, I will tear it to pieces, 5772.’”

Satan? Sin? Law? Right and Wrong?

There is general agreement among the New Age’s “channeled spirit entities” that the devil, sin, the Law of God, the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and eternal death as punishment for sin are human inventions. The Catholics’ “Marian apparitions” follow their church teachings on these questions.

Bartholomew. Mary-Margaret Moore “channels” an “energy” called “Bartholomew.” Bartholomew’s views on moral issues are characteristic of “channeled” writings and of New Age teachings in general. Note how similar his comments are to what the serpent said in the Garden of Eden. He says, “there is no such thing as TRUTH in the way that we think of it” (iii). “You run from Self, and Self is your only real Savior! You are looking for a Savior and you already have one. It is *you*” (19). “There is no ‘wrong’ and there is no ‘right’; there is simply choice!” (29). “Your life has been based on the supposition that there is something wrong with you that you’ve got to fix. I would like to suggest that there is nothing wrong with you, and you certainly don’t need to be fixed. Your inner tension comes from *not loving* certain parts of yourself” (36). “Again, religion would tell you that there are sins in the world that have to be overcome; but it is my experience that when you love your ‘children’ (emotions), you love *all* those parts of yourself that have been labeled sinful, . . . it’s all there in a beautiful ever-changing pattern, and *that is the wonder of it!* (41).

New Age Mary. The New Age “Mary” says, through Annie Kirkwood, “I will be appearing in many places in these last few years and so will other Angels of God. They will come to answer questions and to give advice. Many will think them devils, and many of your religious leaders will confuse the people and give wrong advice. They will denounce the spiritual realm which will show itself to mankind. When will you on Earth realize the satans and devils have always been only in your mind?” (27).

“Another fallacy which is believed on Earth is that there is a heaven, a hell, and a purgatory. Heaven and hell are simply mental states, both on Earth and here. . . . If you believe you are in heaven, you will find things pleasant. If you are in fear and believe in hell, you will truly live in fear” (195–196).

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The following quotes are purportedly “channeled” through Kirkwood from Jesus Himself. “Eternal life is a gift of the Father. It is through His Love that you have eternal life, not because you believe in me or profess to my testimony, but simply because of the Great Love God has for His creation. There is nothing you must do to have eternal life. . . . Each of you has lived before. There have been lifetimes of work and service given to God. There have been many wasted lifetimes given to your own pleasures also” (264).

“Sin is simply another way of saying a ‘spiritual mistake’” (269).

“The beast of the Earth had power to cause fire to come down from heaven. Through signs and powers this beast gained much. Of those who had the mark of the beast, 666 were allowed to sell and trade. Many people today think this is the mark of the devil. . . .

“The devil is the race-consciousness of greed, power, and wealth from ill-gotten gains. It is drugs and addictions of all kinds. It is abuse of children, women and men. . . .

“These preachers who are shouting from their pulpits about the war with the devil are simply playing into the belief of evilness. They are aiding the race-consciousness which wishes to survive. These preachers bring fear, hostility and these kinds of emotion to the people. . . . You need no longer be afraid of the beast, because you recognize that he is an illusion. . . . So you can tell others that there is no devil, it is a fallacy. It is not real. This belief in a devil will deter you from your spiritual goals. You will lose your spiritual growth if you continue to believe in the devil” (278–280). Well, if Jesus says so, that’s good enough for me!

Washta. Where did Satan come from? The space alien Washta explains: “Hence, Archangel Michael established the energies that would create a being of darkness, as called for under the divine plan. That is what the so-called ‘war in heaven’ refers to. This being of darkness was created by God’s plan so that eventually the dark energy patterns could be transformed back to light after many physical lifetimes lived on planet Earth. This transformation could eventually lead to a great series of immortals living in light” (152–153).

Catholic Mary. The Catholic apparitions are much more traditionally Christian, but with some interesting distinctives. Michael H. Brown writes, “Mary says at Medjugorje . . . ‘*Satan exists! He seeks only to destroy!*’ (2/14/82) . . . *A great struggle is about to unfold, a struggle between my Son and Satan* (8/2/81). . . . *The present hour is the hour of Satan. The hour has come when the demon is authorized to act with all his force and power*” (5).

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Brown frequently reminds his readers of the possibility of “apparitions” being satanic, and in this he echoes several of the “apparitions” themselves. He writes, “Assuming a case *is* true we must always be aware of that other distinct possibility: that certain of the supernatural events are being orchestrated *not* by Heaven but by sinister forces that seek to dilute the bona fide phenomena and lead us on a wild goose chase. In other words, the battle is so treacherous that Satan is not beyond masquerading as the Virgin to confuse and discourage us.

“Every single event, no matter how good it seems at first, must be weighed and discerned by means of extensive prayer. And we also should remember that there are always cases of collective suggestion and hysteria.

“It’s already clear, from cases you’ll read, that wherever Our Lady appears the devil also turns up. In some cases Satan or his demons actually materialize as full-bodied apparitions, attempting to disrupt the events. In other cases they’re an invisible but influential force” (9).

The revelations of “Mary” to the “seer” Maria Esperanza are interesting: “There are many anti-christs, she said; one was Saddam Hussein. An anti-christ was always rooted in pride. The situation in the world was going to improve, but not before certain trials. ‘The yellow races will stand up, and that’s very serious and I’m very afraid, because they would like to take over the world,’ claimed Maria. ‘It’s a very difficult time for humanity, but man will survive. The justice is coming. A very hard moment will come very soon—1992, 1993, 1994—1994,’ she told me. ‘But it will make us better people.’

“After that, said Maria, ‘Jesus will have a great surprise.’ He is living ‘with His mother among us. We will see Him in glory with rays of light. He will brighten the whole world with His rays” (205).

Brown writes, of “Mary,” “But she also warned against false apparitions, explaining that no authentic ones would be continued after she stopped appearing in Medjugorje. Those who made such fraudulent claims were the ‘false prophets’ of latter times. ‘Many pretend to see Jesus and the Mother of God, and to understand their words, but they are, in fact, lying,’ she said. ‘It is a very grave sin, and it is necessary to pray very much for them’” (219).

Reporting on “Marian locutions” given to Father Stefano Gobbi, Brown writes, ““She warned that while much of her plan would be carried forth by apparitions, the devil would succeed in infiltrating and imitating them. He would seduce God’s people ‘by false manifestations of the supernatural in order to bring about deception and confusion on

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all sides. He will succeed in working many prodigies which will beguile the minds of even the good” (256–257). [This prepares people to accept most apparitions, even while considering some demonic.]

Reporting on the visions of two Irish “seers,” Brown writes, “What seemed to bother Beulah most were the impressions she received of the Anti-Christ. During an apparition from Mary she saw Pope John Paul II looking worn out, his eyes sunken; and it was as if he were being replaced by a dark-complected young man with a short black beard and golden vestments. Beulah saw a devil come out of the ground, a devil with the sharp features of Lenin. The devil went into the body of the young man.

“When Christina Gallagher saw an image of the Anti-Christ, he was a man 45 to 50 years old, with very piercing eyes but nothing especially horrific about his physical visage. ‘I heard the echo, “Anti-Christ, Anti-Christ,”’ she says. ‘He’s not Irish or English. He struck me as foreign. His skin was darker but he didn’t have squinty eyes. There are many anti-christs and through them an army will unite and resurrect a leader” (296).

The Ecuadoran teenager Pachi says, of her “apparitions,” ““(Mary) does speak of the Anti-Christ . . . He’s already in the world. He’s acting all over the world through various fields—not directly, but through such things as science. People don’t know him. He is *going* to act directly and we’re *going* to know him. He’s very, very intelligent, and will look like a humble good man and he’s going to be very attractive, even beautiful, and have a very attractive personality, and he will get to people through television and all the ways of the world. But especially to youth in music and drugs. It is the work of Satan. He is very young yet. He’s going to act directly in a terrible way after the punishment” (320–321).

What Then Shall We Do?

What then are we to make of these “channeled” messages? To return to our earlier questions, are they due to demons preparing us to accept satanic impersonations of Christ, of Mary, of people from other worlds? I believe they may well be. Is Satan preparing the world to accept alternative explanations of the time of trouble, blaming it on natural phenomena? I believe that too is a probability. Is it possible that Satan is preparing the world for another “great disappointment”? I believe he would be delighted to lead Christians to set dates for Christ’s return, in hope of their losing faith, and this certainly fits in well with the millennium’s end. Is “channeling” a hoax? I believe that much of it

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is, but I also think that some portion of it is actually based on messages flowing in from an outside source, though that source is not the one named but “the father of lies” and his minions.

We are warned, in II Thes. 2:9–10, that “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” The following two verses, however, tell us that God allows this so that those sitting on the fences will decide whether they serve the true God or Ba’al. “For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” These “apparitions” and “channelings” are the work of demons, but we mustn’t forget that God may be using them to accomplish His will. Our work is to preach the Word, to make disciples, to warn the world of these deceptions, so those who turn to God in faith and obedience will not be fooled.

What of our opening question? Are these “channelings” intercepted dispatches from the Enemy or disinformation? Frankly, we don’t know for sure. I suspect they are disinformation, but they may reveal as well something of Satan’s plans. Little or none of that is being “channeled” is original. The “channelers” are not saying things that are new. How much more impressive it sounds, though, when it is “channeled” from “the other side,” rather than being simply theorizing, mere wishful thinking.

We are told, of the land beast of Rev. 13: “And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.” These things are coming to pass right now; we are seeing these signs, and we will see more of them in the few years left to this sinful earth. We needn’t fear these things. They are signs that our “redemption draweth nigh.” Our hope is not in the mutterings of demons, but in the God who, as Isaiah 44:25–26 says, “foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, who carries out the words of his servants and fulfils the predictions of his messengers.”

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We know whom we have believed. As Daniel says, "The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy" (Dan. 2:45). Hold fast to these things.

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