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The President's Page: Creation—The Sine Qua Non of Adventism

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The doctrine of Creation is an article of faith on which the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands or falls. Creation is crucial for our theology because, I am deeply convinced, all our essential doctrinal points can be directly or indirectly traced to the Creation roots. Each of our 27 fundamental beliefs is somehow tied to Creation.

The Gospel according to Moses starts with an astounding cornerstone proclamation: God is the Creator (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” [Gen 1:1]). This statement is not proven, but revealed to us as the truth, and all the rest of God’s revelation depends on this premise and critical recognition (Heb 11:3, 6). Biblical authors do not try to defend it, but boldly declare it. No photographs have been given or videos provided of Creation week, because primarily the Creator God is not to be argued about but witnessed. The Old Testament not only starts with the theme of Creation, but also ends with the same thought (in the Hebrew canon with the hope of restoration [2 Chr 36:22–23], or in the Christian canon with the view of the splendid Day of the Lord [Mal 4:1–6]) and is full of references to the Creator God (e.g., Gen 14:19–22; Deut 32:6; Pss 8; 19; 33:9; 104; 139; Isa 40:28; 41:20; 45:7–8; 46:9–10; 55:11; Jer 10:6–16; 51:15–19). This theme permeates all biblical material.

The whole Bible reveals its clear paradigm—from creation (Gen 1–2) through de-creation (the Fall [Gen 3] and the Flood accounts [Gen 6–7]) to re-creation (Gen 8–9; and fully in Rev 21–22). Between Creation and the ultimate new Creation lies and is explained the story of redemption, of how God deals with sin and how He saves those who believe in Him. Let us not forget that redemption and salvation are nothing more than a spiritual re-creation which culminates in the restoration of all things in Christ (Eph 1:10).

The New Testament presents the same picture as the Old Testament. It starts with genealogy and ends with the hope of the New Heavens and the New

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Earth. There are many references to God as the Creator (e.g., Matt 19:4; Mark 13:19; John 1:1–3; Acts 17:24–28; Rom 1:19–25; Col 1:16–17; Rev 4:11). Thus, there is a whole deliberate design in the biblical canon from Creation to the new Creation which can be called a “Creation paradigm” or “Creation-eschatological pattern.” Without protology (the biblical doctrine of first things; i.e., the Creation) there is no eschatology (the biblical doctrine of last things; i.e., the Second Coming of Christ, the judgment, and the New Earth).

Our church’s name is bound to Creation and conveys an important message. The term “Seventh-day” points to the culmination point of the first Creation story, the Sabbath, and the designation “Adventist” leads to expectations of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ (i.e., a re-creation where God will make everything new). Our understanding of Creation with all its connections and implications provides a unique contribution to the interpretation of Christian theology.

Creation is about life, and the essence of life is relationship. In the Creation accounts, God is presented as the One who cares for relationships. With the word “relationship,” I summarize both biblical accounts of Creation, because the purpose of the first Creation narrative (Gen 1:1–2:4a) is establishing a relationship between God and humans. The second Creation account (Gen 2:4b–25) is about building a relationship in the most nuclear, essential human cell—marriage. These two relationships, vertical and horizontal, are complementary and must always come in the described ordered sequence so that our life can be meaningful, beautiful, and happy. First comes a cultivation of a loving relationship with God, then with our marriage partner, and finally with other people. Only God can provide all the resources for our life so we can be a contribution and blessing to each other. We were created totally dependent on God; therefore only from Him can we receive all we need for building deep bonds of lasting relationships. Genuine life is about relationships, and the crux of both Creation stories is about relationship. From the very beginning of God’s revelation, God is presented as the living God and the God of relationships!

Thus, from the Garden of Eden until today, we have two precious God-given gifts, the Sabbath (the climax of the first Creation account) and marriage (the apex of the second Creation narrative). No wonder that today the enemy of our lives severely attacks and wants to destroy both these vital institutions that remind us of life before sin. God calls us to be vigilant and not only to remember our roots but also restore them to their original meaning and purpose. Without this past there is no meaningful present and glorious future!

The first verses of the Bible provide the first definition of true life. Life can happen only where the Spirit of God (Gen 1:2b) and the Word of God (Gen 1:3) come together and reign (in the first Creation account, the phrase “and God said” occurs ten times!). Spirit + Word = Life. This is correct not only for the creation of a physical life but also for the birth of a spiritual life. A person can be born again only when he or she is born from above—when this person opens himself or herself to the influence of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5–8; Rom 8:14;

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Titus 3:5) and believes in the Word of God (John 1:12–13; 1 Pet 1:23; James 1:18). The doctrine of regeneration has its root in the biblical Creation story.

God creates out of love because He is love. We were not present at Creation; it was done for us and without us. Humans are the crown of God's physical creation and made wonderfully as man and woman in the image of God. God created everything ready for them in order that they could enjoy a full life. The Garden of Eden was the best home for the first couple. Creation reflects God's desire to make us happy and smiling so that we can make others happy and give them a reason to smile, too. The most essential ingredients in a relationship are mutual love and trust. God graciously provided these components so we could meaningfully communicate with Him and with other human beings.

Our God has a great sense for beauty and esthetics. When He creates, He does it perfectly and in abundance. He is really extravagant. Do you know that there are between 25 and 30 thousand species of orchids or nearly 300 thousand species of only beetles? What about the variety of colors in a meadow, thousands upon thousands of different species of birds, fish, butterflies, animals? What about the more than 100 billion galaxies in our universe? We can only marvel and stand in awe before our magnificent, glorious, omniscient, wise, holy, gracious, and loving Creator! The more we know Him, the more we admire Him. The more we understand what He is doing, the more we want to become acquainted with Him and follow Him, because His Presence means everything to us.

Claus Westermann accurately observes that the biblical message about our Creator is always in the context of praises. One cannot understand God as our Creator without admiring and praising Him at the same time. This conjunction with the exaltation of God is vital—He is unique, alive, no one is like Him, He is above all, and only He can create life. This is why He is worthy of our praises and adoration (see, for example, Pss 8:1–9; 19:1–4; 104:1–3, 31–35; Isa 40:28; Jer 10:6–13; and Rev 4:11). Westermann argues that “the real goal” of the biblical Creation stories is “the praise of the Creator.”¹

God is the Creator. This is the first marvelous message of the Holy Scriptures, and on this inspired truth hangs everything else. To remove or diminish this basic irreplaceable part of the chain of God's revelation means to break in pieces all the rest. This is why we as Seventh-day Adventist Bible scholars and theologians stress so vigorously on the basis of exegetical, theological, and literary grounds that the Creation week of Gen 1–2 consists of seven literal, historical, consecutive, and contiguous twenty-four hour days. Therefore, ATS welcomes the document “An Affirmation of Creation” (The International Faith and Science Conference Organizing Committee's report) and the “Response to an Affirmation of Creation” (voted by the members of the General Conference Ex-

¹ *The Genesis Accounts of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 37.

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ecutive Committee at the 2004 Annual Council). This biblical teaching is the real bedrock and a very precious jewel of the infallible Word of God.

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From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part I: Historical Review

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1. Introduction

After making a presentation to a group of Adventist professors teaching in universities around the world, I opened the floor for questions. A soft-spoken scholar reacted to my presentation by affirming, “If things are as you argued, we do not belong to the same church.” I did not know what to say. I had been caught off guard. Even though I did not know the members of the group personally, I knew all of them were Adventist believers teaching in Adventist educational institutions. How could another Adventist colleague come to such a shocking conclusion? After all, I had just made a standard Adventist presentation to a group of fellow believers. After a moment’s hesitation, I ventured to ask: “What do you teach?” The group burst into laughter. When the laughter subsided, I was brought up to speed. My interlocutor was a theology professor. At the time, I dismissed the incident as an overstatement. However, with the passing of time, I came to realize that my colleague was right. Though members of the same denomination and teaching for the same educational system, we did not belong to the same church. Can a house divided against itself stand? (Mark 3:25).

Adventism has grown and developed in a very uneven way. I used to believe that all Adventist administrators, pastors, and teachers around the world understood Adventist theology and mission in the same way. More than twenty years at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary have taught me that Adventists have grown apart in the way they understand themselves, do theology, engage in mission, and even worship God. What keeps us together is our solid worldwide administration. Once we were a movement; now we are an institution. The movement originated, developed, and grew because of its uncompromising biblical theology and self-understanding. As the movement became

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institutionalized, Adventism's biblical theology and self-understanding slowly but surely were displaced from their original grounding role. A subtle detheologization of the Adventist mind and experience has taken place. A progressive forgetfulness of Adventist theology has motivated some inquiring minds to find their self-understanding in the world of Protestant theology. While this process was taking place in some sectors of the church in America, Europe, and Australia, other sectors continued to understand Adventism from Scripture and Ellen White. Theological unity was replaced by theological diversity.

As a seminary professor, I experience this diversity first hand from my own students. They bring to the seminary ideas taught to them by their pastors and teachers around the world. Moreover, during the last twenty years, Adventist publications, not only at the scholarly but also at the popular level, have disseminated theological diversity. Many view theological diversity as a sign of growth and vitality. However, careful study of the theological ideas circulating in Adventism at the beginning of the twenty-first century shows the existence of incompatible theological systems competing for the Adventist mind.¹ Can a house divided against itself stand? (Mark 3:25).

The purpose of this four article series is to help readers understand the present theological landscape (first article); adumbrate ways to overcome divisive differences in theology that conspire against the unity of the Adventist Church and slow its global mission (second and third articles); and consider the way theological ideas impact the ministry and mission of the church (fourth article).

To accomplish the first goal, we will consider in this article the theological process that brought us to the present situation. In 1893, Ellen White wrote, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history."² Have we forgotten? What is

¹During the last ten years the existence of theological problems in Adventism has been addressed in various ways: for instance, by Jack W. Provonsha, *A Remnant in Crisis* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1993); William G. Johnsson, *The Fragmenting of Adventism: Ten Issues Threatening the Church Today: Why the Next Five Years are Crucial* (Boise: Pacific, 1995); Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (Berrien Springs: Berean, 1996); George Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 160–197.

²"The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant. In reviewing our past history, having travelled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment and with confidence in Christ as Leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history. We are now a strong people, if we will put our trust in the Lord; for we are handling the mighty truths of the word of God. We have everything to be thankful for. If we walk in the light as it shines upon us from the living oracles of God, we shall have large responsibilities, corresponding to the great light given us of God. We have many duties to perform, because we have been made the depositories of sacred truth to be given to the world in all its beauty and glory. We are debtors to God to use every advantage he has entrusted to us to beautify the truth of holiness of character, and to send the message of

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there to remember? To answer these questions I will analyze the methodological, hermeneutical, and systematic structure of early Adventist theology. “Remembering” will help us perceive the slow “forgetting” that eventually led to a surprising “replacing” and a welcomed “reaffirming” that extended to significant and different sectors of church leadership and membership.

In the second article, we will consider whether “remembering” may motivate us to “retrieve” the methodological, hermeneutical, and systematic structure that called Adventism into existence. Finally, we shall consider how the “retrieving” may guide us in our “doing” theology and finishing the mission of the Church in our postmodern times.

2. Remembering

How did Adventist theology begin? We may answer this question by simply saying that Adventism began by studying biblical prophecy, notably the books of Daniel and Revelation. Though true, this response is limited because it does not tell the whole story. To notice that Adventist Theology began as Eschatological Theology does not explain its genius nor the pioneers’ reason for separating from all other existent churches and theologies to form a new worldwide community which they believed to be the remnant true Church of God in the last days before Christ’s second coming.³

To visualize the genius implicit in early Adventist Eschatological Theology, we need to reflect on the methodological ground on which it was constructed. Specifically, we need to consider the ground and the vision from which the system of Christian theology was understood by early Adventist theologians.

The Ground. For a good number of us, the most important feature of Adventist theology, the one aspect that charters its uniqueness and destiny, passes generally unnoticed in everyday Adventist circles. I am referring to the “*sola Scriptura*” principle on which it builds.⁴ Ellen G. White repeated this principle

warning, and of comfort, of hope and love, to those who are in the darkness of error and sin” (Ellen White, “General Conference Daily Bulletin” [January 29], 1893, par. 5).

³“The Protestant churches of the Reformation era may be considered God’s faithful remnant after more than a millennium of papal apostasy. SDAs hold that various Protestant groups served as Heaven’s appointed harbingers of truth, point by point restoring the gospel to its pristine purity, but that one by one these groups became satisfied with their partial concept of truth and failed to advance as light from God’s Word increased, and with each refusal to advance, God raised up another chosen instrument to proclaim His truth to earth’s inhabitants. Finally, with the arrival of “the time of the end” . . . God called another “remnant,” the one designated in Rev. 12:17 as the remnant of the long and worthy line of heroes of the faith.” (Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2d. rev. ed. [Washington: Review and Herald, 1966], sv., Remnant).

⁴SDA Fundamental Belief #1: “The Holy Scriptures: The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and

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often. She praised Luther for applying this principle⁵ that she identified as the “Protestant Principle.”⁶ At the end of time, she assured us, “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.”⁷

Since Adventists received the ground on which they built their theology from Protestantism, the question arises as to *the difference* that exists between Protestant and Adventist theologies. If both built on the same ground, why did early Adventist believers feel the need to leave all Protestant denominations behind and form a new one? Because studies of our roots mainly focus on continuities with Protestant tradition, they do not help much to explain the differences between Seventh-day Adventist and Protestant theologies.⁸ The question about the uniqueness of Adventist theology takes us, then, to consider the fields of theological methodology and hermeneutics. If the difference between Adventist and Protestant theologies cannot be explained in relation to the source of theology, it might become apparent if we consider the method and hermeneutical principles each tradition used in building their theological views.⁹

Addressing this question ten years ago, Adventist historian C. Mervyn Maxwell correctly identified four basic characteristics of the hermeneutics and method on which early Adventist theology was constructed.¹⁰ Three of them, as we will see, are intensifications of methodological principles received from Protestant Theology. The fourth is the macro hermeneutical vision from which Adventist theology came to existence. Let us consider each one briefly.

the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)”

⁵See, for instance, *The Great Controversy*, 132.

⁶*Ibid.*, 204.

⁷*Ibid.*, 595.

⁸See, for instance, Gerhard Hasel, “The Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century and their Relationship to the Sabbath” (M.A. Thesis, Andrews University, 1960); Peter van Bemmelen, “The Reformation Roots of Adventism” (Philadelphia: Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Adventist Society of Religious Studies*, 1995); Woodrow Whidden, “Adventist Theology: The Wesleyan Connection” (Philadelphia: Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Adventist Society of Religious Studies*, 1995); Charles Scriven, “The Radical Vision and the Renewal of the Church” (Philadelphia: Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Adventist Society of Religious Studies*, 1995); Smuts van Rooyen, “The Reformation Roots of Adventism: A Personal View” (Philadelphia: Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the Adventist Society of Religious Studies*, 1995). George Knight sums it up by saying that “While it is true that Adventism’s concept of salvation by grace through faith came through the mainline Reformers, the theological orientation of Adventism really finds itself most at home with what church historians call the Radical Reformation or the Anabaptists” (*A Search for Identity*, 30).

⁹The difference between Roman Catholic and Adventist theologies is easily explainable when we take into account the sources from which each builds its theology and practice. Since Roman Catholicism subscribed to the multiple sources of theology model, we can easily understand that its theology will be different from a theology built on the *sola Scriptura* model.

¹⁰“A Brief History of Adventist Hermeneutics,” *JATS* 4/2 (Autumn 1993): 213–214.

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(1) *Deconstructing Tradition*. “Although the Reformers rejected some customs and traditions, Adventists writers manifested a sharper rejection of tradition.”¹¹ Early Adventists, then, were aware of the traditions of Christianity their former churches embraced. Yet, instead of taking them as either sources of theology or hermeneutical guides for the interpretation of Scripture or the understanding of its doctrines, they decided to engage them critically. Their critical relation to tradition was not new, only more extensive. This methodological approach is necessary for the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle. Unless we understand tradition, distinguish it from Scripture, and criticize its contents, we will unavoidably confuse ideas received from tradition with biblical ones. Deconstructing tradition, however, is only a negative step necessary to give us access to the ground of Adventist theology, Scripture. Thus, we move now to the second methodological characteristic of early Adventist theology.

(2) *The Tota Scriptura Principle*. Maxwell explains that

the Reformers insisted on the superlative authority of Scripture, yet Adventists have shown a keener appreciation for the authority of the entire Bible. Luther is well known for his tendency to reject James, make very little use of Hebrews, and set up a canon within the canon. Calvin virtually rejected the book of Revelation. The later Scottish-American reformers, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, contemporaries of the Adventist pioneers, rejected the entire OT. But Adventists, and especially the Seventh-day Adventists, insisted on taking truth from the entire Bible.¹²

Because Scripture is the only source of theology, it provides the point of view from which to evaluate, criticize, and replace the teachings transmitted via the tradition of the church. When the *tota Scriptura* principle is added to the *sola Scriptura* principle, something new comes to view in the theological method, namely, the *historicity of Christian theology*, which, regrettably, was and continues to be disregarded as the realm of divine being and action. Thus, this affirmation implicitly brought a new pre-conception of divine reality and activities to the interpretation of Scripture and the understanding of Christian doctrines. From the timeless understanding of reality operative in Christian and Protestant theologies, Adventism implicitly moved to a temporal-historical view of reality. The overarching consequences of this paradigmatic change that *implicitly* took place at the ontological level of early Adventist theology *has not yet been totally perceived and formulated* by either Christian or Adventist theologians. We will come back to this issue in our second article. Let us now turn our attention to the third characteristic of early Adventist method and hermeneutics.

(3) *Typological understanding*. Maxwell remarks that “whereas the Reformers made enthusiastic use of the OT types of the cross, Adventist writers

¹¹Ibid..

¹²Ibid., 214.

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made richer use of biblical types and antitypes that were seen to anticipate last-day developments.”¹³ The intensification of typological interpretation in early Adventist theology should not be seen as an unrelated oddity, but as direct *consequence of the historical understanding* of reality implicitly incorporated in the *tota scripture* principle. Richard Davidson has convincingly shown that in biblical typology, reality is assumed to be historical, “occurring or existing as recorded in Scripture.”¹⁴ If God’s reality and activities are to be understood historically, then, the typological method becomes the key to grasping the meaning of divine activity in the history of salvation.¹⁵

So far, Maxwell’s review of early Adventist hermeneutics reveals that Adventist thinkers applied a few basic methodological traits received from Protestant theology with greater consistency and determination than Protestant theologians themselves. We now turn our attention to the fourth hermeneutical principle Maxwell mentions in his article. The pioneers discovered it by applying the previous three methodological principles.

The Vision. Maxwell explains, finally, that the difference between Protestant and Adventist hermeneutics should be traced back to the early pioneers’ use of *prophetic fulfillment as a hermeneutical tool*. “Once established as scriptural, the fulfillment of prophecy in the second advent movement became a hermeneutical tool for helping establish the Sabbath, sanctuary, spiritual gifts, true church, second advent doctrines, etc. . . .”¹⁶ Ellen White expresses the same hermeneutical vision in different words. “The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. *It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious*, showing that God’s hand had directed the great Advent movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of his people.”¹⁷ Shortly put, “light from the sanctuary illumed the past, the present, and the future.”¹⁸ Recently, Alberto Timm brought to our attention that the Sabbatarian Adventists used the “end-time eschatological emphasis as the basic hermeneutical framework for the development of a unique doctrinal system integrated by the concept of the cleansing of the sanctuary of Dan 8:14 and the three angels’ messages of Rev 14:6–12.”¹⁹

¹³Ibid., 213.

¹⁴Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Types Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1981), 416–417.

¹⁵Davidson uncovers “a relationship between the structure of typology and those of salvation history.” The former, he argues, “appear to be identical to constituent elements of salvation history and may therefore be subsumed under that heading as ‘salvation-historical structure.’” He concludes that salvation history “appears to provide the suprastructure within which these additional structural elements are worked out” (ibid., 420–421).

¹⁶Maxwell, ibid., 214–215.

¹⁷*The Great Controversy*, 423 [emphasis mine].

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Alberto Ronald Timm, “Seventh-day Adventist Eschatology, 1844–2001: A Brief Historical Overview,” in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: Hacia una eclesiología Adventista*, ed. G. A. Kilngbeil, M. G.

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According to Timm, “the configuration of the whole system” was one of the original contributions of early Adventist theology.²⁰

With the passing of time, Adventist believers placed this hermeneutical perspective among the “pillars” of Adventism. According to Ellen White, the pillars were the Doctrines of the Sanctuary, the Sabbath and the Law, the non-immortality of the soul, and the three angels’ messages.²¹ Identifying these four teachings as pillars suggests they played a special role in the construction of early Adventist theology. The “pillar” metaphor insinuates that these basic biblical doctrines are bases from which Christian theology is to be constructed. The fact that Ellen White reported one of the pillars, the doctrine of the Sanctuary, as opening to view “a complete system of truth connected and harmonious” suggests the pillars functioned as hermeneutical principles guiding the interpretation of Scripture and the understanding of its doctrines. Arguably, the sanctuary doctrine is the most comprehensive doctrine or motif in Scripture and therefore plays a decisive role in guiding biblical interpretation and the construction of Adventist theology. The revolutionary nature of this macro hermeneutical perspective has not received sufficient attention yet in Adventist scholarship. Let us consider the system of theology early Adventist pioneers envisioned through the lenses provided by “fulfilled prophecy.”

The System. From its inception, Adventist theology was systematic. In 1858, James White reported that “the present truth is harmonious in all its parts; its links are all connected; the bearings of all its portions upon each other are like clockwork.”²² LeRoy Froom saw early Adventist theology as “the base of a coordinated *system* of truth.”²³ According to George Knight, Sabbatarian Adventists produced an integrated theology rather than a list of discrete doctrines.²⁴ Yet, they did not leave in writing a full account of the system they saw or how

Klingbeil, and M. A. Núñez (Libertador San Martín: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 287.

²⁰Alberto Ronald Timm, “The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages 1844–1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995), 473.

²¹“The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God’s people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels’ messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, ‘The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.’ One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God’s law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.” (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 30–31; Manuscript 13, 1889).

²²*Review and Herald*, Jan. 7, 1858.

²³*Movement of Destiny* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1971), 87.

²⁴George Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 86.

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that clockwork connectivity worked out for them.²⁵ They saw the system in their minds and in its broad profile. Yet, they fell short of exploring, expressing, formulating, explaining, and uncovering all its contents, connections, and consequences. Perhaps we can find the best expression of the theological system that the Sanctuary opened to view in the writings of Ellen White. Even though unfinished, the theological system of Sabbatarian Adventists played a decisive role in their spiritual experience, self-consciousness, and mission.²⁶

Later generations of Adventist believers *inherited* the hermeneutical vision encapsulated in the Sanctuary doctrine and an unfinished theological task. The as yet unfinished task involves the understanding, expanding, formulating, explaining, and applying of the theological system that the pillar doctrines brought to view.

3. Forgetting

Ellen White's conviction that "we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history"²⁷ applies to the vision and theological system that originated the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Have we forgotten them? The vision of early Adventists remains operative in Adventist theology. However, with the passing of time, some influential sectors of Adventism slowly began to forget the theological vision that originated the movement and climaxed with the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863. The forgetting has not happened overnight, nor has it embraced the entire worldwide denomination. How has the forgetting taken place? A detailed answer to this question requires a historical analysis that falls outside the limited reach of this article. Instead, we can briefly consider some general patterns that have somehow contributed to the forgetting of the Adventist vision in some sectors of the Adventist community.

From Eschatology to Soteriology: Shifting the Emphasis. The Minneapolis 1888 General Conference presentation by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner switched the attention of Adventist studies from prophecy (eschatology) to justification by faith and the experience of salvation (soteriology).²⁸ According to Froom, E. J. Waggoner was convinced that the supreme truth of redemption "was in no sense a diverting departure from the great structural framework of 'present Truth,' as some had unfairly asserted. Instead, it invested the Message

²⁵In his dissertation, Timm concludes that "an appraisal of the interrelationship between such foundational themes as (1) God, (2) the cosmic controversy, (3) the covenant, (4) the sanctuary, (5) the three angels' messages, and (6) the remnant shows that the subjects of the sanctuary and the three angels' messages were not regarded as ends in themselves. These subjects were perceived as connectedly dependent on the transcendent realities of God, the cosmic controversy, and the covenant, with the missiological purpose of preparing a remnant people to live with God throughout eternity" (474).

²⁶Knight, *ibid.*, 86.

²⁷"General Conference Daily Bulletin" [January 29], 1893, par. 5.

²⁸See LeRoy Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 188–299.

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with greater power, strength, and attractiveness.” Ellen White shared this view by affirming that the message of justification by faith “is the third angel’s message, in verity.”²⁹ Most Adventists have shared this view over the years.

However, thirty-two years after Minneapolis, a new way of understanding and connecting the entire body of Christian doctrines began to manifest itself in Adventism. “Prescott, the leading Adventist authority on doctrine and former editor of the *Review* (1901–9), felt that the traditional Seventh-day Adventist approach to doctrine resulted in a rigid, compartmentalized system that did not integrate beliefs with the person of Christ. To correct this problem, he published a textbook in 1920 entitled *The Doctrine of Christ*.”³⁰ Prescott’s purpose in this textbook for students of theology was not “to develop a scheme of systematic theology” but to emphasize “the meaning of the revelation of Christ as an experience in the life.”³¹ Nevertheless, later on in his book, he affirms that the “great facts concerning Christ,” namely, His death, ascension to heaven, second coming, and glorious eternal Kingdom “are among the grounds of a whole system of thought and habit of feeling, and when taught as such they grow into a scheme of doctrine.”³² The apparent contradiction between these two statements reveals the tension that exists between the early Adventist theological vision and the classical Protestant vision implicit in Prescott’s Christological approach. As we will see later, with the passing of time, other Adventist thinkers interpreted Scripture and understood Adventist doctrines from this new perspective.

Going beyond Prescott’s explicit practical emphasis, A. G. Daniells understood that Adventist pastors and lay members needed to incorporate in their thinking and lives the 1888 message and experience. According to Daniells, righteousness by faith was “a fundamental, all-embracing truth”³³ which “throws a flood of light upon the great problem of redemption in all its phases.”³⁴ After enumerating twenty-two doctrinal themes, he went on to explain that this was “the great sweep of truth embraced in the short phrase ‘Righteousness by Faith.’” “The brief phrase, ‘Righteousness by Faith,’ [adds Daniells] opens the door to all the priceless stores of the wealth and glory of the gospel in Christ Jesus our Lord.”³⁵ According to Daniells, then, the doctrine of righteousness by faith “opens to view” the entire scheme of biblical truths and their interconnectedness. For Daniells, righteousness by faith plays the same hermeneutical role

²⁹*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890; *Selected Messages*, 1:372.

³⁰Gary Land, “Shaping the Modern Church, 1906–1930,” in *Adventists in America: A History*, ed. Gary Land (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 164.

³¹W. W. Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries*, (Takoma Park: Review and Herald, 1920), 37.

³²*Ibid.*, 3

³³A. G. Daniells, *Christ our Righteousness: A Study of the Principles of Righteousness by Faith as Set Forth in the Word of God and the Writings of the Spirit of Prophecy* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1941), 70.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 71.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 72–73.

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so far played by the Sanctuary doctrine and the pillars of Adventism. Daniells was probably unaware that his views introduced a tension at the macro hermeneutical level of Adventist theology.

Since 1888, then, two hermeneutical visions have implicitly coexisted in Adventism. As the “righteousness by faith” vision joined the “sanctuary” vision, an imperceptible process of “forgetting” the latter was set in motion. The inner incompatibility of these two visions, however, didn’t become apparent until almost a century later.³⁶

From Sabbath School to University: Shifting the Matrix. During the 1960’s Adventism entered an unexplored frontier: The University.³⁷ The matrix from which theological reflection generates shifted from the practical realm of ministry, evangelism, and administration to the technical realm of scholarship. As Adventists entered the scholarly world in which sciences of different kinds are not only taught but also created, they came across new foundational questions. Not surprisingly, these questions challenged Adventist scholars. To answer them, they needed to have an unambiguous, coherently conceived, and clearly formulated systematic set of principles. In simple terms, they needed a vision articulated in academic fashion and a full-fledged theological methodology. Unfortunately, not only did such an academic formulated vision not exist, but also, Adventism was *implicitly* operating with two competing visions: Sanctuary and justification by faith. Consequently, during this period Adventist scholars faced the daunting task of overcoming the theological ambiguities inherited from previous periods and new challenges presented by the academic world without an explicit understanding of the hermeneutical vision or the way in which it functions in the theological method.

Theologians attempted to solve questions originating in the academic community without first addressing the question of hermeneutical presuppositions required in the academic world. Some attempted to answer questions and make sense of Adventist theology from the implicit vision they inherited from their church education. Others slowly adjusted their way of thinking to the academic vision.³⁸ Gradually, another vision joined the visions already at work in the Ad-

³⁶I am not suggesting that the doctrines of Justification by Faith and the biblical Sanctuary are incompatible. It is their use in the macro hermeneutical role in the construction of Christian theology which is incompatible. This affirmation requires further explanation. As we expand the methodological function of macro-hermeneutical presuppositions in the construction of Christian theology, this issue will become clearer in the mind of some readers.

³⁷In 1874, Battle Creek College was created. Since then, a significant number of Adventist colleges have been established not only in the United States but also around the world. However, with the organization of its first two universities, Andrews University in 1960 and Loma Linda University in 1962, the growing worldwide educational program of the Seventh-day Adventist church entered the halls of academe. This new academic setting has forced Adventism to interact in a thus far unfamiliar turf, namely, the scholarly world.

³⁸For instance, Jerry Gladson compared his experience on entering university studies with the way ten of the twelve spies felt after recognizing the land (Numbers 13:32, 31). “I felt the same way

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ventist community. The competition against the Sabbatarian Adventist Sanctuary vision gradually grew. So did the church's forgetfulness of the vision on which alone it must stand.

As Adventists engaged in graduate studies and scholarly research, they focused on chronological, archeological, historical, and exegetical issues. This concentration moved theological reflection away from the systematic nature and dynamics of early Adventist thought. Thus, the vision's role in academic research became less and less clear to new generations of Adventist scholars and believers. As the interconnectedness of thought was neglected, Adventist believers began to experience the doctrines of the church as disconnected affirmations severed from the experience of salvation and the mission of the church.³⁹

Meanwhile, communal life and action became absorbed in the practice and mission of the church, to the detriment of theological reflection and advancement. Emphasis on the practical side of church experience set in motion a process that, in time, produced a disconnect between pastors and teachers, practice and theology. The theological drive that directed the future course of Adventism was slowly subsiding and thereby minimizing the importance of the vision and its role in the generation of theological thinking. As theological matters progressively became less important to Adventists, diversity of visions and the theological systems they generate found their home in the church. Within this atmosphere, forgetfulness of the Sanctuary doctrine and its role as hermeneutical key opening to view a complete system of connected and harmonious truth intensified.

4. Shifting

This momentous forgetting produced at least four paradigmatic shifts in some sectors of the leadership of the church in North America and Europe. As the community forgot the hermeneutical role of the Sanctuary doctrine, new generations of Adventists became unable to see by themselves the complete system of truth discovered by the pioneers. By default, a macro hermeneutical shift took place. A new hermeneutical principle began to operate and expand in some sectors of Adventism that opened to view a different system of truth than the one discovered by the pioneers. The shift in hermeneutical vision and theological

when I entered Vanderbilt University to take up graduate studies in Old Testament. This was certainly the 'land of the giants,' and I wasn't sure my backwoods theology would be sufficient to slay the giant intellects who inhabited it. I saw in each professor a formidable adversary. In order to survive, I thought, I must be able intellectually to impale him upon the logic of my theological position. Since every professor was an avowed historical critic, I was tempted to transfer my insecurity into an adversarial attitude toward the historical-critical method." "Taming Historical Criticism: Adventist Biblical Scholarship in the Land of the Giants," *Spectrum* April 1988, 19.

³⁹See, George R. Knight, "Twenty-seven Fundamentals in Search of a Theology," *Ministry* February 2001, 5-7.

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understanding unleashed a chain reaction of paradigmatic shifts in the ground (sources theology), practice of ministry, and self-consciousness of the church.

Leroy Froom's historical review of Adventist theology reveals the ambiguity brewing in Adventist thought during the sixties and seventies. On the backdrop of *Questions on Doctrines*,⁴⁰ Adventists differentiated between the so-called "eternal verities" and "testing truths." The former incorporated "the Everlasting Gospel in essence and operation,"⁴¹ while the latter included the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, the Spirit of Prophecy, Conditional Immortality, new aspects of prophecy, and the like.⁴² Implicitly or explicitly, the conviction that "practically all Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are held by one or more Christian groups"⁴³ has become widely accepted in all sectors of Adventism. According to this view, we hold together with most Christian churches the "eternal verities" which include the foundational issues of theology, including the way of salvation. We differ in our views on the existence of a Heavenly Sanctuary, the Investigative Judgment, the Spirit of Prophecy manifested in the ministry and writings of E. G. White, and the Three Angels of Revelation 14 as describing the proclamation of the last message to the world before the coming of Christ.⁴⁴ Obviously, Adventists began to relate to the biblical Sanctuary as a doctrine among others without explicitly perceiving its guiding hermeneutical role.

Thus, it seems that almost fifty years ago some sectors of Adventist leadership began to think that there was very little difference between Adventist and Evangelical doctrines. For some, the Adventist Church was no longer the remnant church in the sense of the only true visible church on earth. Instead, they saw Adventism as just another Evangelical denomination. The Sanctuary and the Three Angels Message were no longer conceived as pillars on which a complete system of truth stood, but as pieces of the Evangelical building of truth. This change in conviction may help us to understand the shifts that took place in Adventism in the latter half of the century.

Shifting the Hermeneutical Vision. Was the Sanctuary still experienced as "opening to view a complete system of theology"? Froom's analysis of Adventist history exposes some ambiguities regarding both the hermeneutical function of the eschatological vision that gave birth to Adventism and the theological system that it brought to view. On one hand, Froom shows that the "vision" function of the Sanctuary doctrine experienced by E. G. White and the early pioneers was being replaced by the soteriological Protestant perspective. In early Adventism—explains Froom—the newly discovered doctrines had not as yet "found their integral relationship to Christ. They were consequently each held as

⁴⁰ *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1957), 21–25.

⁴¹ *Movement of Destiny*, 34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴³ *Questions on Doctrine*, 21.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

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largely independent, though related, doctrines.”⁴⁵ This evaluation shows how the new soteriological emphasis was beginning to operate as hermeneutical vision from which the entire corpus of doctrines had to be understood. On the other hand, Froom recognized that without the doctrine of the Sanctuary, “we have no justifiable place in the religious world, no distinctive denominational mission and message, no excuse for functioning as a separate church entity today.”⁴⁶ Moreover, he also recognized the systematic function of the Sanctuary in Ellen White’s thought. Quoting her, Froom affirms that the doctrine of the Sanctuary “involves and constitutes ‘a complete system of truth’ (GC 423). All other essential truths are actually embraced within it—the moral law, Sabbath, sacrificial Atonement, High-Priestly Mediation, Judgment, Justification and Sanctification, Righteousness by Faith, final rewards and punishments, Second Advent, and total destructions of the incorrigible wicked.”⁴⁷

Froom’s writings seem to indicate that early in the second half of the twentieth century, Adventists were at least ambiguous regarding the hermeneutical vision from which to build their biblical and theological understandings. In theory, the eschatological Sanctuary doctrine is still mentioned, yet not as a vision, but as the embodiment of the system itself. In practice, however, Adventists began to use the soteriological emphasis as hermeneutical vision from which to understand Scripture *and* build their system of theology. Consequently, the Sanctuary hermeneutical vision of Adventism was being replaced by the soteriological hermeneutical vision of Protestantism. Ten years later, Desmond Ford expressed this replacement explicitly and theoretically, unleashing an epochal paradigm shift in Adventist hermeneutics and theology.

Desmond Ford’s articulate, scholarly, and charismatically presented rejection of the Sanctuary doctrine brought his views to the attention of the Church.⁴⁸ His rejection gave explicit expression to the implicit hermeneutical shift already taking place in some sectors of Adventism. He replaced the foundational “pillar” on which Adventist theology stands with the soteriological vision of Protestant

⁴⁵*Movement of Destiny*, 181. He further explains that “not until the transcendent nature and centrality of Christ came to be clearly recognized—and His pre-eminent place established through intensive Bible study, public presentation, and Spirit of Prophecy attestation—could the integral relation of Christ to these doctrines be established and emphasized” (Ibid.).

⁴⁶Ibid., 542.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸“Never forget, the Old Testament Day of Atonement pointed to the Christ event, to the cross of Calvary. It is wrong to indulge in calendrical shuffling, trying to bring the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement down to the nineteenth century. The ancient Day of Atonement is not talking about the nineteenth century. It points to the cross of Christ. That’s where the final, full atonement was made. Calvary was the only place of complete atonement. We look only to Calvary, not to an event or date invented by man.” Desmond Ford, *Right with God Right Now: How God Saves People as Shown in the Bible’s Book of Romans* (Newcastle: Desmond Ford, 1998), 55.

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theology.⁴⁹ Thus, what Adventism was confronting at the 1980 Glacier View meetings was not only an exegetical challenge to the doctrine of the Sanctuary, but primarily a paradigm shift in the hermeneutical foundations of its theological system.⁵⁰ As Ford identified the Protestant interpretation of Justification by Faith originated by Luther⁵¹ with Paul's teachings in Romans, he correctly perceived its inner inconsistency with the Adventist teaching of the investigative judgment. Because Ford was persuaded that "we, as with all other Christians, have been entrusted with 'the everlasting gospel,' it is essential that nothing in our doctrinal presentation should compete or clash with that gospel," the Sanctuary doctrine had to go.⁵² In the final analysis, then, Ford felt compelled to abandon the doctrine of the Sanctuary not merely because he believed Adventist exegesis builds on "highly debatable" assumptions,⁵³ and the unpopular historicist method of prophetic interpretation,⁵⁴ but because it conflicted with the Protestant soteriological vision.⁵⁵ That Ford explicitly understood and applied the Protestant understanding of Justification by Faith as hermeneutical vision that opens to

⁴⁹Ford thus brought to fulfillment Ellen White's prediction that the pillars of Adventism will not only be challenged but also changed. "In the future [predicted Ellen White] deception of every kind is to arise, and we want solid ground for our feet. We want solid pillars for the building. Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established. The enemy will bring in false theories, such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. Where shall we find safety unless it be in the truths that the Lord has been giving for the last fifty years?" (*Review and Herald*, May 25, 1905; *Evangelism*, 224).

⁵⁰"The center of the earthquake, however, is a doctrinal one—the gospel and the sanctuary. That the Pauline righteousness by faith is the technical term for justification alone, that Christ's human nature was spiritually like that of Adam before the fall, that believers have the verdict of the Last Judgment the moment they believe and for as long as they believe, and that the investigative judgment has no basis in Scripture, nor the date 1844—these revelations have left many reeling and dazed, while having an opposite impact on others who are worshiping in the same pews" (Desmond and Gillian Ford, *The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity* [Newcastle: Desmond Ford, 1982], 4).

⁵¹See, *Right with God Right Now*, 35–48.

⁵²*Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment* (Casselberry: Euangelion, 1980), i).

⁵³"Our traditional sanctuary interpretation of 1844 and the investigative judgment . . . is dependent, not upon plain didactic statements from Scripture, but upon a prolonged series of assumptions and inferences—most of which are highly debatable" [emphasis ours] (*The Adventist Crisis*, 95).

⁵⁴"Today, biblical scholarship almost completely rejects the adoption of the historicist package of prophetic interpretation of apocalyptic [sic]. But the distinctive and special emphases of Adventism, 1844 in particular, spring [sic] from the whole-hearted acceptance of the interpretive positions that almost all other scholars reject" (*The Adventist Crisis*, 82).

⁵⁵"To even infer that Christ's atoning work at Calvary was not complete but required another phase; to suggest that the merits of the blood of the Savior did not reach the Most Holy Place until 1844; to intimate that our Lord for over eighteen centuries was engaged in a ministry which represented the limited privileges of the Jewish pre-cross era (Heb. 9:6–9); to create the fear that one's eternal salvation rested to any extent on the basis of works rather than faith alone, and that the issue of the judgment depends in part on the exigency (rather than the reality) of Christian growth—[sic] is to imperil the blessed gospel" (*Daniel 8:14*, i).

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view a complete system of theology becomes apparent from his statement that “when the gospel of grace is understood then that truth coordinates all other truths including such apparently esoteric matters as prophecy and the human nature of our Lord.”⁵⁶

Even though Adventism officially condemned Ford’s rejection of the Sanctuary doctrine and the historicist interpretation of prophecy at the 1980 Glacier View meetings, some still think his views represent real theological progress. This sector uses the “Gospel” (Justification by Faith understood à la Luther) as the hermeneutical “vision” through which the Bible is understood and the entire system of theology is constructed. The result of applying this vision is a wholesale reinterpretation of Adventist doctrines and practice.⁵⁷

Adventists using this new hermeneutical vision to understand the system of Christian thought and doctrines become convinced that the pioneers’ understanding of the Sanctuary was wrong and that the Church should recognize this error and rectify it for future generations. A going back to Protestantism replaces the early going out of the pioneers.⁵⁸ Believers thinking along these lines make up the so-called Evangelical Adventism. Though Adventists in name and affiliation, in thought and practice they belong to the Protestant community. Evangelical Adventism is not an organized community, but a way of thinking theologically within Adventism. Believers following this way of thinking usually believe that they represent the “true” Adventist thinking to which the church should eventually come around. Probably, most of the believers thinking along these lines have never understood the doctrine of the Sanctuary or used it as a hermeneutical key to grasp the complete system of Biblical truth. Evangelical Adventism leads either to a radical reinterpretation of doctrine or to defection.⁵⁹

However, a problem with ignoring, rejecting, or replacing the Sanctuary doctrine is that, as Froom put it, without the Sanctuary doctrine, Adventism has “no justifiable place in the religious world, no distinctive denominational mis-

⁵⁶*The Adventist Crisis*, 80.

⁵⁷The best example I know of the reinterpretation of Adventism when the Sabbatarian pillars of early Adventism are replaced by the Protestant interpretation of the Gospel is Steve Daily’s *Adventism for a New Generation* (Portland: Better Living, 1993). That Daily does not understand Christianity from the Sanctuary vision of early Adventists becomes clear when he states, after quoting in full the twenty third Fundamental Belief describing the official Adventist teaching on the Sanctuary, “If you made sense out of that, congratulations. The sanctuary doctrine, with its emphasis on an investigative judgment, has been challenged and questioned more than any other Adventist belief throughout the history of the church. It has generally had little meaning or practical relevance—except in a negative sense” (160).

⁵⁸Early Adventists identified their “going out” of Protestantism experience with the second angel’s message.

⁵⁹For instance, the “Proclamation” magazine edited by Dale Ratzlaff gives expression to the experience of ex-Adventists that never used the Sanctuary doctrine as a vision that opens to view a complete system of truth coherent and harmonious. Implicitly, they understand Christianity from the Evangelical theological perspective.

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sion and message, no excuse for functioning as a separate church entity today.”⁶⁰ Without the Sanctuary doctrine hermeneutical role, the only reasons that remain to explain Adventism to the world are cultural. Not surprisingly, some propose Adventism should join the ecumenical movement; others leave the church to join Protestant denominations.

Shifting the Ground. Forgetfulness of the theological revolution that gave birth to Adventist theology soon extended beyond the hermeneutical vision of the Sanctuary to the *sola Scriptura* principle from which it sprang. By the end of the twentieth century, a sector of the Adventist theological community abandoned the *sola Scriptura* principle on which early Adventists built their theological system, replacing it with the multiple sources approach on which Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians constructed their theological views.⁶¹ Thus, some Adventist thinkers no longer understand Christianity and the world from Scripture. Instead, they attempt to understand Scripture from contemporary science and culture.⁶²

Perhaps the writer that has formulated this shift with greatest clarity and scholarship is Fritz Guy.⁶³ For him, theology is no longer the investigation of divine truth revealed in Scripture, as it is for most Adventists even today, but

⁶⁰*Movement of Destiny*, 542.

⁶¹For an introduction to the plurality of theological sources in Protestant theology, see, for instance, Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason & Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

⁶²This paradigmatic change in Adventist hermeneutics clearly appears in a recent article on the interpretation of Genesis 1. In the introduction, the author lays down his hermeneutical approach: “Our central question is this: in the light of what we understand scientifically and theologically in the twenty-first century, how shall we interpret Genesis 1?” (Fritz Guy, “Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-first Century,” *Spectrum* 31/2 (2003): 5). Thus, Guy understands Scripture in the light of science and not the other way around. That this approach is a reversal of Adventist hermeneutics can be appreciated when we learn that Ellen White understands science in the light of Scripture. “The Bible is not to be tested by men’s idea of science, but science is to be brought to the test of this unerring standard. When the Bible makes statements of facts in nature, science may be compared with the Written Word, and a correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. One does not contradict the other. All truth, whether in nature or revelation, agrees” (*Selected Messages* [Washington: Review and Herald, 1980], 3: 307–308). When Ellen White says that “all truth agrees” (all truth is God’s truth), she is not inviting us to achieve such agreement by accommodating Scripture to science. On the contrary, she invites us to evaluate and even reject scientific theories when they disagree with biblical teachings. “Inferences erroneously drawn from facts observed in nature have, however, led to supposed conflict between science and revelation; and in the effort to restore harmony, interpretations of Scripture have been adopted that undermine and destroy the force of the word of God. Geology has been thought to contradict the literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of the creation. Millions of years, it is claimed, were required for the evolution of the earth from chaos; and in order to accommodate the Bible to this supposed revelation of science, the days of creation are assumed to have been vast, indefinite periods, covering thousands or even millions of years. Such a conclusion is wholly uncalled for. The Bible record is in harmony with itself and with the teaching of nature” (*Education* [Mountain View: Pacific, 1952], 128–129).

⁶³For an introduction to and evaluation of Guy’s *Thinking Theologically*, see Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2003), 110–116.

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rather the attempt to understand our religious experience as expressed in beliefs.⁶⁴ In so doing, he places his understanding of Adventism within the modern theological tradition as expressed in the History of Religions School of theological thought.⁶⁵ This indicates not only an abandonment of the *sola Scriptura* principle in favor of the multiple sources of theology paradigm,⁶⁶ but also a radical reinterpretation of the origin and nature of Scripture.⁶⁷ The modern view that Scripture preserves humanly originated religious convictions replaces the Adventist view that Scripture directly discloses God's mind and acts in history in thoughts and words.⁶⁸ The multiple sources approach led modern theologians to believe that Biblical writers used the culture and ideas of their day to convey their personal noncognitive encounters with God. According to this view, the

⁶⁴At the beginning of his book, Guy candidly agrees with modernist theologian Langdon Gilkey's definition of theology as "the interpretation of faith—that is, thinking about the meaning of faith— theology is the activity of thinking as carefully, comprehensively, and creatively as possible about the content, basis, and implications of one's own religious life, including experience (or 'spirituality') and practice as well as belief" (*Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* [Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1999], 4).

⁶⁵Guy takes his definition of theology from Langdon Gilkey (4, n.4). Here we have an example of how many Adventist theologians derive their basic theological assumptions from other theologians, neglecting the necessary work of theological deconstruction. For an introduction to the notion of *Religionsgeschichte* see Ernst Troeltsch's, *Religion in History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). Notable theologians approaching systematic theology from this perspective are, for instance, Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, trans. ed. from the 2nd German ed. (1830) (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928); *The Christian Faith*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

⁶⁶"Strictly speaking the Reformation motto *Sola scriptura*, 'By Scripture alone,' popularly interpreted as 'the Bible and the Bible only,' has always been a polemical exaggeration. . . . Historically and experientially, a more accurate motto is *prima scriptura*, 'By Scripture first of all.' Perhaps even better would be an affirmation of something like the 'Wesleyan quadrilateral' consisting of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience" (*Thinking Theologically*, 137). See also Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside: La Sierra UP, 1991), 88–98; and Woodrow W. Whidden, "Sola Scriptura, Inerrantist Fundamentalism and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Is 'No Creed but the Bible' a Workable Solution," *AUSS* 35/2 (1997): 211–226.

⁶⁷"Because of the ontological difference between our reality and God's—that is, between finitude and infinity—our language cannot be applied directly to God," (*Thinking Theologically*, 187). As Scripture belongs to human language, we cannot find in it divine revelation. The ontological difference, as understood by Guy (he does not expand about such a foundational issue in his book), prohibits it. Of course, if the ontological difference could be interpreted differently, then divine revelation should be understood differently as well. This conviction stems from the implicit acceptance of the empirical-Kantian limitation of knowledge to things and events that take place in space and time. Since God, the infinite, does not act in time as finite beings do, humans cannot know God directly, neither can God speak directly to humans in space and time.

⁶⁸"An adequate interpretation of faith [explains Guy] must exhibit, among other things, faith's cognitive content; it must show the relationships of faith to what is believed to be true about the world and humane existence. *Apart from these relationships, faith is literally 'meaningless,'* however peaceful, exhilarated, virtuous, or valuable it might make a person feel" (ibid., 190; emphasis mine).

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contents of Scripture are merely the human “faith” response to divine encounters with God.⁶⁹ Thus, Scripture is human tradition, not divine revelation. It is only by faith that we are able to experience the event of divine revelation that lies behind and beyond biblical words and teachings. Theology is understood as Christian tradition instead of as biblical revelation.⁷⁰

Even though the abandonment of the *sola Scriptura* principle is more divisive than Ford’s views on the Sanctuary doctrine, the Adventist church has not yet officially addressed this shift and its theological implications as outlined in Guy’s theological methodology.⁷¹ Yet, a growing number of Adventist intellectuals are building their theological views along these lines. Some belonging to this way of thinking call themselves “Progressive Adventists.” For this group of Adventists, “progress” means adapting the Adventist “faith” (doctrines they received via Adventist tradition) and biblical teachings to modern science and contemporary culture.⁷² During the second half of the twentieth century, this sort of Adventist *aggiornamento* emerged around large institutions with a high concentration of college and university trained believers.

For many Adventists facing questions for which they have no answers, adjusting their beliefs seems the only way to maintain intellectual honesty and spiritual sanity. Questions on the meaning and understanding of the Adventist belief system soon replaced questions on biblical interpretation. Because of its history, Adventism was better prepared to answer the latter. Thus, the growth and development of Adventism created a need the church did not address while it was growing. Individually, Adventist believers sought to answer questions as best they could.

Generally, Adventists integrated theological, scientific, and pastoral views that fit their understanding of Scripture with belief systems borrowed from other denominations. As new questions arose, some influential teachers, pastors, and

⁶⁹See, for instance, Herold Weiss, “Revelation and the Bible: Beyond Verbal Inspiration,” *Spectrum* 7/3 (1975): 49–54; and Edward W. H. Vick, *Speaking Well of God* (Nashville: Southern, 1979), 21–22.

⁷⁰Karl Barth’s view that Scripture is not revelation but testifies about it, notably, about Jesus Christ. For an analysis and criticism of the Modern Model of Revelation-Inspiration in general, and, of Karl Barth’s view in particular, see my *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundations of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham: UP of America, 2001).

⁷¹Unfortunately, Guy does not develop his view of revelation and inspiration, leaving his readers to guess from the scattered clues they may find in related issues or passing statements throughout his *Thinking Theologically*. For instance, he states that “theologically, the canonical New Testament writings constitute the primary witness to the revelation of God in the person of Jesus the Messiah, and to think theologically as a Christian is to recognize the primacy of these writings” (*Thinking Theologically*, 126).

⁷²See Ervin Taylor, “Progressive Adventism: A Nonfundamentalist Vision,” *Adventist Today*, On line edition, September-October 2001. Steve Daily reports that “there is a ‘spirit of hopelessness’ that many Adventists are struggling with, who want to see change in the church. And change in the direction that our culture is moving in general today, but who feel helpless to do anything about it” (*Adventism for a New Generation*, 3rd ed. [Portland: Better Living, 1994], xvi).

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administrators integrated secular and theological ideas they thought harmonized with Scripture. Unfortunately, many of them were incompatible with it. As new generations of Adventist believers received these new ideas from within the Adventist grapevine, they logically experienced them as Adventist teachings. Inconsistencies were adjusted by further adapting biblical thinking to new developments in religious and secular culture.⁷³ Over time, this process shaped the theological understanding and practice of cultural/progressive Adventism, which obviously developed in directions quite different from the biblically grounded beliefs of their Church.

That Progressive Adventists are serious about radically changing Adventism becomes clear when one learns their views about origins. Their deep certainty that we should build our beliefs on a multiplex of sources leads them to the unavoidable conviction that science, not Scripture, tells the truth about the history of life on earth. Thus, to reject scientific “truth” is tantamount to rejecting “present truth.”⁷⁴ On the face of mounting scientific evidence—they contend—Adventists can no longer intelligently and honestly believe in a six-day literal historical creation. To accommodate the long ages of science,⁷⁵ they read the Genesis account “theologically.”⁷⁶ According to this view, evolution and creation are not contradictory because creation does not speak about the historical process through which life originated, but about creaturely dependence on “ultimate reality.”⁷⁷ While evolutionary theory enlightens us about the history of life on earth, Scripture enlightens us about the “spiritual,” “metaphysical” rather than physical side of reality.⁷⁸

Accommodating the Genesis narrative to evolutionary theory requires also a change in the traditional Adventist understanding of revelation-inspiration. How

⁷³The search for meaning requires belief systems to be consistent and coherent. All beliefs and teachings should be consistent between themselves and coherent with the realities to which they refer.

⁷⁴“I fear that if church leaders insist on adopting a literal, fundamentalist biblical interpretation in this matter [the long ages of life on earth], they will demonstrate that they are turning their backs on ‘present truth’” (Ervin Taylor, “Before Adam,” *Adventist Today* November-December 1994, 21).

⁷⁵“There is overwhelming evidence, collected over the past two centuries in a wide spectrum of scientific disciplines, showing that the time frame for the fossil record should be measured in hundreds of millions of years. Within the last century, impressive evidence has also been collected suggesting that the time frame for human-like fossils (hominids)—and the artifacts they fabricated—extends back hundreds of thousands and even several million years” (ibid., 20).

⁷⁶Fritz Guy, “Interpreting Genesis One,” 5–16.

⁷⁷Thus, Fritz Guy invites us to consider Genesis 1 “as a fundamental—that is, foundational—expression of the relation of God, humanity and the world.” Immediately he expands his thought by quoting Jürgen Moltmann’s theological definition of creation: “Creation is the term that describes the miracle of existence in general” (*God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* [San Francisco: Harper, 1985], 196, in Fritz Guy, “Interpreting Genesis One,” 11).

⁷⁸After arguing that “taken literally,” the two explanations of creation [Genesis 1 and 2] “are incompatible” Fritz Guy affirms that taken theologically, “there is no conflict at all, because the two explanations of creation ‘offer complementary spiritual truths’” (“Interpreting Genesis One,” 12).

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else could we explain why God inspired a text depicting a historical six-day creative process while all the time attempting to communicate a spiritual non-historical truth. If the truth of creation was spiritual, why did God not inspire the prophets to say it plainly? If theologians can explain the so-called spiritual meaning of creation clearly, why was God unable to make it clear to biblical writers in the first place? Why did God decide not to use evolutionary history to convey theological truth?

To answer these and other related questions, some Progressive Adventists use an idiosyncratic understanding of revelation-inspiration commonly known as “thought inspiration.” According to this view, God inspired thoughts but not the words.⁷⁹ Biblical “errors” like the six-day creation account may be explained as originating in the writers’ words, not in God’s ideas.⁸⁰ By wedging a gap between thought and words, they attempt to make room for a theological interpretation of the ideas God revealed to the prophet.⁸¹ One problem with this view is that in human communication we cannot separate words from thought. Without words, we have no access to the thoughts of others. Thus, theological interpretation is unable to do what it is supposed to do, that is, to reach the divine message that stands beyond and outside the text. When the Modern model of revelation-inspiration—according to which human imagination and not divine inspiration is responsible for the contents of the Genesis account of creation—is adopted, this problem disappears. There is no need to explain here how the Modern model or notion of revelation-inspiration single-handedly destructs the entire building of Christian teachings.

These paradigmatic changes in the understanding of theological sources, the doctrine of revelation-inspiration, and the history of human life have a broad hermeneutical impact on the task of doing Adventist theology. If accepted by the church, these changes necessarily require a wholesale reinterpretation of Adventist theology and life in the image of Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians. However, Progressive Adventists seem oblivious to the hermeneutical and

⁷⁹Raymond F. Cottrell explains the basic premise of Thought Inspiration in the following way. In Scripture “the message itself is of divine origin, and the language and thought forms in which it is expressed reflect the personal characteristics and cultural background of the respective writers” (“Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Relation to Phenomena of the Natural World,” in *Creation Reconsidered: Scientific, Biblical, and Theological Perspectives*, ed. James L. Hayward [Roseville: Association of Adventist Forums, 2000], 195).

⁸⁰The hermeneutical consequences of Thought Inspiration for the interpretation of Genesis 1 are clear. “Inasmuch as the message from God revealed in the Bible is inspired and the form in which it comes to us is human, it is reasonable to conclude that the message itself is inviolate but that the form may reflect an incomplete or imperfect human perspective.” (ibid., 5).

⁸¹“The problems here to be considered [interpretation of the Genesis creation story] are not inherent with the inspired message, rightly understood; they may arise from the uninspired form or our faulty understanding of either the message or the form. It is also reasonable to conclude that objective criteria are needed by which to distinguish between the message and the uninspired form in which it comes to us.” The objective criteria, of course, are provided by human scientific theories. (ibid., 5–6).

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systematic role that the doctrine of evolution plays in contemporary thinking. They seem to accept deep time and the evolutionary ideas that come with it as explanation for the fossil column and the origin of life on earth, forgetting that when accepted, these ideas necessarily become the vision that opens to view an alternate system of truth.⁸² Shifting the ground of Adventist theology from the *sola Scriptura* principle to the multiple sources of theology matrix, then, necessarily requires changing the hermeneutical vision. In other words, the change of ground requires the replacement of the Sanctuary doctrine and the other so-called “pillars” as macro hermeneutical principles of Adventist theology.⁸³

Since the theological views of both Progressive and Biblical Adventists stem from deep intellectual and religious convictions, it is unlikely that further reflection will integrate them in one harmonious theological system. Progressive Adventists seem to consider that the stark incompatibility that exists between their way of thinking and Biblical Adventism does not endanger the future of the church. On the contrary, they think their contribution is indispensable for the very survival of Adventism in contemporary society. They are committed to redeeming Adventism from its humble intellectual beginnings and its nineteenth-century mistakes.

Besides, they seem to believe that their rejection of the *sola Scriptura* principle and the hermeneutical changes it unleashes does not endanger church unity. According to them, community is primary, theological thinking is secondary.⁸⁴ Theological divisions should not threaten the unity of the church because unity does not depend on theological understanding but on the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit generating communitarian love. They reason that since love is all-inclusive, it should be enough to build unity among all Adventist believers—no matter how incompatible their theological views may be. On this basis, there is little motivation to examine, evaluate, or reject divergent theological views in the light of biblical thinking. On the other side, millions of Adventist believers around the world wonder how their “progressive” brothers and sisters are able to accept teachings that contradict not only the biblical ground and macro hermeneutical principles on which Adventism stands, but also the inner logic of biblical thought.⁸⁵

⁸²For an illustration of the hermeneutical role of the evolution in philosophy and theology, see, for instance, Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford lectures, 1927–28 (New York: Macmillan, 1960); and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

⁸³The notion of the non-immortality of the soul is an exception, as it passes the scientific test.

⁸⁴Richard Rice, *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville: Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), 110, 208.

⁸⁵Clifford Goldstein understands the overall incompatibility between evolution and Adventist theology when he writes that “what amazes me isn’t so much that people can believe in evolution (after all, I used to), but that those who do still want to be Seventh-day Adventists. I can respect someone who, believing in evolutionary theory, rejects the Adventist Church entirely. I have no respect for those who think they can meld the two” (“Seventh-day Darwinians,” *Adventist Review*

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The shift from *sola Scriptura* to the multiplex of theological sources from which Progressive Adventist thinking proceeds requires a complete reshaping of Adventist theology and practice. If accepted, this shift will accelerate and intensify deep divisions in the Adventist community around the world. Moreover, accommodating to rapidly changing trends in philosophical, scientific, and entertainment cultures plunges Adventism into the whirlwind of never-ending conforming to the patterns of this world, thereby explicitly contradicting Paul's injunction to do the opposite (Romans 12:2).

Shift in the Self-Consciousness of the Church. Pastor Jan Paulsen, current President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, seems to perceive a change in the self-consciousness of the Church. He sees many Adventists losing their sense of identity.

There are many things we have in common and can do in common with Christians of other churches, but we are Christians of a very specific identity. That identity is reflected in teachings, in what we value, and in our quality of life. I wonder: Have we become or are we becoming more recognizable as "Christians" than we are as Seventh-day Adventist Christians? And is it possible that this is something we'd like to see happen and, therefore, are being deliberate about projecting ourselves in his manner? To the extent that this is so, what is it that has brought us to this point? Is it a consequence of "theological mobbing"? Is it a consequence of an inferiority complex? Is it a consequence of just wanting to blend in better?⁸⁶

It seems that the paradigmatic changes in the hermeneutical vision and theological sources that have taken place in some sectors of Adventism have influenced not only our biblical interpretation and doctrinal understanding, but also our communal self-understanding. After all, the way we think determines who we are (Proverbs 23:7) and what we do.

The Sanctuary hermeneutical vision and the system of theology that it opened to view led Adventist pioneers to leave their churches and form a new one. The notion of being the visible eschatological remnant representing Christ in the time of the end gave unity, identity, and a sense of mission to Adventism.⁸⁷ Biblical Adventists continue to sense the same unity, an identity that

(Online edition, July 24, 2003). Answering those who do not see the incompatibility, Goldstein explains, "if evolution is true, then the Adam and Eve story becomes null and void. If that's null and void, what happens to the Fall? Without the Fall, the cross becomes an empty gesture, which destroys any grounds for the Second Coming. Thus, it seems impossible to reconcile Adventism with evolution. Someone can be one (an Adventist) or the other (an evolutionist), but not both. All of which comes to the real point of my article: considering that evolution and Adventism cannot be reconciled, should we be paying people to stand in our classrooms or pulpits and promote evolution?" (*Adventist Review*, Online edition, Sept 25, 2003).

⁸⁶"The Theological Landscape," Supplement to the *Adventist Review*, June 13 2002, 3–8.

⁸⁷Commenting on early Adventism (1844–1885) George Knight remarks that "the placement of their theology in the framework of the last great conflict between good and evil set forth in the heart

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propels them in relentless mission and explosive growth around the world. As the Evangelical and Progressive sectors in Adventism shifted their hermeneutical visions and the sources of theology from which they sought to understand Adventist theology and experience, their self-consciousness as members of the community began to change accordingly. The system of biblical theology of early Adventism became increasingly problematic for them. Instead of being critical of Christian tradition and theological methodology, they used them as the perspective from which to understand Scripture,⁸⁸ doctrines, experience, and the mission of the church.⁸⁹ They rejected the notion of the remnant as arrogant and unbiblical and understood themselves as members of the broader Christian Evangelical community of churches, even of a “spiritual ecumenicity” that overcomes “the sin of fragmentation and divisiveness” among Christian denominations.⁹⁰

In this context, the question arises: What does it mean to be an Adventist rather than an Evangelical Christian? Does the Adventist church have a reason to exist as a separate denomination? Let us consider an answer that Progressive Adventism gives to this question. After describing theological changes in Adventist history, Fritz Guy questions whether we can still speak of “authentic” Adventist Christianity. “If we no longer read scripture the way Adventists initially read it, if we no longer believe what Adventists initially believed, and if we no longer think the way Adventists initially thought, in what sense are we still authentically Adventist?”⁹¹ His most appealing reason seems to be one’s personal “choice of the Adventist community as a spiritual home and the adoption of the Adventist past as a part of spiritual identity.”⁹² According to this way

of the book of Revelation gave it an urgency that eventually set the Sabbatarians upon an ever-expanding mission of warning the world” (*A Search for Identity*, 86).

⁸⁸See, for instance, Jerry Gladson, “Taming Historical Criticism,” 19–34.

⁸⁹For instance, Guy thinks that “Adventist theology is not methodologically unique among Christian theologies. It is, to be sure, Protestant rather than Catholic, and it is generally more ‘conservative’ than ‘liberal’ (as these terms are commonly used). But it does not have its own separate way of thinking theologically. If it did, we would have to persuade other Christians to accept our theological method before they could find our theological thinking intelligible enough to warrant careful attention” (*Thinking Theologically*, viii–ix). He also defines Adventist experience, practice, and belief in continuity with general Christianity. “To be Adventist is to be, first and foremost, Christian; and what is most important in Adventist experience, practice, and belief is not what differentiates us from other Christians, but what unites us to them” (*Ibid.*, ix).

⁹⁰Steve Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation*, 313.

⁹¹(*Thinking Theologically*, 92). Obviously, Guy’s affirmation reveals the positive way in which he evaluates change in Adventist theology. Change is good because it stems from “the basic Adventist principle of present truth” (*Ibid.*, 80). The community of faith’s experience (present truth) replaces the pillars of the church.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 92. Guy’s answer to the question: “in what sense are we still authentically Adventist?” is even more revealing. What defines our uniqueness as Adventists, according to Fritz Guy, revolves around the following points: (1) Openness to present truth; (2) salvation as gift of grace as center of personal experience; (3) contemporary importance of the Sabbath; (4) anticipation of the Second Coming; (5) spiritual significance of spiritual health; and (6) “the choice of the Adventist community

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of thinking, Adventism has no compelling theological features that may draw other Christians to become Adventists. For Guy, “authentic”⁹³ Adventism becomes the best available particular actualization of Christianity.⁹⁴ For this sector of Adventism to become or to remain a member of the Adventist “community”⁹⁵ seems to depend more on sociological than theological reasons.⁹⁶ That was not so in the beginning.

as a spiritual home and the adoption of the Adventist past as a part of spiritual identity” (Ibid., 92; compare with page 80). However, other Christian denominations also share some or all of the issues mentioned in points 1–5. By themselves, these points do not give sufficient reason to belong to the Adventist Church rather than to any other Evangelical denomination.

⁹³“Authentic” Adventism seems to refer to the way in which Progressive Adventists have retrieved and reinterpreted the Adventist tradition they received from their parents. To speak about “authentic” Adventism implies the existence of “inauthentic” Adventism, presumably involving those that have different views. For the basic content of “authentic” Adventism, see, n. 87, above.

⁹⁴Explaining why he speaks about “Adventist Christianity” rather than just “Adventism,” Guy hopes “this usage will serve as a gentle but frequent reminder that our distinctiveness is not the proper center of our theology or our spirituality.” A few sentences later, he specifies the way in which he understands the relation between Adventism and the Christian world. “Adventist spirituality, practice, and belief constitute not the epitome or perfection of Christianity but a particular actualization of it—one that for me along with many others is the best available, and it continues to be nurturing, challenging, and rewarding” (*Thinking Theologically*, 10). Here we are far from the notion of remnant church or the sanctuary doctrine as vision from which the Adventist pioneers discovered a complete system of theology and truth. Instead, Guy, notable representative of Progressive Adventism, seems to understand the system of Christian theology from the methodological of the classical and modern traditions of Christian theologies from which he draws freely.

⁹⁵The progressive sector prefers to speak about the Adventist “community” instead of the more traditional “Adventist Church” designation. “I want to use the word ‘community’ instead of ‘church’—explains Guy—as a frequent reminder of the ideal we are called to actualize as often and as well as we can. The incidental fact that a Christian community of faith is usually organized into a structured church does not alter the essential fact that it is, first and foremost, a community. It is important to the health of the community that it recognize the ways in which its organizational structures tend to distort and subvert its nature as a community” (*Thinking Theologically*, 34–35). Yet, Scripture uses the term “church” to identify the community of Christ. While the biblical word “church” refers to a community, it distinguishes it with theological precision from all other human communities. Then, we can hardly ignore it or replace it with the more general term “community.” While Guy correctly affirms that organizations and structure tend to “distort” and “subvert” the nature of the community, he seems to forget that no community can exist without organization and structure. Thus, avoiding organization and structure is not the solution to avoiding “distorting” and “subverting” the nature of the community. Organization and structure are not the problem. The way we think theologically is the problem. The solution is to think and act biblically. By so doing, the community becomes the church of Jesus Christ. For an extended study on the community side of the Church, see Richard Rice, *Believing, Behaving, Belonging*.

⁹⁶In a book that correctly stresses the importance and structural role that communal life plays in Christianity and provides many useful insights and correctives for American individualism, Richard Rice argues that “belonging” to the community of faith has priority over believing and behaving. (*Believing, Behaving, Belonging*, 110). In his conclusion, he affirms that the central point of his book is to anchor “believing and behaving solidly in the life of the community. Belonging is not only more fundamental than believing and behaving, it is also fundamental to believing and behaving. In other words, as Christians we believe and we behave as members of a community” (Ibid., 208). I

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Shifting the Practice of Ministry. The theological changes taking place within Adventism also affect the everyday practice of ministry. The forgetting of the Adventist vision by “balanced” Adventists, the introduction of new pillars by “Evangelical” Adventists, and the rejection of the *sola Scriptura* principle by “Progressive” Adventists have slowly produced a crisis of identity not only in theologians and teachers, but also in pastors and members of the church. With the passing of time, some sectors of Adventism forgot the biblical pillars and were unable to pass them on to new generations. A major sector of Adventism received the pillars, but neglected to use them in further understanding biblical truth.⁹⁷ As we explained earlier, this vacuum imperceptibly led some to borrow extra-biblical pillars, from which Adventist thinking and practice began to shape itself in the image of a declining Protestantism and Modernism. Thus, recent generations of Adventists have found it increasingly difficult to see and experience the harmonious system of biblical truth as their ancestors did. As new pillars stood on non-biblical grounds, Adventists began not only to understand Christian theology as Protestant do, but also to incorporate methods in the practice of ministry that fit and harmonize with the Evangelical and Modernistic theological systems.

As these changes were taking place inside Adventism, dramatic changes were taking place outside. The rapid secularization⁹⁸ produced by modernity displaced a God-centered culture with a culture revolving around the self-interests of human beings. When by the middle of the twentieth century post-modernity⁹⁹ replaced modernity, the frame of mind of secular western society

agree with the last statement. What precedes, however, needs better formulation. In what sense does our belonging to the community have priority over belief and behaving? To give priority to community over belief seems friendly to Roman Catholic and Protestant use of tradition as source of theology and hermeneutical principles. Interestingly, Rice’s emphasis: “belonging, believing, and behaving” does not match the title of his book. From a biblical perspective, we should affirm the interdependence in which these three levels or dimensions of Christian experience necessarily take place. There is no primacy of one level over the other, but systematic integration.

⁹⁷During the early eighties many were of the conviction that had Desmond Ford not challenged the Sanctuary Doctrine as he did, it would have disappeared anyway by neglect and lack of use.

⁹⁸Millard Erickson defines secularism as “the tendency to conceive of reality and to establish one’s values in terms of the observable or the mundane, the worldly” (*Where is Theology Going*, 102). For an introduction to Postmodernity see, Humberto M. Rasi and Fritz Guy, eds., *Meeting the Secular Mind: Some Adventist Perspectives: Selected Working Papers of the Committee on Secularism of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1987).

⁹⁹For an introduction to Postmodernity see, for instance, Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); and Robert C. Greer, *Mapping Postmodernity: A Survey of Christian Options* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003). “With the advent of postmodernity, then, Western culture has arrived at a historic crossroads. What was considered unthinkable only a few years ago is now widely regarded as normal: Nietzsche’s prophecy has finally come to pass. Postmodernity has replaced modernism. The enormity of this paradigm shift is difficult to overstate. It is comparable to the paradigm shift that brought into existence the

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became relativistic and decidedly pluralistic. The revolution in communication technology, notably television¹⁰⁰ and the internet,¹⁰¹ has intensified these cultural changes exponentially and disseminated them globally. Christian denominations fought back the only way they knew how: by further accommodating themselves to rapid philosophical, scientific, and cultural changes.¹⁰² The notion behind this method of fighting secularization with secularization is that secularizing the church in the “non essentials” will attract secular-minded individuals to the “essentials” of Christianity. To put it simply, a secular package will attract secular individuals to the sacred “spiritual” content of Christianity. Even though this strategy properly fits the Evangelical and Progressive theological visions and systems, Biblical Adventists also began “testing” this strategy in their worship rituals and in their ministry to the youth.

In the Church, pastors and evangelists are in charge of “packaging” the message to attract the attention of over-stimulated audiences. To attract interest for the church’s message, this approach lets culture dictate the patterns of ministerial activity. Divine wisdom treasured in Scripture and Ellen White’s writings are left behind as old and irrelevant. In the process of producing a new secular model of ministerial practice, pastors and evangelists further accommodate doctrines and practices to new ideologies, or simply push them aside for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel. Worship becomes central and new cultural forms become the chosen tools to call multitudes to “experience” *the gospel* through emotional excitement.

Ministerial pragmatism replaces biblical truth. Whatever works is seen as what the “Holy Spirit” wants for the church, even if this contradicts biblical

Enlightenment over two hundred years ago—and perhaps even comparable to the earlier shifts that opened the Reformation and Renaissance” (Ibid., (203–205).

¹⁰⁰“No feature of modern culture so dominates life and thought as does television. The medium heavily influences all by the smallest minority of people, therefore, at no time in history has there existed such a level playing field with regard to information and entertainment. Culturally, television is the great equalizer. The socially high and mighty watch the same programs as the socially low and powerless. Television is the consolation prize for being poor” (William E. Brown, “Theology in a Postmodern Culture: Implications of a Video-Dependent Society,” in *The Challenge of Postmodernity: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 318).

¹⁰¹On the effect of computers on knowledge itself, see Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1979], 3–6). On the globalization of information, see Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 17–18.

¹⁰²This pattern became ingrained in the blueprint of classical Christian theology (Jack A. Bonson, *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology* [New York: Paulist, 1993], 22–31). This pattern, still present in the modern synthesis of Christian theology, is methodologically attached to the multiplicity of sources of classical and modern theologies (see, for instance, David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988], 43–56). Christian theology has always adapted to the philosophy, science, and culture of the day. Thus, it is not surprising that Christians will continue to do the same when facing secularism and postmodernity.

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teachings and practice. At the beginning of the twentieth century, modernism divided denominations across the border into liberal and conservative camps. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Charismatic movement permeates all denominations, conservative and liberal, and unites them in praxis ecumenism.

In North America, Europe, and Australia the presence and writings of Evangelical and Progressive Adventists have influenced the mindset of an increasing number of Adventist leaders (pastors, teachers, administrators, and laity). They look at Adventism not from the biblical Sanctuary and the pillars of Adventism perspective, but from the hermeneutical principles (pillars) on which Christian theology (Roman Catholic and Protestant) has been built. Thus, they are prepared to further accommodate their beliefs to new changes in Charismatic and cultural thinking.¹⁰³ They are convinced that to reach a new secular audience, the Charismatic-entertainment model of “worship” is the solution.¹⁰⁴ Consciously or unconsciously, many are joining the Charismatic movement and bringing it into the church’s self-consciousness and mission. As a result, they advocate joining the new “spiritual ecumenicity” sweeping all Christian denominations.¹⁰⁵

For some, the goal in the practice of ministry is to have a large attendance on Sabbath.¹⁰⁶ Because in first world countries church attendance does not increase, pastors sense the irrelevance of their efforts. Following the Charismatic model of worship sweeping throughout Christianity, some pastors attribute the irrelevance of their effort, in favor of believers and unbelievers alike, to “old packaging” or forms of worship. Thus, many pastors seek to attract larger audiences by embracing culturally engaging worship rituals to the detriment of preaching the Word and engaging membership in the mission of the Church. Incorrectly, this renewal of the ritual is labeled “worship” renewal. However, rituals are only external forms unable to produce or elicit the spiritual nature of worship.

¹⁰³Steve Daily wishes Adventism to experience the “third wave of the Holy Spirit.” He considers the charismatic movement the model to follow, among other things, because it “has grown more than thirty times faster than Adventism, and has been more than one hundred times as effective at reaching young people in North America as Adventism” (*Adventism for a New Generation*, 249). See also his charismatic interpretation of the heritage and essence of Adventism (*ibid.*, 272–281).

¹⁰⁴For many in this mind frame, Willow Creek becomes the model Adventism should follow (*ibid.*, 241–242).

¹⁰⁵Steve Daily is explicit about this point. Explaining that the “‘Charismatic’ renewal that is impacting many mainline churches” is forming a “spiritual ecumenicity,” he tells us that his “prayer is that Adventism will be on the cutting edge of this movement, rather than occupying its usual position at the end of the tail” (*ibid.*, 313).

¹⁰⁶Richard Rice correctly reviews some of the problems in looking at the ministry and mission of the church from the perspective of numbers (*Believing, Behaving, Belonging*, 122–126).

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Emphasis on ritual is slowly Charismatizing¹⁰⁷ Adventism and transforming it into another ritualistic version of Christianity. The so-called “worship” experience becomes the preferred tool for evangelizing the youth. Relation to God becomes associated with and mediated by “doing” the ritual. A new legalism replaces the old legalism. The old “ethical” legalistic attitude assumed one earns salvation by performing ethical actions prescribed by Scripture. The new “ritualistic” legalistic attitude assumes God confers salvation through baptism and Sabbath worship rituals.

In an overwhelming number of our Adventist churches, a new “sacrament”¹⁰⁸ mediating the presence of the Holy Spirit is popular beat or rock music. Music¹⁰⁹ then replaces the Word. Concerts replace preaching. Feeling replaces mission. Spirituality replaces obedience. Religion becomes a mechanically induced,¹¹⁰ existentially spiritless experience in the midst of spirited shouting and external expressions of joy. As a result, Bible study and personal commitment to biblical truth is disappearing from the consciousness and imagination of Evangelicals in general¹¹¹ and new generations of Adventists in particular. Adventism

¹⁰⁷Steve Daily explicitly advocates the Charimatization of Adventism as the only way to find relevance and be authentically Christian (*Adventism for a New Generation*, 313). Lloyd Grolimund reports a high level of Charimatization of Adventism in Australia (see “Fire in the Church,” in Samuele Bacchiocchi, *End Time Issues 110* [Newsletter: [http://www. biblicalperspectives.com/](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/), 2,01, 2004]). North America and Europe are not immune to this tendency.

¹⁰⁸According to the Catholic Church, “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Internet ed. [Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993], 1131). See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIIa. 60. 2–3. In a pragmatic culture and charismatic setting, music becomes the efficacious spatiotemporal sign of grace dispensed to us. The new priest is the “worship director.” Thus mediated, reception of grace and salvation does not require preaching or the understanding of Scripture. The kind of music involved is irrelevant, as long as it awakens the spirit (emotions) of the worshipers.

¹⁰⁹We should understand divided views on rock music in church worship as the result of different hermeneutical visions and theological systems. While Samuele Bacchiocchi and other authors argue the traditional position of Adventism that rejects rock music as an option in church worship (*The Christian & Rock Music: A Study on Biblical Principles of Music* [Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 2000]), Ed Christian criticizes Bacchiocchi’s book and thinks there may in some circumstances be a place for Contemporary Christian Music in Adventist worship (“The Christian & Rock Music: A Review Essay,” *JATS* 13/1 [2002]: 150–183; expanded and much revised in the later *Joyful Noise: A Sensible Look at Christian Music* [Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2003]).

¹¹⁰The classical conception of the “sacraments” is at the basis of a mechanical conception of salvation advocated by Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and most sectors of American Evangelicalism. Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ” feeds on this unbiblical theology of salvation and is becoming a sacrament to a postmodern multimedia-saturated secular audience. See, for instance, the comments on “The Passion of the Christ” in *Way of Life Literature* (<http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/melgibson-thepassionofthechrist/melgibsons-film.html>).

¹¹¹Evangelicals are profoundly divided into two main groups that Albert Moehler, Jr. names the “Doctrine [Traditional] Party” and the “Experience [Progressive] Party” (“‘Evangelical’: What’s in a Name?,” in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel*, ed. John H. Armstrong [Chicago: Moody, 1996], 32). Many Evangelicals have problems

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is rapidly secularizing its worship rituals and Christian experience.¹¹² At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many Adventist communities are moving rapidly from a biblically to a culturally-centered worship and life style. Changes in the ground and hermeneutical pillars of the church generate shifts in her life and mission.

These trends in ministry and mission are not compatible with the coherent system of truth that the doctrine of the Sanctuary opened to the mind of Ellen White and the pioneers. How did they come about? One contributing factor may be that throughout its short life span, the basis for the praxis of Adventist communities has shifted from the one Book, to the “many books” of Ellen White, to the many sources of theology in Evangelical and Progressive Adventism, and to the many books of Evangelical writers our pastors now use as guides for their theological thinking and practical action.¹¹³

5. Reaffirming

While some sectors of the church experienced large paradigmatic shifts in the hermeneutical vision—pillars—and cognitive foundation—the sources of theology—on which Adventist theology and ministry stand, most Adventists were and continue to be unaware that such changes are taking place. Yet, as in the last twenty years the Evangelical and Progressive reinterpretations of Adventism began to circulate more freely by way of publications, sermons, presentations, classes, and personal interchange, two responses challenged the wholesale reinterpretation of Adventism by reaffirming Adventist traditional beliefs. One response builds on Ellen White’s writings, the other on Scripture. Let us consider each briefly.

Historical Adventism. As a general designation, Historical Adventism is a label of convenience to designate a sector of Adventism that, since the early

with the Charismatic movement. They do not agree with the notion that God speaks to the church apart from the Bible (R. Fowler White, “Does God Speak Today Apart from the Bible?” in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 86); with the Charismatic-propelled notion that culture rather than Scripture should rule our worship style (John F. MacArthur, Jr., “How Shall We Then Worship?” in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 175–187); or with contemporary Christian music and lyrics (Leonard Payton, “How Shall We Sing to God?” in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 189–206).

¹¹²Secularizing means defining one’s views and practices by culture (*seculus*, the world) rather than Scripture (the sacred, God); see, Millard J Erickson, *Where is Theology Going*, 102.

¹¹³In some Adventist churches in America, one can hear more quotations from C. S. Lewis and Dietrich Bonhoeffer than from Ellen White. A recent example of the trend is the use of Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) by some Biblical Adventist pastors in Sabbath School and lay training. The entire premise from which this book proceeds is the Calvinistic interpretation of foreknowledge, predestination, and providence that stands in direct contradiction to the biblical understanding of these issues. When we do not understand these issues in their biblical systematic context, implicitly we let their philosophically grounded interpretation become a hermeneutical principle that shapes the entire constellation of Christian doctrines. When pastors promote this sort of book, we should not be surprised when believers get the impression that Adventism is compatible with and supports the ideas they contain.

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eighties, reacted strongly against Ford's views on the Sanctuary doctrine.¹¹⁴ This sector continued the widespread practice of doing theology from the writings of Ellen White that began soon after her death early in the twentieth-century.¹¹⁵ Those familiar with Ellen White's writings could easily detect the large shifts Evangelical and Cultural Adventists were introducing into the Adventist community. Adventists who believed in Mrs. White's prophetic role saw these shifts not as mere theological nuances, but as departures from the truth entrusted to the saints. They understood that Ford's proposal was a rejection of the Sanctuary doctrine and the hermeneutical role on which Adventism stands. They did their best to counter the "new theology" infiltrating Adventist thinking.¹¹⁶

Though their writings undoubtedly helped many Adventists understand the issues and keep the original theological perspective alive, their efforts were limited in two ways. From the administrative perspective, their "independent ministries" strategy of organization placed them at odds with the very community they wanted to support. From the theological perspective, their arguing from Ellen White's writings put them at odds with the *sola Scriptura* principle they defend. In so doing, they created a methodological disconnect between themselves and the "new theology" against which they are reacting. To put it briefly, Historical and Evangelical Adventists speak two different languages. The former speak from Ellen White's theology and the latter speak from Scripture. By proceeding in this way, Historical Adventists maximize their influence among believers familiar with Ellen White's writings, but greatly diminish their persuasiveness with Evangelical and Cultural Adventists.

By closely following Ellen White's writings, Historical Adventism reaffirms the traditional teachings of Adventism. On the positive side, this approach keeps alive the hermeneutical vision that originated Adventism. On the negative side, Historical Adventism interprets the Sanctuary doctrine from the ontological "vision" of Christ's sinful human nature, Christ incarnated in sinful human flesh, sharing the same tendencies to sin we have. This implies that real Christians must achieve absolute perfect sinlessness before the second coming of Christ. Sinless perfection becomes the final and decisive chapter in the Great Controversy before the coming of Christ.¹¹⁷ According to Adventist historian George Knight, most Adventists held these views until the 1957 publication of *Questions on Doctrines*.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 175.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 138–141.

¹¹⁶See, for instance, Russell R. Standish and Colin D. Standish, *Adventism Challenged: The Gathering Storm* (Brisbane: Hartland Institute, 1986); and *Adventism Challenged: The Storm Bursts*, vol. 2 (Brisbane: Hartland Institute, 1986).

¹¹⁷For a forceful and clear presentation of this way of thinking, see M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd rev. ed. (Washington: Review and Herald, 1969).

¹¹⁸George Knight, ed., *Questions on Doctrine Annotated Edition* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2004); see Russell R. Standish and Colin D. Standish, 43.

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Is the human nature of Christ sinful, sinless, or both? Instead of dwelling on past unfinished Adventist traditional teaching prior to the sixties or engaging in war by using quotations from Ellen White, Adventist theologians should engage in drawing their theological vision from Scripture, including all ontological issues involved, even the nature of Christ. Failure to do so has contributed in no small degree to the divisions in Adventist theology that we are briefly surveying in this article.

As noted above, Historical Adventism does not build its doctrines and theological understanding on the *sola Scriptura* principle,¹¹⁹ even though Ellen White recommends it.¹²⁰ Besides, their theological strategy overlooks the theological, methodological, and intellectual issues undergirding the Evangelical and Cultural reconstructions of Adventist thought. To survive as a united theological community, Adventism must address and resolve these issues.

Biblical Adventism. Serious, revolutionary, and committed Bible study is the genius of Adventism. As the community grew, the center which generated ground-breaking biblical studies switched from the laity to the administration. With the creation of colleges and universities, the center of theological activity switched again from the administration to the academic community around the world, led by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.¹²¹

¹¹⁹Adventist beliefs came about from solid Bible study rather than from supernatural revelations given to Ellen White. “Ellen White’s visions filled the role of confirmation rather than initiation” (Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 86).

¹²⁰Ellen White explicitly viewed her writings as the lesser light given to bring attention to the greater light of Scripture. “The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light” (*Review and Herald* January 20, 1903, par. 9). Moreover, she consistently argued that we should ground our beliefs on the greater light of Scripture. “We must study to find out the best way in which to take up the review of our experiences from the beginning of our work, when we separated from the churches, and went forward step by step in the light that God gave us. We then took the position that the Bible, and the Bible only, was to be our guide; and we are never to depart from this position” (*Counsels to Writers and Editors* [Nashville: Southern, 1946], 145; emphasis provided).

¹²¹The Biblical Research Institute is a service department of the General Conference established by action of the GC Committee on Sept. 25, 1975. “The purpose and goals of the institute are to (1) identify areas in which biblical research is needed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church; (2) conduct research in the Bible and related areas; (3) communicate the results of this research to the appropriate audiences; (4) assist the GC administration on matters of biblical interpretation, doctrines, and church trends; (5) serve the world field as a resource in the areas of biblical interpretation and doctrine; (6) evaluate manuscripts referred to it by the North American unions and the overseas divisions; (7) provide educational services in biblical studies and theology for pastors, Bible teachers, administrators, and other interested workers; (8) maintain contact with SDA seminaries; (9) foster and maintain contact and good relationships with the community of SDA scholars in biblical studies, theology, and related areas; and (10) provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of papers on biblical studies. The historical roots of the institute go back to two committees that functioned for many years independent of each other: the Biblical Study and Research Committee and the Defense Literature Committee. The Biblical Study and Research Committee was appointed by the Autumn Council on Sept. 24, 1952.” “The Defense Committee, established in 1943, had basi-

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Among the important contributions of this sector of Adventism to the biblical thinking of the church was the publication of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1953–1957).¹²² As response to Ford's Evangelical reinterpretation of the Sanctuary doctrine, the Biblical Research Institute produced a series of substantial studies on related issues of biblical interpretation. At the turn of the century, a team of leading Adventist theologians led by Raoul Dederen published a biblically-grounded systematic exploration of the 27 fundamental beliefs in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.¹²³ Other theologians making substantial contributions to Biblical Adventism in various areas of research include Edward Heppenstall,¹²⁴ Hans La Rondelle,¹²⁵ Gerhard Hasel,¹²⁶ Samuele Bacchiocchi,¹²⁷ and Richard Davidson.¹²⁸

cally an apologetic function answering publications against the church" (Don F. Neufeld, *Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed., Commentary Reference Series [Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1995], sv., Biblical Research Institute).

¹²²Francis D. Nichol [et al.], eds., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald, c1978–80); see Knight, *A Search of Identity*, 162–163.

¹²³Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000).

¹²⁴Heppenstall has written the most comprehensive systematic study on the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in *Our High Priest: Jesus Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1972). He also wrote *Salvation Unlimited: Perspectives in Righteousness by Faith* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1974), and, *The Man Who is God: A Study of the Person and Nature of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1977).

¹²⁵*Christ our Salvation: What God Does For Us and In Us* (Mountain View: Pacific, 1980); *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs: First Impressions, 1983); *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota: First Impressions, c1997); and *Assurance of Salvation* (Nampa: Pacific, c1999).

¹²⁶*Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); and *Speaking in Tongues: Biblical Speaking in Tongues and Contemporary Glossolalia* (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1991).

¹²⁷*Rest for Modern Man: The Sabbath for Today* (Nashville: Southern, 1976); *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian UP, 1980); *The Sabbath in the New Testament: Answers to Questions* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1985); *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1985); *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness: A Theological Study of the Meaning of the Second Advent for Today* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1986); *Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle: Five Predictions that Failed!* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1987); *Wine in the Bible: A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1989); *The Marriage Covenant: A Biblical Study on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1991); *Christian Dress & Adornment: Biblical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1995); *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian UP, 1995); *God's Festivals: In Scripture and History* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1995); *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1997); and *Sabbath under Crossfire* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1998).

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When Evangelical Adventism rejected the Sanctuary doctrine in the early eighties, Biblical Adventists reaffirmed it with solid biblical scholarship.¹²⁹ Thus, in spite of the shifts taking place in the Adventist community, *sola Scriptura* remains the implicit and official ground on which Adventists should build their theology and teachings. Yet, in spite of these all-important affirmations, Biblical Adventism has neglected the macro hermeneutical role the doctrine of the Sanctuary plays in Adventist theology.

Scholarly reaffirmation of the Sanctuary doctrine has not persuaded Evangelical or Progressive Adventists. This fact reveals the depth of the theological divisions in Adventist thinking. They reach the very foundations of theological thinking and method. They divide us at the level of (1) the *sola Scriptura* cognitive ground of theology and (2) the hermeneutical vision from which we should strive to understand all theological issues. As a result, incompatible theologies and practices coexist in the Church.

6. Conclusion

Our brief overview of the early Adventist vision that generated the Adventist community and opened to its sight a complete yet unfinished system of biblical truth, connected and harmonious, has revealed that with the passing of time the Church has neglected it. Moreover, large sectors of Adventist leadership and laity are convinced that the Adventist vision was wrong and have replaced it with visions borrowed from other Christian theologies. As a result, at the beginning of the twentieth-first century, Adventism is administratively united but theologically divided. As we have briefly pointed out in this article, the divisions reach the very foundations of theological thinking. In spite of historical and biblical reaffirmations, forgetting is still dividing Adventism today; forgetting the *sola Scriptura* principle, forgetting the pillars, and forgetting the complete system of truth, perfect and harmonious, the pillars bring to view. Forgetfulness is not only making inroads in the scholarly community but also in the pastoral and lay communities as well.

¹²⁸*Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Types Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1981); and *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Washington: Review and Herald, c1988).

¹²⁹Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 176. Arnold V. Wallenkamp; and Richard Leshar, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1981); William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington: General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, c1982); Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies* (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, c. 1986); Frank Holbrook, ed., *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy* (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986); Frank Holbrook, ed., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Silver Springs: Biblical Research Institute, c. 1989); Frank Holbrook, ed., *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey (1845–1863)* (Silver Springs: Biblical Research Institute, c. 1989); Frank Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation* (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1992); Frank Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation*, 2 vols (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 1992).

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These developments are not encouraging. Diversity¹³⁰ has become pluralism¹³¹ in the ground level of divine revelation and in the hermeneutical level of the vision from which the theological thinking of the church and its praxis is generated.

We can overcome the division that exists at the level of hermeneutical vision *if* we work from the *sola Scriptura* principle. Theological concerns and contributions of Evangelical Adventists are not only not contradictory with but also included in the complete system of theology the Sanctuary doctrine and the pillars of Adventism open to view.

Yet, if we persist in replacing the *sola Scriptura* principle with the multiple sources of theology matrix borrowed from Christian theology, we will not be able to overcome our hermeneutical, theological, and practical divisions. The Adventist vision and system of theology our pioneers discovered in Scripture is incompatible with visions and theologies derived from scientific and philosophical wisdom. Thus, embracing what we broadly know as “Progressive Adventism” implies a radical change in the ground, hermeneutical vision, theological system, and practice of ministry of what we today still know as Adventism. Biblical Adventism and Progressive Adventism are two complete theological systems that are incompatible with each other. Rationality requires that we choose between them. The differences between Evangelical and Progressive Adventism, on one side, and, the complete system of theology that the Sanctuary doctrine opens to view, on the other side, reach the very ground from which the thinking and praxis of the community flow. Due to this fact, the church will be forced to choose between them. They cannot coexist in a united church. Can a house divided against itself stand (Mark 3:25)?

What should we do? Consistent with their way of thinking, Evangelical and Progressive Adventists suggest unity in love, not in theological thinking. They

¹³⁰Diversity “implies that there is a common basis (Scripture) on which different opinions can be approached and resolved. If there is one foundation, the Bible, then from this one commonly accepted basis will come growth in knowledge, spiritual growth, and growth in the understanding of God’s nature. If we imagine Scripture as the tree of our knowledge on which these grow, we will easily understand that some fruits will not occur on a tree that has this foundation. The various fruits may be at different stages of growth. Not all will have the same color. As the apostle Paul wrote: there is ‘one Lord, one Faith, one baptism’ (Eph 4:5 NIV). On the basis of this **one** faith there will be unity—not pluralism. But different opinions can be tackled and resolved because the Bible is the norm for our faith” (“Living With Confidence Despite Some Open Questions: Upholding the Biblical Truth of Creation Amidst Theological Pluralism,” *JATS* 14/1 (2003): 246.

¹³¹Frank Hasel correctly explains that “pluralism” “expresses the idea that there are conflicting truth-claims that stand in competition with each other because there is no common basis, foundation, or starting point. There are different sources of knowledge, such as experience, reason, philosophy, naturalistic science, and Scripture. Imagine each of these sources as a tree, each bearing its own characteristic fruit. These trees stand apart from each other, each claiming to have greater importance than the others. If there is pluralism there still be no unity. Instead of unity we have conflicting truth claims and viewpoints within the church that lead to fragmentation, ambiguity, and doubt” (Ibid.).

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argue that loving acceptance of theological pluralism is good for the Church. However, since they are conscious that their theological understanding implies large paradigm shifts the worldwide church may not be willing to accept, maintaining the status quo seems to work well for the advancement of their theological views.

Yet, we should not confuse theological pluralism at the ground level of the source of theology, hermeneutical vision, and their impact in the overall teaching ministry of the global church with diversity at the personal level of understanding and experiencing our life in Christ. The cause of theological pluralism is intellectual in nature and reaches the very foundations of our theology, identity, unity, and mission. Since a house divided against itself cannot stand, we need to overcome theologically the present state of theological pluralism in Adventism.

We should go beyond reaffirming the *sola Scriptura* principle, the Sanctuary doctrine, and the pillars of Adventism. We must use them as a hermeneutical vision from which to discover for ourselves the complete system of theology and truth our pioneers discovered in Scripture. We should use the Adventist vision to advance the unfinished task of Adventist theology in the twentieth-first century. We need more than a few disconnected doctrines: we need the full understanding of their interconnected meanings and the difference they make in understanding everyday life. We need also to understand the theological revolution that this approach implies when compared with the classical, Protestant and modern approaches to Christian theology.

Can we achieve these goals in an intellectually sound way? Can we defend the “Great Controversy” approach to Christian theology at the scholarly level of university research? Is it possible to continue working on the theological project the pioneers left unfinished and many Adventists forgot along the way? Would such a theological project help the Adventist community to overcome pluralism and foster unity and mission? The second part of this series will explore these questions.

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What Happens to Biblical Truth if the SDA Church Accepts Theistic Evolution?

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The *National Geographic* asks, “Was Darwin Wrong?” William L. Allen, Editor-in-Chief, states, “Our magazine aims to explore the world, often by highlighting scientific concepts such as evolution. Is this approach necessarily at odds with faith, which lies beyond the possibility of scientific proof? No. Just as religion did not disappear after Galileo demonstrated that the Earth is not at the center of the solar system, evolution does not exclude God from our origins”¹

In his article “The Evidence for Evolution is Overwhelming,” David Quammen notes,

Darwin himself quietly renounced Christianity during his middle age, and later described himself as an agnostic. He continued to believe in a distant, impersonal deity of some sort, a greater entity that had set the universe and its laws into motion, but not a personal God who had chosen humanity as a specially favored species.²

God was distant from nature in Darwin’s Victorian England. Newtonian physics, with its mechanistic view of nature, was compatible with a Deistic God who gave inherent laws so nature could operate on its own without His involvement. The fact that there is evil in nature was credited to nature, and not to God, a burden that Darwin retained in his theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest.³ The basic assumption that God is removed from nature logically implies a Deistic God, one who is less than the God of Scripture.⁴

¹Bill Allen, “From the Editor” *National Geographic*, November 2004.

²David Quammen, “The Evidence for Evolution is Overwhelming,” *National Geographic*, November 2004, 9, (4–35).

³Two books by Cornelius G. Hunter give the background to the belief in God at the time of Darwin and the concern of Darwin to give a solution to the problem of evil in his theory of evolution (his theodicy). Hunter also documents that evolutionary scientists diminish God in their arguments and often say God could not or would not do certain things, as if they have information about God

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Darwin's view of God is contrary to the biblical view of God⁵ and should give Christians pause before buying into Darwin's naturalism and attempting to wed it to the supernatural in a theistic evolutionary synthesis. At least Darwin was consistent in presenting evolution as pure naturalism with no connection with the personal God of Scripture, even if an impersonal God began the process.

Much of the Christian world no longer believes Genesis 1–2 is a literal account of creation. Physicist Howard Van Till asserts, "I would even be so bold as to add that the misunderstanding of the historic doctrine of creation may be as widespread within the Christian community as it is outside of it."⁶ Since Darwin, natural processes are thought to explain the origin of life,⁷ and Christian scholars have attempted to accommodate science by interpreting the Genesis record in the light of the current scientific worldview.⁸ Theologian John S. Feinberg rightly compares interpreting Genesis 1–2 through evolution to interpreting biblical eschatology through current events. He concludes, "I don't think biblical data allow either an atheistic or a theistic evolutionary account . . . I would prefer my views to be consistent with Scripture even if that means they are inconsistent with science."⁹ In 1991, theologian Paul K. Jewett said, "the form of the

not found in Scripture. He shows that design in nature, credited to the evolutionary process, is insufficient to explain the incredible complexity of mechanisms found in nature, or how evolution could produce such mechanisms. Only intelligent design, belief in a divine designer, can do this. He argues that in the end evolution is "ultimately a religious theory," and its claim to be a fact is a certainty "in the religious sense," and not in the scientific sense. *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Brazos/Baker, 2001); *Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion over Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos/Baker, 2003); see page 153 for quote.

⁴See the discussion in Michael A. Harbin, "Theistic Evolution: Deism Revisited?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 639–651.

⁵In Darwin's day God was considered to be infinitely wise and good, but Darwin discovered nature to be otherwise. Rather than looking to Scripture for an answer and discovering that Satan and his cosmic controversy is responsible for all evil, he studied evil in nature and gave up belief in a God who was loving and personal, allowing the natural world to determine the nature of God rather than Scripture doing so. This is because Darwin placed nature above God's Word. See Cornelius G. Hunter, *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 9–12.

⁶Howard J. Van Till, "The Fully Gifted Creation: Theistic Evolution," in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, eds. J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 161.

⁷Darwin opposed the view that each species has been independently created (69), that there is an "immutability of species" (317), and presented "the theory of descent with modification through natural selection" (435). *The Origin of Species* (New York: Gramercy, 1979, 1st ed., 1859).

⁸Evolution calls the Genesis creation account into question. Therefore, many theologians accept Genesis as pre-scientific with no interest in the process of creation which science allegedly provides. For example, Augustus Strong stated, "Evolution does not make the idea of a Creator superfluous, because evolution is only the method of God." *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 465–466.

⁹John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 579, 580. However, he is inconsistent in accepting a modified 24 hour days, in which some days are a little longer (615). His argument that literary symmetry (two triads in six days) questions solar days

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creation story in Scripture is clearly that of a historical narrative, like the subsequent narrative of salvation history culminating in the Incarnation and Pentecost.” But, “Today, however, few who confess the Christian doctrine of creation would suppose that the world was fashioned in a week of time some six to ten thousand years ago.” He then notes some exceptions, and we cite one of them.

Many Seventh Day Adventists, named for their observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, have followed Ellen White in seeing the choice as one between the Bible, which is God’s word, and science, which is a human word. Were the days of Genesis not literal, the seventh-day Sabbath would not be literal. But if the original seventh-day Sabbath was not a literal Sabbath, then how could one be sure she was keeping the right day as the Sabbath memorial of the creation, as God enjoins us to do in the fourth commandment? As far as planet Earth is concerned, the data to which geologists appeal, found in the rocks and fossils, is looked upon by Adventists as the catastrophic result of the Noachic deluge. Therefore, one need not postulate long periods of time to explain such data.¹⁰

What Theistic Evolution Does to the Plan of Salvation and the Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Questioning the historical reality of the Genesis creation account logically questions subsequent acts of God in history. It is not a question confined to Genesis 1–2, but affects the rest of Scripture. Thus, the historicity of the entire biblical story is undermined by rejecting the historicity of Genesis 1–2, as it was for Rudolf Bultmann, who dubbed biblical cosmology as “pre-scientific,” with disastrous results.¹¹ Theistic evolution assumes that God uses evolution to arrive

seems to overlook the fact that God does all things in an orderly way, which Scripture commends to humans (1 Cor 14:40, Col. 2:5) (615–617).

¹⁰Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation & Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 479, 480. Seventh-day Adventists base their doctrines on Scripture alone, and not on Ellen G. White or church tradition. She urged, “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms.” *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911), 595.

¹¹Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1964, 1st ET, 1953), 1–4. He jettisoned the supernaturalistic worldview for a naturalistic worldview, and this called into question all God’s supernaturalistic acts in history. For example, he said, “No one who is old enough to think for himself supposes that God lives in a local heaven. There is no longer any heaven in the traditional sense of the word . . . We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:154ff).” “Even if we believe that the world as we know it will come to an end in time, we expect the end to take the form of a natural catastrophe, not of a mythical event such as the New Testament expects.” Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 4–5. See also The Gifford Lectures that Bultmann delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1955, where eschatology is confined to the ever-repeated coming of the Holy Spirit in encounters to human existence, replacing a final cosmic coming of Christ. This is the extent of the reinterpretation and reductionism of Bultmann’s existential hermeneutic. Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: University P, 1957).

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at the creation of humans, who are still in process, and some forms of evolution go so far as to say humans will evolve to become God, a similar falsehood suggested to Eve in Genesis 3:1–6.¹² If humans are the result of a progress within natural evolutionary development, then there is no place for their fall, for death through sin, no need of God’s law, of divine revelation in Scripture, of salvation through Christ, of the new creation work of the Holy Spirit, or of Christ’s present intercession, second coming, or final judgment.

If God didn’t speak much of creation into existence in Genesis, this calls into question His future creative word to raise the dead and His supernatural creation of a new heavens and a new earth. Once a literal supernatural spoken word of God in creation is rejected, then a supernatural spoken Word of God in Scripture is rejected, and Scripture is merely the product of a natural collection of oral and human sources. If the Adventist church accepts theistic evolution, it must abandon its biblical basis and mission and descend the slippery slope of doctrinal change, as described by E. Edward Zinke and Angel Manuel Rodriguez.¹³ Furthermore, if the truths of Scripture are undermined, so is the God of Scripture who gave them. Acceptance of theistic evolution would also call into question the unique mission that Adventists believe they have in proclaiming God as Creator in the context of the everlasting gospel (Rev 14:6, 7) in the end-time (2 Pet 3:3–5), with the seventh-day Sabbath truth this involves (Gen 2:2, 3; Exod 20:8–11; Isa 66:23).

What Theistic Evolution Does to the Uniqueness of Human Creation

The Genesis creation record differentiates Christ as *Elohiym* (transcendent, omnipotent God), who creates (*bārāʾ*) by speaking things into existence in Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, from His added name *Yahweh* (imminent, covenant God), the Christ who forms (*yašar*) humans in Genesis 2. *Yahweh* is only added to *Elohiym* in Genesis 2:4, after which *Yahweh Elohiym* is the name for Christ throughout the rest of Genesis 2. *Yahweh Elohiym* is the powerful Christ-up-close, creating humans in a way distinct from His creation of all the rest of created reality in Genesis 1. There is an important reason for this addition to Christ’s name. As the all-powerful transcendent God He spoke all created realities into existence (Genesis 1:3–2:3). But as the *Yahweh Elohiym* He drew

¹²See the New Age Movement in Norman R. Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998), chapter 13. If God allegedly held Eve back from becoming like God, then eating the forbidden fruit was an alleged natural process to achieve this end. So Satan not only caused Eve to doubt God’s Word, His love and wisdom, but suggested a natural process to achieve this goal apart from Him. This is the whole thrust of naturalism. Evolution is atheistic, and it is illogical to consider it theistic.

¹³For examples of the effect of theistic evolution on doctrines, see E. Edward Zinke, “Theistic Evolution: Implications for the Role of Creation in Seventh-day Adventist Theology,” in *Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary*, ed., John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 159–171, and Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “Theistic Evolution and the Adventist Faith: An Analysis,” unpublished manuscript, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of SDA.

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close and formed Adam and breathed the breath of life into him (Gen 2:7) and created Eve from a rib taken from Adam (Gen 2:20b–23). The stunning contrast emphasizes the stark distinction between the way humans were created and the way the rest of creation was created by Christ. Humans are singled out as unique, just as their being made in the image of God is unique (Gen 1:26, 27). They were not merely the final product of a process, but a hands-on creation by *Yahweh Elohiym*. Evolutionary naturalism does not do justice to this distinction given in the biblical creation record.

Because of the creation of humans in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27), Christian theology does not consider humans as merely evolved from animal ancestry without God's intervention. Many theistic evolutionists believe God places the human soul into each human, but this is because they accept another human idea, taken from Greek philosophy, that human souls are separate from human bodies, which is contrary to the biblical holistic view of humans, where there is no distinction between soul and body.¹⁴

What Theistic Evolution Does to the Supernatural

Evolution is confined to methodological naturalism, shutting out the supernatural in the process. This means that the acts of the Creator in Genesis 1–2 are irrelevant, and the creation record is discarded as non-literal and non-historical.

No humans observed creation week, nor did evolutionists observe deep time when the alleged evolutionary process took place. So neither creation nor evolution is proved or disproved in the lab today. It takes faith to believe either view. There is empirical evidence for micro-evolution, the metamorphosis of caterpillar to butterfly, for example. But this is minor compared to the impossibility of demonstrable evidence for macro-evolution.

But there is macro-evidence for creation in historical time. The incarnation of God into history is a far greater miracle than the creation of Adam, and if God can do the greater through a supernatural act, why not the easier creation of Adam? Genesis 1 and John 1 speak of Christ. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1), and "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (John 1:1:1, 2). An incredible supernatural event is revealed to us in John 1:14a: "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us." Here are two

¹⁴There is no distinction between an immortal soul and a mortal body, for Christ said to Adam that death would come if he ate the forbidden fruit (Gen 1:16, 17). There was no mention of death only to the body. In fact, Scripture is clear that God "alone is immortal" (1 Tim 6:16) and that humans only receive immortality at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor 15:53, 54). In the meantime Christians seek immortality (Rom 2:7). So God does not place an immortal soul into mortal human bodies. The total person is somebody or a soul, as in English we can say, "I know somebody" who was one of the "souls" baptized. In this holistic sense Scripture can say, "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek 18:20), which is contrary to Greek philosophy on the immortal soul. For further discussion on this, see Norman R. Gulley, *Christ is Coming!*, 276–298.

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supernatural creation events—the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the incarnation of God. Here is the Creator Christ who created everything becoming a part of His creation. This means that the creation of Genesis 1–2 was just as supernatural as the incarnation of the Creator. That’s why the creative words were instantaneously obeyed in Genesis 1 and the Creator instantaneously left heaven and became present in Mary in John 1:14. This unique creation event involved God preparing Christ a body (Greek *sōma*, Heb 10:5–7) and His conception (Greek *gennēthen*) through the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20b). Naturalism has no place for this supernatural event into human history.

Reading the Genesis creation account in light of God’s creation of the humanity of the God-man (John 1:1, 14; Matt 1:20), the creation of the first Adam in light of the incarnation of the second Adam (1 Cor 15:45, cf. Rom 5:18–19), we find a type/antitype gift of love which is fully compatible with God’s gift of love at Calvary (John 3:16). Here is the biblical God of love and not the God of theistic evolution. Here is “Immanuel,” God with us—our Creator-Redeemer, rather than a distant and disinterested God in methodological naturalism.

What Theistic Evolution Does to the Biblically Constructed Worldview

Theistic Evolution is a view of origins that subscribes to God either beginning the process of evolution or beginning and superintending it. But this is an attempt to marry two mutually exclusive worldviews: supernaturalism (theistic) and naturalism (evolution). Supernaturalism is God creating the world without any dependence on nature. Naturalism is nature evolving in the world without any dependence on God. So which is it? It has to be one or the other, for a mix of the two isn’t possible. For example, why would an omnipotent God need a long process? Why would an omniscient God need so much trial and error along the way? Why would the God who asks that “everything be done decently and in order” (1 Cor 14:40) do the opposite in the torturous process of mega-time? Why would the God who opposes salvation by works (Eph 2:9) use the survival of the fittest method?¹⁵ In all these examples, theistic evolution calls into question God’s Word about these matters, presenting a human worldview in place of the biblically constructed worldview.

It should be kept in mind that Darwin’s *Origin of Species* is a worldview to explain evil in nature,¹⁶ whereas God’s creation of the universe through Christ (Col 1:15, 16; Heb 1:1, 2) is through One who later revealed God as love (John 14:9b; 17:23), and the Trinity were as selfless and loving in creation as they are in salvation (John 3:16; Heb 13:8). In stark contrast, Satan is self-centered (Isa 14:12–15; Ezek 28:12–18) and launched a war against God in heaven (Rev

¹⁵See Henry M. Morris, John D. Morris, *The Modern Creation Trilogy: Scripture and Creation* (Green Forrest: Master, 1996), 40.

¹⁶See Cornelius G. Hunter, *Darwin’s God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*.

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12:3–8) and on earth, which affected the natural world (Gen 3:1–19).¹⁷ Christ called Satan the “prince of this world” (John 12:30–32), and Paul called him the “god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4), and evil in this world (moral and natural) must be credited to him, for “God is love” (1 John 4:7–16), and His love defeated Satan at the cross (Rev 12:9–13; John 12:31, 32). It seems that theistic evolutionists do not take into account the radical difference between these two worldviews.¹⁸ If the Seventh-day Adventist church ever accepted theistic evolution it would unwittingly find itself on the wrong side of the cosmic controversy by contributing to a worldview that distorts the truth about God, the hallmark of the controversy.

What Theistic Evolution Does to the Truth About God

A “particular doctrine of God is a prerequisite for evolution’s success.”¹⁹ If God chose to create through the natural evolutionary process, in which the horrors of torture and death over millions of years was necessary to create humans, this would be the longest and cruelest holocaust ever imagined. Why would God use such unjust carnage to create when justice is the foundation of His throne (Psa 89:14)? How is such a model possible in view of His divine providence in history (Rom 11:36; Rom 8:28–30)? Why would God use death to create humans in His image (Gen 1:26, 27), which is love? If He used death to create, then why did He warn Adam of the evil of death (Gen 2:17) and expose the depths of that evil through dying to save humans from the penalty of death (John 3:16; Rom 6:23)? If death is the last enemy to be destroyed at the end of the controversy (1 Cor 15:26), then how could God use it to create before and after the beginning of the controversy?

George Bugg (1769–1851) asked, “Where is the benevolence, not to say justice of all this? Not a creature capable of offending its Creator. Nevertheless we find whole genera and whole nations of animals perishing in succession; and this numerous times repeated, as if their Author . . . were in sport, forming and

¹⁷After the fall of humans God said the ground would produce thorns and thistles (Gen 3:18). In pre-fall time, in Genesis 1:11, 12, “vegetation” is the Hebrew word *dešeʿ*; “seed-bearing plants” is *ʿešeb mazryaʿ zeraʿ*. By contrast, in Genesis 2:5, when it says, “no shrub of the field had yet appeared,” “shrub” is the Hebrew word *šiah*. Randall Younker links this to the thorns and thistles of Gen 3:18, and so it is a reference to a thorny xerophyte. See “Genesis 2: A Second Creation Account?” in *Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary*, 72–74. Just as Adam’s fall caused death to enter the human race (Rom 5:12), so it caused death to enter the natural world, which consequently longs for restoration (Rom 8:18–22), which would not be so if death was the means God used to create the natural world.

¹⁸Some theologians understand God’s creation as an expression of His love. For example, Jürgen Moltmann, *God and Creation*, 75, 76; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, German 1991), 2, 25; and Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 133. Some theologians deny theistic evolution. For example, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (2, 139, 140), and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 275–279.

¹⁹*Darwin’s God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*, 159.

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destroying worlds again and again!”²⁰ Fredrick Nolan, in the Oxford Bampton Lectures of 1833, said, “During the immensity of time in which, we are assured, this development of nature proceeded, the earth is represented as wholly abandoned to creatures . . . monsters of the most hideous forms and ferocious natures. If the notion of a Creator be admitted into this scheme, the moral incongruities . . . are . . . gross . . . he is represented as improving upon his first essays; as destroying in succession his earliest and rudest works, to exercise his skill in the production of others, more worthy of his contrivance.”²¹ In 1991, David Hull of Northwestern University evaluated the evolutionary process as “rife with happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, death, pain and horror . . . The God implied by evolutionary theory and the data of natural history . . . is not a loving God who cares about His productions. He is . . . careless, indifferent, almost diabolical. He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.”²²

One must look at all biblical truths in the light of the greatest revelation of God at Calvary. The revelation at Calvary was made in history. It had witnesses. As such it provides empirical (historical) evidence of how loving God is, even asking His Father to forgive those who heaped cruelty upon Him (Luke 23:34). Assuming that this same Creator Christ (Heb 1:1–2) heaped cruelty on animals, not for part of a day, but for millions of years, is not a historical datum, but a metaphysical assumption that Calvary can rightly question. Calvary was a holocaust that others brought upon Christ, but the pain and death of animals for millennia would be a holocaust that He brought upon the animal kingdom, which is incompatible with Christ’s love at Calvary.

The fact that the onlooking universe shouted for joy at the creation of this world (Job 38:4–7) is inexplicable if Christ created through causing animal suffering for millions of years. Christ called creation “very good” (Gen 1:31), and that’s worth singing about, but who could call the tortuous process of evolution “very good”? After Christ’s ascension, beings in heaven worshiped God as worthy and deserving of glory because He created all things (Rev 4:10–11). That would be impossible if He created through cruelty. A part of God’s end-time message calls the world to worship the Creator and bring Him glory (Rev 14:6–7), which could not be done if He created through cruelty. Scripture is consistent that God is deserving of glory and worship as Creator (e.g., Rev 4:6–11), for His creative work can only be understood in relation to His character as a God of love (1 John 4:8–16).

²⁰George Bugg, *Scriptural Geology* (London: Hatchard and Son, vol. 2, 1826–1827), 44, quoted in Thane Hutcherson Ury, “The Evolving Face of God as Creator: Early Nineteenth Century Traditionalist and Accommodationist Theological Responses in Anglo Religious Thought to Paleontological Natural Evil in the Fossil Record,” Ph.D dissertation, Andrews University, 2001, 199.

²¹*The Analogy of Revelation and Science* (London: Oxford, 1833), 130, 131.

²²David Hull, “The God of Galapagos,” *Nature* 352 (1991): 486.

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Christ's warning to Adam about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, stating that eating its fruit would bring death (Gen 2:17), indicates that death was not yet a present reality. Here evil and death are associated with disobedience to the Creator. Such disobedience would bring a curse on nature as well as on Adam and Eve (Gen 3:17–19). When Christ recreates the earth there will be no more curse (Rev 22:3). Clearly curses and death are linked to disobedience and have nothing to do with Christ's method of creation. If the new earth will have no curse, and the curses came through the fall, and the first creation was "very good" (Gen 1:31), it is logical that the first creation had no curses or death. That's why Scripture speaks of death as the wages for sin (Rom 6:23) and an enemy (1 Cor 15:26), and never as God's chosen method to create.

That's why Scripture says, "sin entered the world through one man" (Rom 5:12). It was Adam and not His Creator who brought death to this planet. It was Christ who came to die to put death to death and liberate the fallen race (Rom 4:25). It was the one act of the first Adam that caused this death-condemnation, and the one act of the second Adam's death that provided salvation (Rom 5:18). Christ did not use death to create humans in Eden, He died to save humans at Calvary. Given a cosmic controversy in which Satan hates Christ and has engaged in a process of disinformation about God (Hebrew word *rekullah* of Ezekiel 28:15–16)²³ since the inception of his rebellion, it makes sense that a natural method of creation through horror is something he would promote, for it effectively destroys the drawing power of Calvary. Satan hates the cross because it reveals what God is really like and what he (Satan) is really like. Creation through horror is compatible with Satan's hatred against Christ at the cross and not compatible with a loving Creator-Redeemer who dies for others (rather than inflicting death). Life through death is a biblical concept of atonement and not a biblical concept of creation.

Christ created "every green plant for food" for animals (Gen 1:30). Apparently animals were not created as predators, nor will they be predators in the new earth (Isa 65:25), as no death or pain will be there either (Rev 21:4). Predation is a post-fall phenomenon and should not be read back into the creative process. As a God of love (John 4:7–16), God created in love. The fact that He sees the sparrow fall (Luke 12:6–7), feeds the ravens (Luke 12:24), and was concerned about "the many cattle" in Nineveh if it was destroyed (Jonah 4:11) is evidence that He would not cause animal suffering in a theistic evolutionary plan of creation. How important it is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (*sola Scriptura*), rather than a nonbiblical idea (naturalism) to have that function.

²³The Hebrew word *rekullah* means "trading" or "peddling," referring to goods or gossip. Here Satan spreads gossip about God. See Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 11 (2000) 1–2:108.

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What Theistic Evolution Does to the Truth About Christ's Spoken Word

Christ "is the image of the invisible God . . . by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him" (Col 1:15, 16). God made the universe through Christ (Heb 1:2b; cf. Rev 4 and 5). The question is, did Christ depend upon the natural process of evolution to create, or did He as the omnipotent God create without dependence on anything?

Genesis 1 indicates how Christ created the world and all things in it. He spoke things into existence. In all but one of the days "God said" (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24) is followed by "and it was so," proclaiming the power of His commands. The supernatural power of Christ's creative word is demonstrated by the speed with which His commands were fulfilled, for the creation days were literal, continuous, contiguous, 24 hour periods of time, for the Hebrew word for day "*yôm*" when used with ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) is always a literal day.²⁴ His commands had instant response. That's why He could say each day that the new created reality was "good" (Gen 1:3, 10, 13, 19, 20, 24). That's why Scripture presents creation as one of the mighty acts of God. "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Psa 33:9), for "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb 11:3). Scripture warns that in the end-time there are scoffers who "deliberately forget" that the heavens and earth were created "by God's word" (2 Pet 3:5). One important part of our church mission is to tell these persons that Christ is the Creator (Rev 14:7) and show how He created from Scripture, which includes His time on planet-earth.

Throughout His life on earth, Christ manifested the power of His creative words and works. Here are some examples from the book of John. His first creative miracle changed water into wine, in obedience to His words, "Fill the jars with water" (John 2:7-11). To one an invalid for thirty-eight years Christ said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk," and he was instantly healed (John 5:1-15). Christ fed five thousand men, besides woman and children, through a creative miracle using "five small barley loaves and two small fish" (John 6:5-14). Christ's creative power gave sight to one born blind (John 9:1-7). Christ called

²⁴Context decides the meaning of the Hebrew word for day (*yôm*). For example: (1) "This is the account of the heaven and the earth when they were created" (Gen 2:4). The word "when" in Hebrew is *yôm*, meaning in the day they were created. Day = six days. (2) "A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath" (Job 20:28). Day = period of God's wrath (also; "Like the coolness of snow at harvest time" (Prov 25:13). Time = period of time). (3) In creation week the six days are designated within the time of an evening and a morning (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), and the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3) and the Sabbath is the seventh day after six creation days in the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8-11). The reason for the specificity of "continuous, contiguous, 24 hours periods of time" is because evolutionists look at the six creation days as six revelatory days, separated by vast amount of time, in their day-age interpretations, which are popular in many churches.

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Himself “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), and resurrections are the ultimate evidence of His creative power.

Christ raised Lazarus after the man had been dead four days. Jesus said to the onlookers,

‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.’ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus come out!’ The dead man came out. (John 11:40–44a)

Looking to the future, Jesus spoke about His creative power, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28, 29). Christ says of a believer, “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54). So one day all dead humans will hear the creative voice of Christ and will rise from their graves, so billions will be instantaneously raised by His creative word, just as Adam and Eve received life from His creative work. It is the same Christ who does both through His supernatural power.²⁵ He was no more dependent upon natural means in creation than He will be dependent on natural means in these final resurrections.

Christ demonstrated His power as Creator through these creative acts during His life on earth.²⁶ They give demonstration in human history of His creative power in the beginning. To accept His creative power during His life on earth necessitates accepting His creative power in the Genesis record, for both are equally supernatural, and both are given to us through divine revelation. The reason Christ’s spoken word is so important in creation is because God’s word is so important throughout Scripture, for it is the revelation of that word which is supernatural, and hence inspired, and gives us God’s supernatural worldview, which is contrary to the worldview of naturalism.

What Theistic Evolution Does to the Sabbath

In Genesis 1 there is a correspondence between days 1–3 and days 4–6, where the first three days give the areas *formed* by *Elohiym*, the all powerful

²⁵We are not considering here the millennium between the resurrection of the good and the resurrection of the evil (see Revelation 20).

²⁶In Genesis Christ created as God, for God worked through Him to create (Heb 1:1–3). Having laid aside the use of His divinity in His incarnation (Phil 2:5–11), Christ depended upon His Father to do creative acts (John 10:25, 32, 38; 14:10). As Son of God He was also a dependent human throughout His human life, but in choosing to die and in His resurrection His divinity operated again. As He chose to become human (Heb 10:5–7), so He chose to lay down His life and to take it up again (John 10:17, 18).

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God, and the last three days give the areas *filled* by Him.²⁷ This can be charted as follows:

Day 1	Light	Day 4	Luminaries
Day 2	Sky	Day 5	Birds and Fish
Day 3	Land (Plants)	Day 6	Animals and Man (Plants for food)
	Day 7	Sabbath ²⁸	

The climax is not the creation of humans,²⁹ as it is in theistic evolutionary theory, but the gift of the Sabbath.³⁰ The narrative ends with the Sabbath in Genesis 2:1 (chapter divisions came long after the time of writing). Karl Barth says the Sabbath “is in reality the coronation of His work” for “not man but the divine rest on the seventh-day is the crown of creation.”³¹

The first biblical reference to the Sabbath (Gen 2:2–3) is in a chiasmic structure, where it is central and hence emphasizes its importance.

- A God finished his work (v. 2)
- B And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done (v. 2)
- C So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it (v. 3)
- B' Because on it God rested from all his work which he had done (v. 3)
- A' In creation (v. 3)³²

²⁷Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1–15*, 6–7.

²⁸Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1–15*, 7. Adding “Dark” and “Sea” as Kidmer does, makes more sense. Derek Kidmer in the *Tyndale O.T. Commentaries*, Gen. ed. D. J. Wiseman, Genesis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1967), 46, arranges the six days as follows:

	<i>Form</i>		<i>Fullness</i>
Day 1	Light and Dark	Day 4	Lights of Day and Night
Day 2	Sea and Sky	Day 5	Creatures of Water and Air
Day 3	Fertile Earth	Day 6	Creatures of Land

Wayne Grudem has a similar arrangement, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 301.

²⁹Humans are “the crowning work of Creation” in SDA Fundamental Beliefs, #6 (which compares humans with other created things in space). Davis A. Young considers humans as “the climax of creation” in this sense in *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 89.

³⁰John S. Feinberg, in *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*, notes that the Sabbath commandment is linked to the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2. He considers this as “undeniably a significant theme of these chapters,” although not the whole point of them. He also notes that the “rest of the Pentateuch makes it quite clear that a major purpose of that day is to worship the great God who made all things” 573. Compare Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984), 52–59, where the climax of creation is the Sabbath.

³¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), vol. 3/1, 223.

³²Kenneth Strand, “The Sabbath,” *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, 493–495.

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God's blessing (Hebrew, *bārāk*) was only given to the seventh day. It was set apart from the other six, and in this way it was made holy. The word Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew word *šābat*, meaning to "cease" or "desist" from a previous activity. On day six, Christ judged creation as "very good" (Gen 1:31), and hence completed (Gen 2:3). For "in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested" (Exod 31:17). His "works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3 NKJV). Clearly the work of creation was finished on the sixth day of creation week, contrary to the claims of some who believe in an on-going macro-evolutionary process.

In Scripture the Sabbath is a celebration of finished works of Christ, in creation (Gen 2:1–3, Exod 20:8–11), in the Red Sea deliverance (Deut 5:15), and on crucifixion Friday (John 19:30). Christ created Adam on creation Friday, and on crucifixion Friday He became the second Adam for the world in His death (Luke 23:44–24:6). Crucifixion Friday, like creation Friday, was a beginning for the race. The Sabbath celebrates (1) Christ's finished creation for Adam and Eve, (2) Christ's finished deliverance for a nation, and (3) Christ's finished sacrifice for a world. The first finished work of Christ is as literal as the other two finished works. Christ was no more dependent on an evolutionary process than He was on any other process in these miracles of His divine power.

Those denying a literal seven-day creation week and attempting to found the Sabbath in the Sabbath-keeping practice of Christ overlook the fact that the pre-incarnate Christ, who gave Moses the ten commandments on Sinai, inscribed the following revelation in stone (Exod 24:12): "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exod 20:11). God created all things through Christ (Heb 1:1–2). In the fourth commandment Christ was writing about His own experience in human history at the end of creation week (Gen 2:1–3, cf. John 1:1–3, 14; Col 1:15–15). Christ as "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28) made the Sabbath for all humans (Mark 2:27). Christ's pre-incarnate teaching about the Sabbath clearly endorsed the six days creation week, where the days were literal, historical, consecutive, contiguous, 24 hours, each bordered by an "evening and morning" (Gen 1:5, 6, 13, 19, 23, 31), and not merely revelatory days with millions of years between them. In keeping the Sabbath during His life on earth, Christ endorsed the six days creation account. In His death, Christ's followers "rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment" (Luke 23:56b; cf. Exod 20:8–11).

So it is not possible to ground Sabbath keeping in Christ's incarnational practice and teaching without reference to creation week, because He began His practice of Sabbath keeping at the end of creation week and presents the Genesis creation account as literal history in His pre-incarnate teaching—because He was there. No wonder the incarnate Christ speaks of the creation of Adam and

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Eve as a literal historical fact (Matt 19:4–5), and Paul speaks of their creation and fall as literal historical facts (1 Tim 2:13, 14).

Prior to Darwin, there was general belief that creation days were literal.³³ Some even referred to creation days as literal because of a literal Sabbath,³⁴ or referred to the Sabbath in creation week.³⁵ In denying the literal days of creation, and so denying a literal creation week, theistic evolution removes the God-given foundation for the seventh-day Sabbath.

What Theistic Evolution Does to Scripture as God's Word

Behind all that has been said so far, theistic evolution calls into question God's written Word, and hence questions the truths it presents. In denying the literal 24 hours days of Genesis 1–2, theistic evolution unwittingly questions God's Word.³⁶

Robert Reymond gives seven hermeneutical principles for interpreting the creation days. (1) The preponderate meaning of a term should be maintained unless contextual considerations suggest otherwise. The Hebrew word for day *yôm* in the singular, dual, or plural occurs 2,225 times in the Old Testament, and the overwhelming majority designate a 24-hour period. No contextual demand is present in Genesis 1 to do otherwise. (2) The recurring phrase “evening and morning” (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) occurs in 37 verses outside of Genesis (e.g., Exod 18:13; 27:21) and always designates a 24 hour period. (3) The ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd) used with *yôm* (same texts as above) occur hundreds of times in the Old Testament (e.g., Exodus 12:15; 24:16; Lev 12:3) and always designate a 24 hour period. (4) The creation of the sun “to rule the day” and the moon “to rule the night” (Gen 1:16–18) on the fourth day suggest literal 24 hours days for days 4–7, and nothing in the text suggests that days 1–3 were different. (5) Scripture best interprets Scripture (*analogia Scripturae*), where a less clear passage is interpreted by a clearer passage or passages. The fourth commandment of Exodus 20:11 (cf. Exod 31:15–17) documents that creation days were literal. (6) Days plural (Hebrew *yāmîm*) occur 608 times in the Old

³³For example, John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 1. 92; John Brown (1772–1787), *Systematic Theology* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2002), 170; Heinrich Hepppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans., G. T. Thomson (London: Wakeman Trust, 1950, 1st 1861), 199.

³⁴For example, Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed., James T. Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992), 1. 444–452, and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996; includes the 1932 and 1938 vols), 155.

³⁵For example, Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed., Jaroslav Pelican (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 1.80, see 3–82.

³⁶There are those who do not subscribe to theistic evolution, but who question whether God created the world in six literal days. They honor God's power to create, and would not question His ability to do so in six days, but seem hesitant on other grounds. By contrast, Scripture has a certainty that can help them have the same.

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Testament and always designate 24 hour periods. (7) If Moses intended to mean day-age, instead of a 24 hour period, he would have used the Hebrew term *śōlām*.³⁷

Theistic evolution needs to take God's creative word seriously as well as His written Word that supports a literal historical creation. It should be kept in mind that if the length of creation days is a day-age, then how would vegetation created on the third day (Gen 1:11–13) survive until the fourth day when the sun was created (Gen 1:14–19)? This is contrary to science and is another contextual reason that the days of Genesis 1–2 are literal 24 hours periods.

The whole book of Genesis is structured by the word "generations" (*tōlēdōt*), so that the statement, "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth" in the Genesis 2:4 (KJV) creation account is as literal as "these are the generations of Noah" (Gen 6:9, KJV) or as literal as God's promise to establish His covenant with Abraham "and thy seed after thee in their generations" (Gen 17:7, KJV). Scripture presents creation as one of the mighty acts of God. "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Psa 33:9). "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb 11:3).

Genesis is only one of five books Moses wrote under God's guidance. Do his other books interpret the creation week as literal? All subsequent references of Moses to creation week³⁸ are given a literal interpretation. For example, (1) manna fell for six days but none on the seventh day Sabbath (Exod 16:16:4–6, 21–23). (2) The Sabbath in the fourth commandment is based on the seventh day which God blessed after six days of creation (Exod 20:8–11). (3) The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people, "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested (Exod 31:16–17). To interpret the creation record as non-literal doesn't make sense in view of these subsequent references. The above evidence for literal creation days needs to correct the Catholic Church³⁹ and even evangelical theologians

³⁷Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of The Christian Faith* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 393, 394.

³⁸Even the repetition of the Sabbath command with its additional meaning and purpose (celebrate liberation at the Red Sea—rest from enemies Deut 5:15) is prefaced by reference to the Sabbath as a holy day of rest following six days of work (Deut 5:12–14), based upon the creation holy Sabbath following six days of creation (Gen 2:1–2).

³⁹For example, the second Vatican Council (1963–1965) addressed the relation between Scripture and science. It speaks of "the rightful independence of science" (Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., trans. ed., Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 234), and of "the legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences" (265). This is in keeping with the Catholic division between Scripture and tradition. In the Document on Revelation, "sacred tradition" is placed before "sacred revelation" (117). In the same way it is expected that science takes precedence over Scripture in the area of evolution. The latest *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) says, "The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man." The document

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who otherwise believe in the inerrancy of Scripture,⁴⁰ for any question of the literal days of creation unwittingly denies a detail of God's Word. Is this any different in kind from Satan questioning a detail of God Word about dying if the forbidden fruit was eaten (Gen 2:16)? That questioning of God's Word led to the fall of the human race (Gen 3:1–19). Eve fell because she listened to the questioning of God's Word. If she had trusted God's Word she would have evaluated Satan's alleged empirical evidence for what it was—a rejection of God's Word. When Eve “saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it” (Gen 3:6). She put her faith in what looked to her like empirical evidence that doubted God's Word.⁴¹ That's the fundamental challenge we face in this final Faith and Science Conference⁴²—will we place our faith in God's Word or in empirical evidence that seems to call it into question?

Conclusion

The overwhelming evidence in the Genesis creation record, in the other books of Moses, and in the entirety of Scripture⁴³ leads one to conclude that God created during a literal six days followed by a literal Sabbath. Any accommodation of the literal historical creation week to theistic evolution (1) calls into question God's Word not only in Genesis but throughout Scripture, replaces the plan

gives thanks to God “for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers” (Laager: Laager, 1994, 74), and views the Genesis creation account as symbolic (87).

⁴⁰For example, Carl Henry said, “The Bible does not require belief in six literal 24-hour creation days on the basis of Genesis 1–2” [*God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco: Word, 1983), vol. 6, 226]. Millard Erickson says, at “present, the view which I find most satisfactory is a variation of the age-day theory,” although he wisely adds, “we cannot be dogmatic” [*Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2nd ed., 1998) 407]. Wayne Grudem considers “the possibility must be left open that God has chosen not to give us enough information to come to a clear decision on this question” [*Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 297], and the “heated debate” is “far from being settled decisively one way or another” (293). Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest believe “The most probable conclusion is that the six consecutive creative acts were separated by long periods of time” [*Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) vol. 2, 44]. So there is considerable hesitancy to see the Genesis creation days as literal.

⁴¹Christ the Creator gave Eve life, a husband, a garden, the world, the Sabbath, and Himself in close Yahweh fellowship with a warning about the forbidden fruit. Yet Satan, who had given her nothing except a contrary claim to Christ's, was accepted. Such is the delusive power of doubting God's Word because apparent empirical evidence seems to call it into question.

⁴²International Faith and Science Conference, Denver, Colorado, August 20–26, 2004.

⁴³Although beyond the scope of this paper, there are various references concerning Israel keeping the seventh-day Sabbath (Exod 16:23–26; 31:16; Ezek 20:12–24), as well as non-ethnic persons (“aliens within your gates” Exod 20:10b), Christ's practice of Sabbath keeping (Luke 4:16), Sabbath keeping after Calvary (Matt 24:20), Sabbath keeping for all humans (Mark 2:27), Sabbath keeping in the end-time because the everlasting gospel, to all nations, calls for all to worship Christ as Creator, with the words who “made the heavens, the earth, the sea and springs of water,” which recite a part of the Sabbath commandment (Exod 20:11a), and Sabbath keeping for all the redeemed in the new earth (Isa 66:22, 23).

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of salvation, and is contrary to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church; (2) replaces the uniqueness of human creation with humans merely a product of the process; (3) replaces the supernatural by the natural; (4) replaces the biblically constructed worldview with one that concurs with the cosmic controversy questioning of God's Word and nature; (5) replaces the loving God with a God who created through millions of years of suffering, portraying Him in a way incompatible with Calvary; (6) undermines Christ's supernatural words in Scripture, in His past, present, and future ministry; (7) removes a literal Sabbath as the climax of a literal creation week, which calls into question the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11); and (8) rejects God's Word in Genesis 1–2, which is just as destructive as Eve rejecting God's Word in Genesis 3.⁴⁴

Therefore the Seventh-day Adventist church must reject theistic evolution as God's method of creation, or it could end up questioning God's Word throughout Scripture, abandon its unique end-time mission, and fail God just as Eve did. We must not allow God's Word to be doubted through apparent empirical evidence, but test empirical evidence by God's Word.⁴⁵ For in the end-time there are scoffers who "deliberately forget" that the heavens and earth were created "by God's word" (2 Pet 3:5) and believers who "by faith . . . understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb 11:2). This supernatural creation is unanimously attested to throughout Scripture, leaving no room for theistic evolution (some examples: Exod 20:11; Neh 9:6; Job 26:7, 13; Psa 8:3; 33:6; 96:5; 102:25; 104:24, 30; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 136:5; 146:6; 148:4, 5; Prov 3:19; 8:22–30; Eccl 12:1; Isa 37:16; 40:12, 26–28; 42:7; 43:7; 44:24; 45:11–18; 51:13, 16; Jer 51:15; Zech 12:1; Mark 13:19; John 1:1–3; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Heb 1:1, 2; Rev 4:11; 10:6; 14:7).

Corroborating Criticism of Theistic Evolution

Theistic Evolution hoped to bridge the gap between faith and science. In his article "Theistic Evolution: Deism Revisited?" (1997), Michael Harbin documents that "Theistic evolution . . . has not proven to be the mediating position once hoped for," and that "theistic evolution finds itself in the awkward position

⁴⁴Satan deceived Eve to believe she could become as God by rejecting His Word (Gen 3:1–6), which was a type of natural "evolution" apart from God. Evolutionary theory that denies God's Word (as seen in this paper) is equally evolution apart from God, for theistic evolution is a misnomer, for it is tantamount to saying God creates through natural evolution apart from His Word about supernatural creation in Genesis 1–2. Such a premise questions the reliability of God's Word about a supernatural creation in history (Gen 1–2) just as much as Satan called into question a part of the creation record in tempting Eve (Gen 2:16, 17; 3:1–6).

⁴⁵The same principle applies in testing miracles, prophetic claims, and speaking in tongues. God's Word is the divine standard to determine between the genuine and the counterfeit (e.g., cf. 1 Thess 5:20, 21; 1 John 4:2, 3; Matt 7:20; Gal 5:22, 23; Jer 28:9, cf. Deut 18:20–22).

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of defending a scientific model that is coming under increasing attack, even by its own adherents.”⁴⁶

In his book *Intelligent Design* (1999), William A. Dembski, a leading voice in the Intelligent Design movement, evaluates theistic evolution. The fundamental difference between theistic evolution and Intelligent Design is the inaccessibility of God’s design in nature (theistic evolution) and the accessibility of God’s design in nature (Intelligent Design). Dembski says, “The current theological fashion prefers an evolutionary God inaccessible to scientific scrutiny over a designer God whose actions are clearly detectable.”⁴⁷ In other words,

Theistic evolution places theism and evolution in an odd tension. If God purposely created life through Darwinian means, then God’s purpose was ostensibly to conceal his purpose in creation. Within theistic evolution, God is a master of stealth who constantly eludes our best efforts to detect him empirically. Yes, the theistic evolutionist believes that the universe is designed. Yet insofar as there is design in the universe, it is design we recognize strictly through the eyes of faith. Accordingly the physical world in itself provides no evidence that life is designed.⁴⁸

So Intelligent Design (design in nature) is incompatible with theistic evolution (Designer God and His empirical design removed from nature), but compatible with atheistic evolution in that both look in nature for evidence. However, unlike evolution, Intelligent Design does not extrapolate a theory beyond its evidential base,⁴⁹ and unlike theistic evolution it critiques evolution at the mega-level of worldviews. Intelligent Design does not attempt to marry two incompatible worldviews (natural and supernatural, as does theistic evolution), but critiques the naturalistic worldview of atheistic evolution for rejecting the presence of design.⁵⁰

William Dembski’s latest book is *The Design Revolution: Answering The Toughest Questions About Intelligent Design* (2004). In the Foreword Charles Colson rightly notes that Intelligent Design is a scientific theory, and because it is a scientific theory, “secular thinkers are no longer able to simply dismiss design as a religious idea.”⁵¹ In response to Dembski’s book, Ted Peters, Professor

⁴⁶Michael A. Harbin, “Theistic Evolution: Deism Revisited?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 40/4 (December 1997) 639–651; see 640, 651.

⁴⁷William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 110, 111.

⁴⁸William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, 110.

⁴⁹William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, 113.

⁵⁰William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, 114.

⁵¹William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution: Answering The Toughest Questions About Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 17. Keep this in mind with Hunter’s assessment that evolution has only religious certainty and not scientific certainty (footnote 4). This should make Christian scholars pause before giving more credence to a natural evolutionary method of creation than to the *ex nihilo* supernatural method of creation in Scripture.

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of Systematic Theology, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and Graduate Theological Union, says, “I find William Dembski’s writing and argumentation on behalf of intelligent design to be careful, erudite, thorough and a formidable challenge to the theistic evolution camp I normally defend.”⁵²

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⁵²William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution*, 3.

Consequences of Moving Away from a Recent Six-Day Creation¹

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During the last two years we have heard many papers that challenge the traditional Adventist, biblically-founded position of a recent six-day creation. I believe there are many problems with the “objections” and the alternatives they offer. In this brief article I will outline three of the many consequences that I believe would result from rejection of a recent six-day creation: (1) hermeneutical inconsistency and poor exegesis (this can lead to a loss of understanding and authority of the Bible); (2) a diminishing importance of the Cross; (3) the loss of effective witnessing due to mutually exclusive messages.

Requires Hermeneutical Inconsistency and Poor Exegetical Practice

Let’s begin with some basic definitions. In scholarly discussions, the principles and science of interpretation is called *hermeneutics*; and bringing out of the biblical text what is already there is referred to as *exegesis*. In contrast to exegesis, which is a sound hermeneutical practice, *eisegesis* refers to the practice of interpreters reading into the text what is not there.

Speaking as a so-called conservative in regards to our current discussions on creation, I have been particularly disappointed that none of those opposed to our longstanding position has been able to offer any sort of a systematic and consistent hermeneutic or theology. Rather, we are simply told that the traditional interpretations of Genesis are wrong—that the author of Genesis intended something else other than a literal historical understanding. This is my impression, anyway. But what is the justification for this non-literal interpretation?

A number of hermeneutical approaches to Scripture have been adopted by different groups of Christians through time. Of special interest are those schools of interpretation that have arisen since the advent of modern higher criticism

¹ This article is based on a paper presented at the 2004 Faith and Science Conference in Denver, Colorado, August 20-26, 2004.

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(i.e., the historical critical method) in the 19th century. We may classify these schools as²:

(i) the “Liberal” view—denies the full inspiration, authority, internal consistency, and trustworthiness of Scripture; because the Bible is believed to be a fallible human document, it cannot always be trusted; this view employs the methodology of higher-criticism to interpret Scripture;

(ii) the “Fundamentalist” view (some refer to it as the “Ultra-Conservative” view)—which upholds the full inspiration, authority, internal consistency, and infallibility of Scripture, *and a mechanical dictation or word-for-word mode of inspiration*; this view tends to employ the “proof-text” *method* of interpretation, using an isolated text arbitrarily to prove one’s own point;

(iii) the Evangelical “Orthodox” view (also known as the Conservative view)—this view holds that the Bible *is* the inspired and authoritative Word of God, fully inspired, internally coherent, and trustworthy or dependable in whatever it teaches or touches upon; this view rejects the mechanical dictation view of inspiration (unless the text indicates so), and employs the plain reading method of interpretation (known technically as the *grammatical-historical method*);

(iv) the “Neo-Orthodox” view (sometimes referred to as the Barthian view, after Swiss theologian Karl Barth)—which holds that the Bible is not the Word of God; it only *contains* the Word of God or *becomes* the Word of God to individuals when it grips their hearts; it also employs higher-criticism to interpret Scripture;

(v) the “Neo-Evangelical” or “Neo-Reformed” view (some call it the “Moderate Liberal” view)—which, while claiming to believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible on issues of salvation, is nonetheless skeptical about the Bible’s full inspiration, authority, authenticity and reliability on historical and scientific issues; this view employs *modified* aspects of higher criticism to interpret Scripture.

As far as I know, few Adventists have advocated anything like the liberal, fundamentalist, or neo-orthodox views, at least as defined above. However, the *Evangelical-Orthodox (Conservative)* view and the *Neo-Reformed or Neo-Evangelical* view are especially relevant to our own current discussions. The two systems of interpretation seem to be competing in the Seventh-day Adventist church.³

² For the classifications used in this area, I have conflated the descriptions given by Norman L. Geisler, *Decide for Yourself: How History Views the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word* (Berrien Springs: Berean, 1996) and his *Must We Be Silent* (Ann Arbor: Berean, 2001), 445-546.

³ Koranteng-Pipim refers to these competing systems of interpretation in the SDA church as the Bible-believing (conservative) position and the Bible-doubting (or moderate liberalism) position. See his *Must We Be Silent*, 445-453.

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Historically, the *Evangelical-Orthodox* or (*conservative*) view arose in part as a response to the historical-critical approach to Scripture. Its leading advocates were Archibald Hodge and Benjamin Warfield.⁴ The Orthodox view of the Scripture sees the Bible as not only containing the words of God, but being the Word of God; it acknowledges that Scripture is conveyed through humans but is infallible; the Bible is self-consistent and is historically and scientifically true. The Orthodox view holds to plenary and verbal inspiration (when the text so indicates—there are direct quotes from God), but denies that it was mechanically dictated. The orthodox view also teaches that Biblical Criticism (the historical-critical method) should not be allowed to contradict what Scripture says about itself.

The *Neo-evangelical* or *Neo-reformed* (or *moderate liberal*) view is more recent. Its leading advocates have been Gerrit Cornelius Berkouwer (1908-1996) and Jack B. Rogers—the latter represents a more recent and extreme form of this view. The Neo-Reformed view holds that the Bible is *both* Word of God and word of man—they emphasize the truly human aspect of Scripture and note that humans err. They believe in Divine sovereignty, but argue that the Bible is subject to human limitations. They believe the Bible *contains* the word of God, but does not equal the Word of God. The Bible is not an infallible divine word, but rather, reliable human words—especially about salvation. The Bible is a *witness* to divine revelation, but is not itself revelation. Concerning historical and scientific matters, the Bible is errant; it contains myths; its purpose is salvation not science. Neo-Reformed scholars protect the central saving message of Christ; however, this message is better known subjectively and experientially. Historical Criticism is a legitimate approach to Scripture.

From a scholarly perspective, the biggest problem with the Neo-reformed view is its lack of hermeneutical and exegetical consistency; this is especially evident in how Genesis 1-11 is treated.

Traditionally and officially, the Adventist church has endorsed the conservative *grammatical-historical* approach to the text, including Genesis 1-11.⁵ Accommodating a non-literal view of these chapters (which is necessary for a theistic evolutionary approach or other alternate approaches that deny a recent 6-day creation) requires *rejection* of the grammatical-historical approach and a literal interpretation of these chapters.

⁴ It should be noted that while Warfield generally advocated a high view of Scripture, he backed off from this position with regards to Genesis 1-11; he was willing to accept a form of evolution. See B. B. Warfield, *Evolution, Science and Scripture*, ed. Mark A. Noll and David N. Livingstone (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). His colleague, Hodges, was less inclined to accept evolution.

⁵ At the 1986 Annual Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, church leaders representing all the world fields of the Seventh-day Adventist church approved the report of the General Conference's "Methods of Bible Study Committee" as representative of the church's hermeneutical position. "The Methods of Bible Study" document was published in the *Adventist Review*, January 22, 1977, 18-20. Cf. Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 58-104.

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Ironically, a non-literal interpretation flies in the face of sound exegetical practice among *both liberal and conservative* scholarship. It requires ignoring internal textual indicators that Genesis 1-11 was intended to be treated and understood like later materials in biblical books such as Chronicles and Kings that have traditionally been understood as “historical” books by virtually all scholars except the “minimalists.”

The understandings of modern science should not be used to “force” the text to say something contrary to what the ancient author thought or intended—to read an unintended meaning into the text is *eisegesis*, NOT *exegesis* and represents poor scholarship.

Genesis 1-11: Literal or Non-Literal?

The controversy about how to properly interpret Genesis 1-11 is not unique to Adventists, as illustrated by a recent exchange by two well-known Christian philosophers from Notre Dame, Ernan McMullin and Alvin Plantinga.⁶

McMullin took issue with Christians who read Genesis 1-11 literally by claiming, “the great majority of contemporary Scripture scholars agree [that to interpret early Genesis] literally or quasi-literally is to misunderstand the point that the writers of those narratives were trying to make.”

We have heard similar claims by some Adventist scholars in our current forum. However, Plantinga directly challenged McMullin’s claim that most Scripture scholars believe that Genesis was not intended to be understood literally.

First, of course, there are whole coveys of phalanxes of conservative critics—e.g. E. J. Young and G. C. Aalders—who think that the writers(s) of Genesis meant to teach much more than that creation depends upon the Lord (There was of course, Thomas Aquinas, who took early Genesis to teach that God created the world in six 24 hour days.) But the same goes for their more liberal colleagues.⁷

Plantinga then quotes three *liberal* representatives from different periods of Old Testament scholarship—Julius Wellhausen, Herman Gunkel, and James Barr—who all believe that Genesis 1-11 is to be understood literally. According to Wellhausen:

“[The author of Genesis] undoubtedly wants to depict faithfully the factual course of events in the coming-to-be of the world, he wants to give a cosmogonic theory. Anyone who denied that is confusing the value of the story for us with the intention of the author.”⁸

⁶ See the essay by Plantinga in *Intelligent Design, Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Robert T. Pennock (Cambridge: Bradford, MIT P, 2001), 197-235).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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Then Plantinga cites Herman Gunkel:

“People should never have denied that Genesis 1 wants to recount how the coming-to-be of the world actually happened”⁹

Finally, Plantinga cites James Barr:

“To take a well known instance, most conservative evangelical opinion today does *not* pursue a literal interpretation of the creation story in Genesis. A literal interpretation would hold that the world was created in six days, these day being the first of the series which we still experience as days and nights . . . so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the *writer(s)* of Genesis 1–11 *intended* to convey to their readers the ideas that:

- (1) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience
- (2) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story
- (3) Noah’s flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark.”¹⁰

Plantinga reminds us that Barr’s statements are within a context in which

. . . he [Barr] means to discredit the ‘fundamentalists’ or ‘evangelicals’ by showing that they profess to take Scripture at its literal word, but in this case clearly do not do so, since it is obvious (at any rate to those professors at world class universities) that the writer(s) of Genesis meant to assert the three things Barr mentions.

For Barr, evangelicals who try to read Genesis in a non-literal fashion in order to conform to the claims of science are both inconsistent and demonstrating poor Biblical scholarship. Barr argues that there is no doubt that the author of Genesis *intended* to describe things in a historical-literal way, but he [Barr] doesn’t believe it because of modern science. For Barr, this is the more honest and scholarly approach.

Why the Difference of Opinion? Here I can only speculate, but I suspect that the philosophers like Mullen are more driven by the findings of science than the exegetical demands of the text. Here I would point out an observation that I have noted recently—while it is not 100%, I have noticed that those theological scholars who feel more free to re-interpret Genesis in a non-literal fashion are *not* usually trained as Hebrew, Old Testament, or Ancient Near Eastern scholars—rather, they tend to be trained in some area of religion or theology—systematics or philosophy, etc.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 217

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I have also noticed that the *non-literal* scholars tend to come from more conservative, evangelical schools or backgrounds, but have moved to the more “liberal” end of the spectrum within those contexts—they have a respect for Scripture, but are powerfully impressed by the scientific method and the findings of modern science. These Evangelicals, with their desire to preserve an inspired Bible, are more willing to help the Bible out of its “difficulty” of apparent ignorance concerning creation (and other “scientific facts”) by ascribing different intents and understandings—non-literal—that they believe the author of Genesis must have had in mind while composing his work. Ironically, *secular* liberals are at least more faithful to the text—they will acknowledge that the writer intended to be taken literally, but according to modern science, he was simply wrong.

The Need for Consistency

However, for the scholars with the Neo-Evangelical methodology to be *consistent*, they must also deny an historic Patriarchal period (Abraham), the Sojourn (Israel in Egypt), the Exodus (Red Sea), Mt. Sinai (Ten Commandments—Sabbath), the Conquest (Jericho), and probably the existence of the Monarchy (Solomon and David)—even the resurrection of Christ could be denied. It would appear that some neo-evangelicals are willing to move part way down this road, although there is a general resistance to playing with the “Christ event.”

True liberal historical critics have already seen this. This is nicely illustrated by Max Miller, a practicing historical critic—he knows what the Bible says and does not deny that this is what the ancients may have believed, but because of modern science (including scientific history), he, as a scholar, must reject it. As he points out:

Remember that *the Bible presupposes* a dynamic natural world into which God, from time to time, intrudes upon human affairs. It is a world with waters rolling back, burning bushes, and ax heads floating. God directs the course of history by simultaneously instructing Moses, regulating Pharaoh’s heart, and bringing unnatural disasters upon Egypt. God hands down laws on Mt. Sinai, and sends angels to defend Jerusalem against Sennacherib’s massive army.

Modern historians perceive the world to be more *orderly*, on the other hand; and another of the standard tenets of modern historiography is that *any* natural or historical phenomenon can be explained *without* reference to overt divine involvement. . . . we modern historians bring [biblical narratives] into line with the world as we perceive it. We leave out miracles, for example . . .¹¹

¹¹ See Max Miller in *What Has Archaeology to Do with Faith?* ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992), 60-74; emphasis added.

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If we are going to start inserting non-literal meanings into the biblical text every time the text conflicts with the findings of modern science or historiography, then we must be consistent in the application from a hermeneutical perspective. This raises the question of how much are we willing to give up for consistency?

Surrendering the historicity of the text means that *theological conclusions* which are based on an assumption of historicity must also be given up. I remind my students that Adventist theology and all of the doctrines of which it consists were formulated with an assumption that the Biblical texts presented actual historical situations in which God spoke and interacted with humankind—the giving of the ten commandments, including the Sabbath and the sanctuary at Mt. Sinai, etc.

A movement to a neo-evangelical hermeneutic could result in Adventists abandoning the ten commandments (Sabbath), the sanctuary (there was no Mt Sinai experience), the non-immortality of the soul, the resurrection (ideas that did not exist in OT times); in terms of the NT we must abandon the second coming, and especially significant is denial of a literal blood atonement on the cross! There have been attempts to preserve the historicity of later Biblical events (like the Cross) by certain Christian (usually evangelical) scholars, but by accommodating evolution by denying the historicity of Genesis 1-11, they are forced into *methodological and hermeneutical inconsistencies* that preclude them from being taken seriously by either “mainstream” scholarship or “true” conservatives.

Tried and true exegetical tools must be employed. The words must be examined in their original language, lexicons consulted, syntax studied, context explored (including extra-biblical contexts), other relevant passages in Scripture examined, etc. Certainly, the genre must be determined, but this must be determined both by internal indicators in the text and by external literary parallels when available.

Those Adventist scholars who employed these methods (appropriate to the field) came to conclusions on Genesis 1-11 that are in harmony with the consensus found among leading scholars in both liberal and conservative biblical scholarship outside of Adventism. The only difference is that the Adventist scholars *believe* the Biblical text—the liberal scholars do not—but they do agree on what the text says and means! The author of Genesis *intended* to depict in a literal way the timing and manner in which the earth became inhabitable and occupied by all known living forms (formed and filled).

Impact on the Cross and Human Salvation

Besides the problem of a lack of exegetical rigor and consistency, interpretative approaches that deny the historicity of a recent six-day creation pose serious problems for the doctrine of salvation (what scholars refer to as *soteriological* problems).

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Simply put, a denial of the historic creation week also necessarily denies the creation on day six of that week of the *first historic humans* who were responsible for introducing sin into the human race; this in turn denies the spread of sin from that first human couple, the introduction of death into the world, and the need for the cross—at least how these things have been traditionally explained by mainstream Christianity for centuries.

Historically, Christians have traced their sinful condition and need for Jesus to the event known as the Fall (Gen 3). Christians believe that somehow, the results of the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God were passed on to all of their biological descendents—as Paul says in Romans 3:23, we all need Jesus, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The church father Augustine attempted to explain the phenomena of how all of Adam and Eve’s descendents became sinners in his doctrine of Original Sin. This teaching has led to a considerable amount of theological discussion and controversy which is our well beyond our present discussion.

In brief, however, there were two central components to Augustine’s teaching: (1) that all human kind inherit Adam’s actual guilt for his rebellion; (2) that humans inherit from Adam a tendency to continue sinning—as Ellen White puts it—a *propensity* to sin is the common lot of all humans.

While Adventists have *not* subscribed to Augustine’s idea that we inherit and are condemned for Adam’s personal *guilt* that derived from his own act of rebellion, we *have* maintained that we do inherit a sinful *nature* with a propensity to sin that is so irresistible that we will inevitably commit our own sinful acts. Because of this inherited sinful nature, we need Christ’s death on the cross to forgive us our own sinfulness, and the grace of His Spirit to overcome our natural sinful tendencies.¹²

Theistic evolution, on the other hand, has no place for an historic Adam and Eve nor an historic fall. To fully appreciate this, it is important to understand how most physical anthropologists explain the origin of humans.¹³ In brief, they do *not* believe that a single pair of human beings evolved into existence.¹⁴

¹² John Fowler has provided a concise summary of the Adventist position by stating that “Adventists do not stress the idea of original sin in the sense that ‘personal, individual moral guilt adheres to Adam’s descendants because of his [Adam’s] sin. They stress, instead, that his sin resulted in the condition of estrangement from God in which every human being is born. This estrangement involves an inherent tendency to commit sin.” John Fowler, “Sin” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 265.

¹³ See also James Gibson’s remarks in his paper “Issues In ‘Intermediate’ Models of Origins,” presented at the 2004 Faith and Science conference in Denver.

¹⁴ A typical explanation, taken from a textbook on human evolution, is thus: “Speciation, or the development of a new species, does not happen suddenly, nor is it the result of one or two mutations in the history of a single family.” . . . “Speciation may occur if populations become so separated from each other geographically that gene exchanges are no longer possible. In adapting to their separate environments, the two populations may undergo enough genetic changes to prevent them from interbreeding.”

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Rather, it was an *entire population* of hominids that somehow became isolated from a “parent” population and due to a variety of factors, evolved into a new species that they define as the “first” modern humans.

Most theologians immediately recognize the implications of this view of human origins. The most liberal scholars have candidly admitted that the traditional doctrine of human salvation is no longer valid and must be done away with. For example, theologian John Hick has noted, “Until comparatively recent times the ancient myth of the origin of evil in the fall of man was quite reasonably assumed to be history.”¹⁵ This view, says Hick, is

open to insuperable scientific . . . objections . . . We know today that the conditions that were to cause human . . . mortality [death] . . . were already part of the natural order prior to the emergence of man and prior therefore to any first human sin.¹⁶

In a similar vane, Catholic theologian Hans Kung, quotes with favor his fellow Catholic theistic evolutionist, Karl Schmitz-Moormann as follows:

The notion of [the] traditional view of redemption as reconciliation and ransom from the consequences of Adam’s fall is *nonsense* for anyone who knows about the evolutionary background to human existence in the modern world. Karl Schmitz-Moormann tells us what the new meaning of redemption must be: Salvation “cannot mean returning to an original state, but must be conceived as perfecting through the process of evolution.”¹⁷

This conclusion has led various theologians to propose a number of different solutions for the various soteriological problems that are immediately evident if one accepts a long-age, evolutionary approach to human origins. Some solutions involve the fall of an entire population, some have redefined “fall,” and still others suggested that God picked two of these new, modern hominids and infused them with a “soul,” making them truly human, after which these two chose to rebel against God. There are still other explanations that have emerged, but all of them reside in a realm of speculation outside of the Biblical text, require rather creative “exegesis,” and pose as many theological problems as they solve.

The only common thread among them is that they agree that the biblical depiction of the fall cannot be understood in the simple manner in which the text reads.

¹⁵ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 283.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 285.

¹⁷ Hans Kung, *Credo* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 22. See also Karl Schmitz-Moorman, “Evolution and Redemption: What Is the Meaning of Christian Proclaiming Salvation in an Evolving World?” in *Progress in Theology* 1/2 (June 1993): 7.

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Directly related to the teachings of human fall and salvation is the belief that from Adam and Eve's historic act of rebellion *death* was first introduced into the planet. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned . . ."

The understanding that evolutionary geology and paleontology contradicts the Biblical teaching of the Fall's impact on both the human *and* sub-human creation has long been acknowledged. As early as 1840 Dr. Edward Hitchcock—a theologian and geologist (and President of Amherst College in Massachusetts, and that state's first official geologist)—clearly saw the implications of the new science of geology on the doctrine of the Fall and its impact on nature. He wrote:

The general interpretation of the Bible has been, that until the Fall of man, death did not exist in the world even among the inferior animals. For the bible asserts that by man came death (1 Cor 15:21) and by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin (Rom 5:12). But geology teaches us that myriads of animals lived and died before the creation of man.¹⁸

While some might argue that the death talked about in Romans 5 is only human death—not sub-human death—passages such as Roman 8 which talk about the *entire creation (ktsis)* being subjected to futility and hoping that it will be set free from its slavery to corruption indicate that the corruption of death penetrated all created life forms. That things changed in the animal kingdom in particular after the Fall is supported by references to a pre-Fall vegetarian diet for the animals and to their post-Fall participation in the blood-letting acts of violence (*hamas*) that resulted in the judgment of the Flood and the institution of capital punishment for animals that kill humans that was imposed on the animal kingdom immediately after the Flood. That the deadly predator-prey relationship that existed in the animal kingdom *after* the Fall was *not* seen as an ideal is clearly expressed in such eschatological passages as Isaiah 11.¹⁹

In summary, a denial of a recent creation six-day creation week requires the abandonment of the creation of a historic pair of ancestral humans—Adam and Eve—their literal Fall, the entrance of sin and death into the world, and the need of Christ's atoning death on the cross. Historically, Adventists have found the Bible's own view of how salvation works, including the origin of sin through the Fall, its spread to all humanity and nature, and its eradication by Jesus on the cross, as the most complete, convincing, and satisfying explanation.

¹⁸ Edward Hitchcock reference is from *Elementary Geology* (New York: Ivison and Phinney, 1840), 273.

¹⁹ So-called problem passages that seem to describe death in the Edenic or New Earth were dealt with in my paper given at this conference, last year.

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The Loss of Effective Witnessing

Finally, I believe that the endorsement of both a recent six-day creation and long age perspectives will seriously impede the Church's witness. I don't question that both recent creationists and, say, theistic evolutionists can win people to their viewpoint. This has been demonstrated many times. The real question is whether the church can survive diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive positions. I don't believe so. We must be honest and admit that the differences are not minor.

I will restrict my comments on this last section to a personal experience. I had an occasion to witness to two non-Adventist scientists about our Church's position on creation. They had been trained in traditional evolutionary thought, but seemed to show a genuine interest in Adventism and were curious about how Adventists dealt with evolution. I gave a careful, but honest reply explaining that we believed in a recent six-day creation, and how we attempted to understand the consensus scientific position in light of this biblical position. The scientists did not make fun of my argument—indeed they seemed to consider them thoughtfully. Later, within earshot, they followed up this conversation by asking more questions of another Adventist. This Adventist, however, was of a more “progressive” orientation, and dismissed the claim that Adventists held to a recent six-day creation by asserting that only backwards and uninformed Adventists would hold such a position. The scientists who had expressed interest to me about Adventism quit asking questions and showed no further interest in Adventism. One cannot help but think of Lincoln's words (paraphrasing Matthew 12:25)—“a house divided against itself cannot stand.” Or, “can two walk together unless they be agreed (Amos 3:3)?

I recognize that this personal experience may be dismissed as simply a pragmatic reason and not theological, but it seems to me that the best environment for successful outreach occurs when people are united in their core beliefs. But it needs to be recognized that for many, if not most of us, our traditional understanding of Creation, the Fall, and the Cross were central to our conversion experience and are at the core of our individual self-understanding as Adventists; they thus form an integral part of our individual witness and, hence, cannot be compromised. If we work at cross purposes on issues that are part of our own core beliefs, the effect will be to impede the work of the gospel.

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, I see at least three important consequences for the church if we move away from a six-day creation (there are more)—(1) an inadequate hermeneutic and inconsistent exegetical practice that will undermine confidence in and the authority of God's Word; (2) an undermining of our understanding of salvation, including belief in the Fall, the penalty of sin, and the importance of Christ and the Cross (the doctrine of the soul and of the divine origin

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of humans are also at stake); (3) finally, our ability to witness effectively will be reduced because we will be witnessing to different truths.

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Issues in “Intermediate” Models of Origins

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Discussion of issues in creation is often focused on contrasting the theory of naturalistic evolution with the biblical model of a recent, six-day creation. The differences between these two theories are profound, and the contrasts can readily be identified in such issues as whether the universe and human life were purposefully designed, the nature and extent of God’s actions in the universe, and the extent to which answers to philosophical questions can be inferred from nature and from Scripture.

Biblical creation is based on a literal-phenomenal¹ interpretation of Genesis 1–3 and other creation texts. The biblical model affirms that humans were separately created in a supernatural act of creation, some thousands of years ago, at the end of a six-day creation. They were endowed with the image of God and the possibility of eternal life. The original human pair freely chose to distrust God, bringing death and other evils into the world.

By contrast, naturalistic evolution is based on a naturalistic approach to science, without respect to biblical teachings. Naturalistic (“scientific”) evolution claims that humans developed from ape-like ancestors, through strictly natural processes, over several millions of years. Humans have no special status in nature, and there is no basis for believing in life after death. Death, disease, and suffering are simply natural by-products of the processes operating in nature and cannot be considered good or evil in any “moral” sense. The differences between the two models could hardly be more dramatic.

However, other models have been proposed that tend to blur some of the contrasts between the biblical and naturalistic theories. A number of attempts have been made to develop intermediate models in which elements of the biblical story of creation are mixed with elements of the scientific story of origins. All of these models share the biblical idea that nature is the result of divine purpose and the “scientific” idea of long ages of time. We cannot consider every

¹ Real events described in the language of appearance.

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variety of origins model, but most of them are variants of two major categories of models, often called “progressive creation” (or “multiple creations”) and “theistic evolution.” Neither of these categories is consistently defined, and each includes a range of models that differ in significant details. Thus it will be necessary to define our terms and describe some of the major variants in order to identify their implications and analyze their strengths and weaknesses.

The major objection to the biblical model is the relatively short time scale it implies, while the scientific data seem to point to a much longer time scale. The intermediate models described here were created in response to the scientific problem of long age faced by the biblical literal phenomenal model. The primary goal of this paper is to explore the major intermediate models to see how well they fare scientifically.

Defining “Creation” and “Evolution”

The terms “creation” and “evolution” are both used in a variety of meanings that tend to confuse rather than clarify the issues. For this reason, I will attempt to define the terms for the purposes of this paper.

By *creation*, I mean the concept that God acted directly, through personal agency, to bring diverse lineages of living organisms into existence. He may have created the first individuals of each lineage *ex nihilo* (Hebrews 1:3), or from non-living materials (Genesis 2:7), or in some combination. Creation in this sense does not include the proposal that God caused new forms of life to appear through secondary processes, such as by guiding the process of evolution. Nor does it include the appearance of new individuals through reproduction. In the sense used here, God (directly) created only the founders of each independent lineage. (Of course God created the entire universe *ex nihilo*, but here we are concerned primarily with the origins of living things on this planet.)

By *evolution* I mean the concept of universal common ancestry² (monophyly) regardless of the mechanism, whether naturalistic or divinely guided. Evolution is the theory that all organisms, including humans, descended from the same original ancestor. I would distinguish between “evolution” and some other terms commonly associated with it. Variation and speciation do not entail universal common ancestry, so they are not the same as evolution. Evolution is sometimes defined merely as “change over time,” but this is not an adequate definition. Every individual changes over time, yet individuals do not evolve—it is populations that evolve. “Change over time” does not necessarily imply universal common ancestry. The term “macroevolution” has no single accepted definition, and I will avoid the term in order to avoid the confusion its use brings.

² K. W. Giberson and D. A. Yerxa, *Species of Origins* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 49.

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Classifying Models of Origins

Several attempts have been made to classify intermediate models of origins.³ My classification borrows from these previous attempts, but emphasizes elements that seem to be particularly useful for evaluating the models. These are: the origin of humans, whether separately created or derived from animals; the interpretation of “days” in Genesis; and, in the case of theistic evolution, the extent of direct divine activity in the process.

The definitions of creation and evolution discussed above will be used in describing and evaluating intermediate models of origins. By *long-age creation* I mean any theory that includes the geological time scale and the idea of separately created lineages, especially the special creation of humans. Since all the major forms of long-age creation involve a series of discrete creation acts, I regard the term *multiple creations* as a synonym for long-age creation. The interpretation of the “days” in Genesis will be used to help distinguish the various models of multiple creations.

I will use the term *theistic evolution* for those theories that accept the geological time scale and universal common ancestry, including humans, in a divinely guided process. The proposed extent of divine activity in nature provides a way to help distinguish the various models of theistic evolution. Theories that do not include any divine activity are beyond the scope of this paper.

Long-age Creation Models (Including “Progressive Creation”)

Long-age creation models include any model that incorporates the two ideas of: 1) the geological time scale and 2) the separate creation of humans, and numerous other independent lineages. These models are usually associated with the idea that if there was a six-day creation or biblical flood, they were local events, rather than global. Ramm introduced the term “progressive creation” and argued for many separate creations, each followed by “horizontal” but not “vertical” radiations.⁴ However, this term is used for a wide variety of models, at least one of which includes an animal ancestry for humans. Because “progressive creation” is so vague, I prefer to use “long-age creation” or “multiple creations.”

Probably the most significant distinguishing feature of long-age creation models is the interpretation of the word “day” in Genesis 1. Certain long-age creation models hold that the creation “days” are literal, sequential days of creation, while other long-age creation models hold that the “days” are non-literal

³ Many attempts have been made. Here are a few: B. Thompson, *Creation Compromises* (Montgomery: Apologetics, 1995), [long-age creation models]; Report of the Creation Study Committee, Presbyterian Church of America [<http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics>]; D. L. Wilcox, “A Taxonomy of Creation,” *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 38 (1986): 244–250; L. J. Gibson, “Biblical Creation: Is There a Better Model?” *Ministry* (May 2000): 5–8.

⁴ B. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966).

and/or non-sequential. (Theistic evolution models necessarily hold that the “days” are non-literal.) I use this difference to help classify the long-age creation models discussed below.

Multiple-creation Models with Literal, Sequential Creation Days

Gap theory. One of the first models of multiple creations over long ages was the “gap theory.”⁵ This theory maintains that Genesis 1 refers to a recent creation in six literal, contiguous days, but this creation was preceded by another creation that had been destroyed. Proponents of this view often claim that the phrase “the earth was without form and void” (Genesis 1:2) should read “the earth *became* without form and void,” which represents a change from its original condition (compare with Isaiah 45:18).⁶ The destruction might have been due directly to Satan’s activity when he supposedly was in control of the world⁷ or the results of a war between Satan and God.⁸

The gap theory founders on both exegetical and scientific grounds. Exegetically, the gap theory is based on the supposition that Genesis 1:2 means that the world “became” without form and void. However, the Hebrew word (*hayetha*) does not have that meaning. The text states that the earth *was* without form and void, not that it *became* without form and void.⁹

Scientifically, the gap theory predicts a gap in the fossil record, with the rubble of the old destroyed creation below the gap and the record of the new creation above the gap. But there is no such gap in the fossil record, and most scholars abandoned the gap theory long ago.

Some scholars have attempted to get around this problem by claiming that the animals and plants of the first creation closely resembled God’s work in re-creation.¹⁰ Thus, the gap would be undetectable. In this view, some fossils that appear to be humans were actually human-like animals, while others were true

⁵ A. C. Custance, *Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2* (Ottawa: Doorway, 1970); also available on the web: http://www.ringsurf.com/netring?ring=Gap_Theory;action=list; W. W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 40; discussed in I. T. Taylor, 1984. *In the Minds of Men: Darwin and the New World Order* (Toronto: TFE, 1984), 362–364; see also chapter 9 in Thompson.

⁶ E.g., H. Rimmer (1937), *Modern Science and the Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 27–28; some Seventh-day Adventists have written favorably about this possibility, e.g., Provonsha, Pearl.

⁷ Rimmer, 28; A web site advocating this view is www.kjvbible.org/satan.html. A similar view was suggested in C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 120.

⁸ G. H. Pember, *Earth’s Earliest Ages* (New York: Revell, n.d. [1876?]); Thompson, 161.

⁹ R. W. Younker, *God’s Creation: Exploring the Genesis Story* (Nampa: Pacific, 1999); Thompson, 161.

¹⁰ This idea is promoted on the website: www.kjvbible.org/satan.html, and is implicit in any theory that explains pre-Adamic natural evil as the result of Satan’s activities. The argument is not dependent on Satan’s involvement; it could be that God’s successive creations were indistinguishable morphologically.

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humans with moral accountability.¹¹ Fossils from the two creations are morphologically indistinguishable. It hardly needs to be pointed out that this idea lacks any biblical, scientific, or philosophical support, and it is perfectly understandable why the idea of an "invisible gap" has not been widely accepted.

Intermittent Creation Days (Multiple Gaps). A few scholars have attempted to preserve the idea of literal days in a long time frame by proposing that the days were intermittent rather than contiguous.¹² Thus, there were actually six literal creation days, in the sequence recorded in Genesis, but they were separated in time by millions of years. However, the sequence of events in Genesis conflicts with the fossil sequence, falsifying this proposal. To get around this problem, a major proponent of this view states that "each successive day opens a new creative period."¹³ The "literal" days are actually only beginning points of successive "overlapping ages" of creation. The successive creation events begin on specific days, but are completed some time later (see below). This strategy effectively transforms the "intermittent" creation days into the "overlapping day-age" model.

Multiple-creation Models with Sequential but Non-literal Days

Non-literal Days. Various suggestions have been made that cut the relationship between literal days and the creation process. One is the "day-age" interpretation discussed in the next section. A similar suggestion is the "relativistic day" interpretation of Schroeder¹⁴ that proposes that "day" means a regular day to humans, but a period of time much different to God.

A third suggestion is that the Genesis "days" are "days of proclamation" or "fiat," in which God uttered the creative words in a series of six literal days. Each fiat might have initiated the creation process, but the events were only completed some time during the millions of years of the "age."¹⁵ The latter proposal has the obvious problem of how one can have a first literal "day" before the solar system (or even the universe) was created.¹⁶ Another problem with this interpretation is that Genesis records "and it was so" before the conclusion of

¹¹ For a similar view in the context of a variant of the day-age model, see D. Fischer, "The Days of Creation: Hours or Eons?" *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 42 (1990): 15–22.

¹² E.g., R. C. Newman, 1999. "Progressive Creationism (Old-Earth Creationism)," in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, ed. J. P. Moreland and J. M. Reynolds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 105–141; D. England, *A Christian View of Origins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972) [not seen].

¹³ Newman, 107; England, 110–111 [not seen].

¹⁴ G. L. Schroeder, G.L. *The Science of God* (New York: Free, 1997).

¹⁵ H. Miller, *The Testimony of the Rocks* (New York: Boston, Gould and Lincoln, 1867), 143, cited in Taylor; A. Hayward, *Creation and Evolution: The Facts and the Fallacies* (London: Triangle, 1985), 167–178. This is the effect of "overlapping day-age" models, including Newman's "intermittent day" proposal.

¹⁶ This is also an objection to recent creation models that include the creation of the entire universe in the six days of Genesis.

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each day. This seems to indicate that each day's creative activity was completed before the beginning of the next day.

Each of these interpretations, in the form discussed here, attempts to retain the sequence of Genesis events. Hence, they are included with "day-age" models.

In contrast, some models reject both the literalness of the days of creation and the sequence of creation events. One variant of this category is the suggestion that the Genesis "days" are days of revelation, in which Moses received a series of six symbolic visions about the creation,¹⁷ but the actual sequence of creation is not revealed. Another member of this category is the proposal that the "days" of creation are overlapping ages. Each age began when God uttered a command, but the actual creation events may have been completed during any of the "ages."¹⁸ Again, the sequence of creation is unspecified.

The "literary framework interpretation"¹⁹ is the best-known model of this type within the long-age creation category. In this view, the Genesis "days" are somehow "analogues" of God's activity in heaven. Models that do not maintain the Genesis sequence are included in the "non-literal, non-sequential days" category.

Day-Age Theory. I include here any model that maintains the Genesis sequence of creation and in which the events of a creation "day" are not completed in a literal day, but may extend over long, sequential ages of indefinite length.²⁰ The following models should be included: the "overlapping day-age" theory²¹; the "intermittent-day" theory of Newman²²; and the "relativistic-day" theory of Schroeder.²³ The day-age interpretation can also be included in a model of theistic evolution. Since all sequence-based, long-age models of origins conflict with the order of the fossil sequence, the problems described here would also apply to any theistic evolution model that attempts to preserve the Genesis creation sequence.

The "day-age" interpretation has very serious exegetical issues.²⁴ The exegetical problems include the biblical description of each day as literal, with an

¹⁷ P. J. Wiseman, *Clues to Creation in Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1977); cited in Hayward, chap. 10, note 13 (see note 14).

¹⁸ H. Ross and G. L. Archer, "The Day-Age View," in *The Genesis Debate*, ed. D. G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo: Crux, 2001), 123–163.

¹⁹ L. Irons and M. G. Kline, "The Framework View," in Hagopian; M. G. Kline, "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48 (1996): 2–15. The basic idea of the framework hypothesis is also compatible with theistic evolutionary models.

²⁰ Ross and Archer, 123–163.

²¹ Embraced by P. P. T. Pun, *Evolution: Nature and Scripture in Conflict?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 265; also apparently by Fischer.

²² Newman, 105–141.

²³ G. L. Schroeder, *The Science of God* (New York: Free, 1997).

²⁴ G. F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?" *Origins* 21 (1994): 5–38; Thompson, 132–147; J. A. Pipa, "From Chaos to

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evening and a morning. The phrase "and it was so" precedes the statement "and the morning and the evening were the [nth] day" and seems to indicate that the action of each day was completed before the day ended. Also, the fourth commandment specifies a literal Sabbath day as commemorating the (by inference) literal creation days. It is widely acknowledged that the natural reading of the text is that the days were literal.²⁵

Scientific issues were probably more influential than the exegetical problems in causing the demise of the day-age theory.²⁶ The sequence of creation events does not match the sequence seen in the fossil record. In Genesis 1, the creation sequence of living groups is:

- 1) land plants and fruit-bearing trees (Day 3);
- 2) water creatures and flying creatures (Day 5);
- 3) land vertebrates including mammals and humans (Day 6).

In the fossil record, the sequence of first appearances is

- 1) water creatures (Cambrian);
- 2) some land plants and land insects (Silurian);
- 3) flying insects and land vertebrates (Carboniferous);
- 4) mammals (Triassic-Cretaceous);
- 5) birds (Jurassic/Cretaceous);
- 6) fruit-bearing trees (Cretaceous);
- 7) humans. (Plio/Pleistocene)

The primary similarity is that humans appear last in both lists and that water creatures appear before flying or land creatures. Otherwise, the lists are quite different.

These problems have led to the wide-scale abandonment of the day-age interpretation by most scholars. Hugh Ross, of *Reasons to Believe*, is probably the most vocal contemporary proponent of the day-age interpretation of multiple creations. Ross argues that the sequences are actually in harmony.²⁷ Ross appeals to flying insects rather than birds to place flying creatures before land creatures. However, if flying insects are to be included, land insects should also be included, and they appear before flying insects in the fossil record.²⁸ The relative order of land plants and water creatures differs in the two sequences, as

Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1–2:3," in *Did God Create in Six Days?* ed. J. A. Pipa and D. W. Hall (Taylors: Southern Presbyterian P, 1999), 153–198.

²⁵ E.g., R. L. Harris, "The Length of the Creative Days in Genesis 1," in Pipa and Hall, 101–111; P. P. T. Pun, "A Theology of Progressive Creationism," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 39 (1987): 9–19.

²⁶ A. Hayward, *Creation and Evolution: The Facts and the Fallacies* (London: Triangle, 1985), 166.

²⁷ This remarkable claim is made in Ross and Archer in Hagopian, 123–163. See also the web site at: <http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/testablecreationsummary.shtml?main>.

²⁸ M. J. Benton, *Fossil Record*, 2.

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does the relative order of flying creatures and land creatures. These conflicts are sufficient to falsify all long-age models that incorporate the sequence of Genesis 1.

The conflict between the sequence of Genesis and the sequence of the fossil record has been known for more than a century. Thomas Huxley commented on attempts to reconcile Genesis with geology in a debate with William Gladstone. Gladstone apparently promoted the view that the days of creation were successive long ages, evolution was the method used by God to create, and the fossil sequence supported the sequence in Genesis. In a memorable passage, Huxley responded to this proposal:

This statement appears to me to be the interpretation of Genesis which Mr. Gladstone supports, reduced to its simplest expression. "Period of time" is substituted for "day"; "originated" is substituted for "created"; and "any order required" for that adopted by Mr. Gladstone. It is necessary to make this proviso, for if "day" may mean a few million years, and "creation" may mean evolution, then it is obvious that the order (1) water-population, (2) air-population, (3) land-population, may also mean (1) water-population, (2) land-population, (3) air-population; and it would be unkind to bind down the reconcilers to this detail when one has parted with so many others to oblige them.²⁹

Non-literal, Non-sequential Days. Some scholars have proposed that the creation "days" are not literal periods of time, but refer figuratively to God's activity in creating. Overlapping day-age models are included in this category if they deny that the sequence of creation events is actually the same as that recorded in Genesis. Theistic evolution models could probably also fit this description, although they are discussed in a different section of this paper.

Framework Hypothesis. One of the best-known models in this category is the literary framework hypothesis.³⁰ The literary framework interpretation treats the "days" of Genesis 1 as neither literal nor sequential, but merely as a literary device for telling the theological truth that the world is a creation. No model of creation is offered, although the special creation of a personal Adam and his subsequent Fall are considered to be true historical events.

A key concept of the framework hypothesis is the "two-register cosmology." According to this formulation, the earth forms a visible "lower register" and the heavens form an invisible "upper register." The two "registers" are related "analogically." This framework is applied to Genesis 1 to explain the "days" as periods of time that belong to the invisible "upper register," and not to the literal world in which the creation events took place. The authors insist that creation "days" refer to something real and significant in the "upper register,"

²⁹ T. H. Huxley, 1885. "The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of Nature," *Collected Essays IV* (1885), 155, 156; <http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/CE4/LecEvol.html>

³⁰ Kline; Irons and Kline, see note 18; for a brief history of the idea, see Thompson, 215–218.

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although it is not clear just what that means, since they deny the sequence represented in God's "daily" activities.

The literary framework interpretation is not really a creation model, but an exegetical hypothesis. It makes no predictions about the fossil sequence and is infinitely flexible in its application. Therefore, the framework hypothesis is a non-scientific theory and must be evaluated exegetically and theologically.

Exegetically, the framework interpretation has very serious problems.³¹ The narrative style of the text, the words used to describe the events, and the rest of Scripture, including the fourth commandment, all combine to indicate the author's intention to describe literal, consecutive days. All New Testament writers appear to accept the Genesis story as literal.³²

The literary framework interpretation has the ability to explain away any exegetical inconvenience by referring it to the invisible "upper register," where it need not concern us. Any text that challenges our own opinions can be safely removed from the "real world" in which we live and relegated to the invisible "upper register," where its meaning can be as vague as we like.

The framework interpretation suffers from the implication of a distinct separation of God's activities in the "upper register" from the world of the "lower register." God is continuously acting throughout the entire universe and is not confined to an "upper register."³³ It also faces serious theological problems with its implications for the character of a God who intentionally created a world of violence, death, and suffering.³⁴

"Serial Creation" Model. The idea of "progressive creation" was championed by Bernard Ramm.³⁵ I use the term "serial creation" because subsequent discussion has blurred the meaning of the term "progressive creation." According to this model, the fossil record shows two kinds of "creative" processes: creation by fiat; and diversification by ordinary processes, guided by the Holy Spirit. Instances of fiat creation can be identified by the sudden appearance of new types of organisms in the fossil record. The number of creation episodes is not specified and can be adjusted to whatever the fossil record indicates. Between creation events, numerous varieties of pre-existing types were "evolved," producing more nearly continuous fossil sequences. The major idea of the model can be summarized in the phrase that evolution can proceed "horizontally [variations] but not vertically [new types of organisms]."

³¹ For a brief history of the idea, see Thompson 215–218; for a critique, see Joseph Pipa, "From Chaos to Cosmos: A critique of the Framework Hypothesis," in J.A. Pipa and D.W. Hall, 153–198.

³² R. M. Davidson, "In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1," *Dialogue* 6/3 (1994): 9–12 (note 14).

³³ Ross and Archer, 274.

³⁴ A criticism repeated, ironically, by a theistic evolutionist: K. R. Miller, 1999. *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (1999), (New York: Perennial, 2002), 128.

³⁵ See Ramm.

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The “serial creation” model attempts to explain the fossil sequence by appealing to a Creator whenever a gap is found in the fossil record and appealing to “natural” processes the rest of the time. The model makes no predictions; hence philosophical and theological considerations must dominate any evaluation of the model. Philosophically, the model is unsatisfying because it is entirely conjectural and ad hoc. One may choose to believe it, but there is no particular reason to do so. Theologically, the model requires a long history of repeated destructive catastrophes. Biblically, the model is based on inconsistent exegesis, accepting some parts of the biblical story of creation as real, while denying other parts of the story. Scientifically, it resembles the theory that God supernaturally arranged the fossil sequence during the Flood. For these reasons, and others, the theory of “serial creation” has never gained widespread acceptance.

Problems Specific to Long-age Creation Models

All long-age creation models suffer from numerous problems. Many of these problems are shared with theistic evolution and will be discussed later. A few problems unique to long-age creation are noted below.

First, all versions of long-age creation are essentially conjectural. They all lack direct support, either scientific or biblical. There is nothing in the Bible or in science to suggest that God created our world in a series of discrete, supernatural acts over long ages of time. Any observation in the fossil sequence can be “solved” with the statement that “God did it.” While this makes the theory difficult to falsify, it also makes it difficult to defend. There seems no particular reason to accept the theory of long-age creation in any of its forms.

Second, all forms of long-age creation that preserve the sequence of events outlined in Genesis are in conflict with the sequence of the fossil record. Thus, the intermittent day theory and day-age theory are both scientifically untenable. Attempts to modify these theories to match the fossil sequence, such as the proposal that the “day” are “overlapping,” convert them into a different category of models: those that invoke non-sequential, non-literal days of creation. Models in this category, such as the framework interpretation, do not explain anything in nature; they merely attempt to explain away the creation text of Genesis and offer no substance of their own.

Third, there is a troubling inconsistency in interpreting Genesis 1 in a long-age context.

[O]ld earth special creationism, by its choice to accept the scientifically derived timetable for cosmic history, is in the exceedingly awkward position of attempting to interpret some of the Genesis narrative’s pictorial elements (interpreted as episodes of special creation)

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as historical particulars but treating the narrative's seven-day timetable as being figurative.³⁶

Thomas Huxley, not known for his "political correctness," stated the problem rather sarcastically:

If we are to listen to many expositors of no mean authority, we must believe that what seems so clearly defined in Genesis—as if very great pains had been taken that there should be no possibility of mistake—is not the meaning of the text at all. The account is divided into periods that we may make just as long or as short as convenience requires. . . . A person who is not a Hebrew scholar can only stand aside and admire the marvelous flexibility of a language which admits of such diverse interpretations.³⁷

Fourth, a multiple creation model is also a multiple destruction model. The fossil record is a record of death and extinction, including numerous mass extinctions in which large numbers of species disappear from the record simultaneously. The extinction of a single species requires the death of every individual of that species. It is not difficult to understand how this can happen if the species is confined to a small region. It is much more difficult to explain the extinction of an entire order or class of organisms, especially if the group has a global distribution. Such extinctions require catastrophic events of global magnitude. What kind of god would repeatedly create and destroy on a global scale?³⁸

Numerous other problems are shared with theistic evolution and will be discussed later in this paper. They include the problem of the origin of humans, the effects of the Fall, the problem of multiple mass destructions, and the problem of death before sin.

Summary

Several models of long-age creation have been proposed. They share two characteristics: acceptance of the long geological time scale and the separate creation of humans and other lineages. When the models are considered in detail, it is apparent that none of them is free of scientific problems. The gap model predicts a gap in the fossil record which is non-existent. The intermittent creation day model and the day-age model conflict with the fossil sequence. The literary framework interpretation merely explains every observation in the fossil column with the words "God did it" (or, perhaps, "the devil did it.") Neither the "days" nor the sequence have any literal or even symbolic meaning. Problems in interpretation are not solved, but merely pushed off into some ethereal "upper register." Overlapping day-age models seem logically problematic due to the

³⁶ H. J. Van Till, 1999. "The Fully Gifted Creation," 161–218 in Moreland and Reynolds, 211.

³⁷ T. H. Huxley, "The Three Hypotheses Respecting the History of Nature," *Collected Essays IV* (1877); downloaded from the web at <http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/CE4/LecEvol.html>

³⁸ K. Miller.

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attempt to blend the sequence of Genesis days with a denial of the sequence of events of those same days.

Long-age creation models were proposed with the intention of resolving the scientific problems faced by the biblical literal, phenomenological model. However, all long-age creation models have serious scientific problems. The fossil sequence falsifies most of the clearly stated models of long-age creation. The historical setting of Adam and the effects of the Fall are problems for all long-age creation models. Scientific problems can be minimized only at the cost of trivializing important issues and denying the teaching of Scripture.

It seems pointless to reject the obvious meaning of Genesis on scientific grounds in order to accept another model with serious scientific problems. Seventh-day Adventists cannot improve their position by adopting any model of long-age creation.

Ellen White was aware of the day-age theory and firmly rejected it:

But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise. It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike his dealings with mortals, and is an impeachment of his wisdom.³⁹

This point seems to apply to any of the theories in which the Genesis days are not interpreted as literal days of creation.

Theistic Evolution Models

Theistic evolution models include any models that are based on 1) universal common ancestry of all organisms, including humans, and 2) the common descent of all organisms as the result of a divinely guided process over long ages of geological time. Several other terms are sometimes used for models of this type: “evolutionary creation”⁴⁰; “fully-gifted creation”⁴¹; “providential evolution”⁴²; and continuous creation.⁴³

³⁹ E. G. White, 1 SP 86:2; 3 SG 91:1.

⁴⁰ G. B. McGrath, “Soteriology: Adam and the Fall,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 49 (1997): 252–263; McGrath comes close to using the term “progressive creation” for his version of theistic evolution.

⁴¹ Van Till, in Moreland and Reynolds, 161–218.

⁴² G. P. Elder, *Chronic Vigour: Darwin, Anglicans, Catholics and the Development of a Doctrine of Providential Evolution* (Lanham: UP of America, 1996).

⁴³ Discussed in T. Peters, “On Creating the Cosmos,” in *Physics, Philosophy and Theology*, ed. R. J. Russell, W. R. Stoeger, and G. W. Coyne (Vatican Observatory-Vatican City State) (Notre Dame: Notre Dame P, 1988), 273–296.

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Theistic evolution models differ among themselves primarily in how they propose divine guidance is accomplished.⁴⁴ The number of minor variants of theistic evolution is too large to consider each one separately, but they can be grouped into categories. I will use three categories. One category includes views holding that God created nature to be autonomous, so that continuing divine influence on nature is unnecessary. The second category is that God is continuously interacting with nature in the regularities we recognize as natural law, yet He is somehow influencing the outcome for His own purposes. The third category is the view that God is constantly tinkering with nature, much as a mechanic would tinker in his shop.

Theistic Evolution Through Autonomous "Natural Law"

One form of theistic evolution holds that nature is autonomous. This seems to be the view of Van Till, who calls it the "fully gifted creation." According to Van Till, God did not "withhold" anything from the creation that would be needed for it to maintain "functional integrity."

In this view, God does not personally control any natural event. Instead, God intentionally designed the laws of nature so that evolution is the natural result. God established the laws of nature at the time of the Big Bang, and no further divine action is needed.⁴⁵ God intended that consciousness would evolve, but He did not need to "coerce material into assuming forms that it was insufficiently equipped to actualize with its God-given capabilities."⁴⁶

The emphasis here is on the sufficiency of natural law. God is not a participant in the evolutionary process, but merely an observer. This view would be ordinary deism except for one thing. Van Till does allow God to occasionally intervene in the lives of believers,⁴⁷ but apparently not in the flow of nature. So the model is quasi-deistic, although Van Till dislikes that term.

The autonomous model of theistic evolution has some very serious difficulties. In the Bible, nature is not autonomous, but totally and continuously dependent on God for continued existence. There is no biblical support for the idea of a God who does not interact with His creation, and much biblical evidence against this idea.

Scientifically, this model has serious problems. There are too many apparent gaps in the "natural economy." Some of the most glaring examples include: the cause of the Big Bang; the origin of life⁴⁸; the origin of gender and sexual reproduction; the origins of the metazoan phyla and classes in the "Cambrian

⁴⁴ Gilbersen and Yerxa, 172.

⁴⁵ A. Peacocke, "Biology and a Theology of Evolution," *Zygon* 34 (1999): 695–712.

⁴⁶ Van Till, 187 (see note 38; note the highly prejudicial language).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ W. L. Bradley, "Response to Howard J. Van Till," in Moreland and Reynolds, 219–225.

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Explosion”⁴⁹ and other major groups; the origins of multicellularity, cellular differentiation, and embryonic development; the rapid radiation (assuming the long age view) of “crown groups” of mammals and birds around the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary⁵⁰; and the origin of consciousness, language and morality in humans. No known natural law can explain the origin of any of these phenomena. The fact that they may operate in harmony with natural law says nothing about their respective origins.

Second, there seems to be too much evidence of intelligent design in nature. For example, the structure of the human brain appears to be designed for far more mental capacity than required for survival under the “law” of natural selection.

Theistic Evolution Driven by “Divine Influence”

Most versions of theistic evolution postulate that God continuously interacts with nature. Nature is not autonomous, but is totally dependent on God’s continuous sustaining activity. God’s activity is observed in the “laws of nature.” But God is not merely sustaining nature; He is somehow influencing its directionality.⁵¹ As God sustains nature, He somehow acts providentially to bring about His will in ways that are generally undetectable to us. This raises the issue of how God can influence nature to accomplish His will without violating the regularity of the natural laws He chose as His method of sustaining the universe.

Some have proposed that God acts through chaotic systems that are unpredictable to us, although it is possible that God can predict the outcome.⁵² However, chaotic systems, while unpredictable to us, are driven by deterministic mathematical equations.⁵³ Another possibility is that quantum uncertainty may provide an opening for God to act in undetectable ways.⁵⁴ However, quantum events, although uncertain individually, act statistically in predictable, law-like ways⁵⁵ that tend toward determinism rather than an opening for divine action.

⁴⁹ Many scholars have discussed this point. It was raised specifically in response to Van Till’s view in J. J. Davis, “Response to Howard J. Van Till,” in Moreland and Reynolds, 226–230.

⁵⁰ E.g., W. R. Stoeger, 1997. “Describing God’s Action in the World in Light of Scientific Knowledge of Reality,” in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 2nd ed., ed. R. J. Russell, N. Murphy, and A. R. Peacocke (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, 1997), 239–261.

⁵¹ Numerous “radiations” have been identified in the fossil record. For a discussion of the problem, see L. J. Gibson, Rates of Evolution, Unpublished manuscript, Geoscience Research Institute.

⁵² E.g., J. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God’s Interaction with the World* (London: SPCK, 1989).

⁵³ T. F. Tracy, “Particular Providence and the God of the Gaps,” in Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke, 289–324; A. Peacocke, “God’s Interaction with the World: The Implications of Deterministic ‘Chaos’ and of Interconnected and Interdependent Complexity,” in Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke, 263–287.

⁵⁴ Pollack; Russell.

⁵⁵ Polkinghorne, 26–28; J. Polkinghorne, 1988. “The Quantum World,” in Russell, Stoeger, and Coyne, 333–342.

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This model, or one much like it, is widely held among scientists, and is the primary object of criticism by the intelligent design group. If natural law is sufficient to explain evolution without God's intervention, why insist that there is actually an invisible, undetectable God somehow acting to influence events?⁵⁶

Some versions of theistic evolution are open to the possibility of occasional direct divine "intervention," as in miracles.⁵⁷ Miracles are uncommon, special acts of God. Miracles for the benefit of believers are often accepted by theistic evolutionists,⁵⁸ but usually not in nature.⁵⁹ Some, however, would permit miracles in the course of nature. God might intervene in nature, for example to help evolutionary processes over difficult obstacles,⁶⁰ such as the gaps mentioned previously.

Theistic Evolution Through Constant Divine "Tinkering"

A third model of theistic evolution proposes that God is continuously and directly experimenting with nature. In its most rigid form, this model is highly deterministic, with every atomic movement individually directed by God. Alternatively, natural law might limit what God can do, but He can still constantly tinker to see what can be done through genetic experimentation, etc.

This model has not been widely promoted or accepted, perhaps because it implies that God is directly causing every event in the universe. Most of us believe we have free wills, which would not be the case if God were directing every event at the atomic level. Furthermore, most people conceive of a good God and exclude the possibility that He is directly causing every cancerous tumor, every genetic defect, and every murder.

Problems with Theistic Evolution Models

All forms of theistic evolution have numerous problems. First, a direct reading of the fossil record, even with the assumption of the long age geological time scale, does not suggest a single evolutionary tree with all organisms descending from a common ancestor. The "evolutionary tree" reflected in the fossil record is full of morphological gaps.⁶¹ These are especially glaring at the level of phyla and classes. The morphological pattern in the fossil record is summarized in the phrase "disparity precedes diversity."⁶² Descent with modification would produce the opposite pattern.

⁵⁶ Davis, 228.

⁵⁷ M. A. Jeeves and R. J. Berry, *Science, Life, and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); R. J. Berry, "What to Believe About Miracles," *Nature* 322 (1986): 321–322.

⁵⁸ Miller, 239; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 45–58.

⁵⁹ Miller, 218; Peacocke, 695–712.

⁶⁰ Mentioned briefly in Jeeves and Berry, 79; and advocated more explicitly in G. C. Mills, "A Theory of Theistic Evolution as an Alternative to the Naturalistic Theory," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 47 (1995): 112–122.

⁶¹ A. Hoffman, *Arguments on Evolution* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), 8.

⁶² S. J. Gould, *Wonderful Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 49.

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Second, the fossil record exhibits too much evidence of evil for the evolutionary process to appear guided by a beneficent creator. There are too many extinctions and too much evidence of suffering and disease. The problem is not solved by the various suggestions that have been offered⁶³: e.g., that we may be wrong in judging such things as evil⁶⁴; or that God's participation in suffering somehow makes it easier to take⁶⁵; or that God had to work with nature as it is⁶⁶; or that suffering is the price God had to pay in order to produce what He wanted.⁶⁷

Third, the deleterious effects of most observed mutations seem difficult to reconcile with the notion that God is guiding them. The origin of cancer and birth defects from mutations are related problems.⁶⁸

Fourth, the origin of morally accountable humans is a difficult problem for all forms of theistic evolution. How can a continuous, gradual process account for a discontinuity in the origin of spiritual humans? In other words, how would one justify the position that a particular individual was morally accountable but his parents were not? A variety of conjectures have been brought forward, but none of them seems satisfactory. One proposal is that the humans gradually became morally conscious and gradually fell.⁶⁹ Another suggestion is that Adam was not the first genuine human, but a person in whom God chose to create His "image."⁷⁰ Another idea is that hominids became human when they gained a religious sense.⁷¹ All these views imply that some human-like fossils are not truly "human." By the same reasoning, one may ask whether all living races of humans are truly "human."⁷² Both biblical and scientific data indicate that all humans are truly members of the same species in every respect.

Fifth, the possibility of human freedom seems difficult to harmonize with the view that the human mind arose through purely natural processes in which all chemical reactions were and are driven by natural law. Natural law does not seem capable of producing a brain with freedom of choice. Quantum uncertainty

⁶³ Summarized in R. Wennberg, "Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil," *Christian Scholar's Review* 21 (1991): 120–140.

⁶⁴ R. J. Berry, "This Cursed Earth: Is 'the Fall' Credible?" *Science and Christian Belief* 11 (1999): 29–49, 42. Berry claims that "evil" in the pre-Adamic world is just an error in our interpretation, not the actual state of nature.

⁶⁵ Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 59–68.

⁶⁶ Miller, 218.

⁶⁷ Peacocke, 695–712.

⁶⁸ Famously noted by Weinberg.

⁶⁹ A. J. Day, "Adam, Anthropology and the Genesis Record—Taking Genesis Seriously in the Light of Contemporary Science," *Science and Christian Belief* 19 (1998): 115–143.

⁷⁰ A. Held and P. Rust, "Genesis Reconsidered," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 51 (1999): 231–243.

⁷¹ R. A. Clouser, "Genesis on the Origin of the Human Race," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 43 (1991): 2–13.

⁷² Jeeves and Berry affirm that not all humans are genetically related to Adam, although they do not claim this makes them non-human.

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has been suggested as a solution to this problem, but quantum processes do not really provide a suitable mechanism for freedom of choice.⁷³ Individual events are unpredictable, which is not a good basis for free choice. Collective events are statistically deterministic, again not a good basis for free choice. Most humans believe they actually have freedom of choice, and they hold other humans accountable for their behavior. This would not be logical if natural law and/or God were directing every atom and every chemical reaction, rather than some reactions being subject to human will.

Sixth, the “Fall” of Adam is difficult to explain in the context of theistic evolution. In evolution, humans are on an upward trajectory⁷⁴ rather than the downward trajectory described in the Bible. This implication of theistic evolution introduces theological problems by undermining the biblical teaching of Calvary and the atonement.

Seventh, theistic evolution tends toward pantheism, although not all advocates accept pantheism.⁷⁵ The proposal that God is somehow acting “within” the creation, continuously influencing its directionality, tends to blur the distinction between Creator and creation in the minds of some theistic evolutionists.

Theistic evolution raises many other, serious biblical and theological problems. These are too numerous to discuss here, but some of them have been discussed elsewhere.⁷⁶

General Problems with All Intermediate Models

Certain problems are inherent in all intermediate models of origins, whether long-age creation or theistic evolution. The origin of humans in the image of God and the relationship of natural evil to the Fall of Adam are perhaps the most interesting of these.

The Problem of Adam and the Origin of Humans. All intermediate models of origins have a serious practical problem with the origin of humans. When one accepts the long geological time scale, one by implication accepts that there was a series of increasingly human-like fossils, stretching back more than a million years. Where do Adam and Eve fit into this scenario?

Theistic evolutionists often deny there was an actual individual Adam, claiming that Adam was a generic representation of the evolutionary advance

⁷³ Polkinghorne, “Quantum World,” 340.

⁷⁴ Peacocke, 701.

⁷⁵ E.g., Peacocke does; Polkinghorne does not).

⁷⁶ E.g., F. Van Dyke, “Theological Problems of Theistic Evolution,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 38 (1986): 11–18; L. J. Gibson, “Theistic Evolution: Is It for Adventists?” *Ministry* (January 1992), 22–25; A. M. Rodriguez, “Theistic Evolution and the Adventist Faith: An Analysis,” unpublished paper presented at the East-Central Africa Division Faith and Science Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 5–6 May 2004.

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from primate to human.⁷⁷ Another view is that Adam was a divinely selected individual in whom God implanted a soul.⁷⁸ Some theistic evolutionists accept the reality of Adam as a Neolithic farmer with emergent self-consciousness rather than a soul.⁷⁹ This Adam was not the ancestor of all humans, but the “federal representative” of the race. The image of God was first placed in Adam and later perhaps given to the remainder of the species.

Long-age creationists have responded in a variety of ways. Some have proposed that Adam was created less than ten thousand years ago⁸⁰ or as much as 60,000 years ago⁸¹ in a world already containing other human-like lineages. Another proposal is that Adam was the first anatomically modern human,⁸² created perhaps one hundred fifty thousand years ago. In either case, there were already human-like but non-spiritual organisms in existence before the creation of Adam. These purported groups are the “pre-Adamites.” Yet another proposal is that language is a defining capability of humans, and paleoanthropological evidence indicates the existence of language at least 400,000 years ago, and perhaps as far back as two million years.⁸³

What, then, is the origin of the “pre-Adamites?” Were they simply animals created by God with human bodies and animal natures? Were they human-like animals produced by Satan’s experiments? Did they leave any living descendants? Multiple creation theories would propose answers to these questions different from theistic evolution theories, but both would share the problem of locating Adam in history.

According to anthropologists, American aborigines reached the New World before 10,000 years ago, and Australian aborigines reached Australia by 40,000 years ago. Europe has been continuously populated for some 35,000 years. The out-of-Africa hypothesis of human origins proposes that humans and their ancestors have lived in Africa for several million years. Placing the creation of Adam less than 10,000 years ago raises the question of how his sin could affect the rest of mankind, since many groups of humans would not be genetically related to him.⁸⁴ It also seems to imply that the atoning sacrifice of the “second

⁷⁷ Day, 115–143; Jeeves and Berry, chapters 7, 8.

⁷⁸ Adam defined by receiving a soul is the most common explanation for the origin of humans in theistic evolution theories.

⁷⁹ Jeeves and Berry, chapters 7, 8.

⁸⁰ D. Fischer, “In Search of the Historical Adam: Part 1,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 45 (1993): 241–251; D. Fischer, “In Search of the Historical Adam: Part 2,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 46 (1994): 47–57.

⁸¹ Ross; Ross and Archer, 141.

⁸² D. L. Wilcox, “Adam, Where Are You? Changing Paradigms in Paleoanthropology,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48 (1996): 88–96.

⁸³ G. R. Morton, “Dating Adam,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 51 (1999): 87–97.

⁸⁴ R. Russman, Correspondence, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Belief* 12 (2000): 165–166.

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Adam" does not benefit most races of humans, since they are not descendants of the first Adam. On the other hand, extending the time for Adam's creation back several millions of years to include all "hominids" means that the image of God is present in the australopithecines, or at least in the erectines.⁸⁵ This is as difficult to accept on scientific grounds as on scriptural grounds.

The Problem of the Effects of Adam's "Fall" on Nature

The Fall of Adam into sin is identified in the Bible as a major turning point in human experience, with serious effects on nature as well as on the human condition. Integrating the Fall into a long-age chronology poses significant challenges.

Those interpretations of the Fall that propose a significant change in nature when Adam sinned run into scientific trouble with the fossil record, since evidence of disease, predation, and mass extinction are found throughout the fossil record.

On the other hand, those interpretations that attribute no physical changes in nature at the Fall run into theological trouble with the relationship of moral and natural evil.⁸⁶ Attributing natural evil to God's intentions does not fit with the biblical revelation of God's character and seems contrary to the biblical promises of redemption and restoration. This problem is discussed further in the next section.

Theistic evolutionists often reject the story of Adam's Fall, interpreting it as symbolic of the undeniable fact that we are estranged from God and in a less than ideal world.⁸⁷ Some claim there was no fall, but "we appear to be rising beasts rather than fallen angels"⁸⁸ Such views conflict with the most fundamental teachings of Scripture.

Berry offers a contrasting position, that there was a real Fall, which was a failure in responsibility by Adam and Eve.⁸⁹ The result of the Fall was the negative ecological effects resulting from the abuse of nature by humans. However, if ecological problems are a moral evil, who was responsible for them before Adam sinned?

The Problem of Death and Suffering Before Sin

The problem of death and suffering is related to the problem of the effects of the Fall, but can be discussed separately. All long-age models entail the idea

⁸⁵ Morton, 87–97.

⁸⁶ R. Isaac, "Chronology of the Fall" *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48 (1996): 34–42; see also, R. C. W. Roennfeldt, "Some Theological Implications of Three Christian Origins Models," unpublished paper presented at the South Pacific Division Faith and Science Conference, Avondale College, 11–14 July 2003.

⁸⁷ The fall as a symbol of estrangement.

⁸⁸ Peacocke, 701.

⁸⁹ Berry, "This Cursed Earth."

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of death and suffering before, and thus independent of, the sin of Adam. The fossil record thus becomes a record of God's activity, not a record of the results of Adam's sin. Repeated episodes of mass extinctions in the fossil record do not seem to reflect the behavior of a caring Creator. What kind of God would permit, or cause, such mass destruction for no apparent reason?

It is commonly claimed that the "death" that resulted from Adam's sin was only a "spiritual" death⁹⁰; physical death was already in force. This conclusion has been severely criticized. Death resulting from Adam's Fall must have been physical, since it involved returning to dust, and was facilitated by preventing access to the "tree of life."⁹¹ Furthermore, restoration involves resurrection of the body. Indeed, physical death is the sign of spiritual death.⁹²

The claim that God depended on death and suffering in order to create living organisms is neither intellectually satisfying nor consistent with Scripture.⁹³ Some scholars have even suggested that God was inexperienced as a Creator and had to learn by practice.⁹⁴

The existence of disease and suffering is another aspect of natural evil that has not received as much attention as the problem of death before sin. Yet there is good evidence that animals suffer now, and that they suffered from disease, injury, and perhaps even emotional trauma in the past.⁹⁵ Suffering is not necessary for evolution, and it is difficult to see how it can be justified theologically. A common response is simply to give up trying to justify suffering and speculate that somehow it is part of "God's good creation."⁹⁶ This leaves the problem unresolved and is a major theological challenge to all long-age models of origins.

Some have attempted to clear God of responsibility for evil by removing Him from direct control over nature. Kenneth Miller is an example of this thinking when he criticizes the theological implications of God directing nature:

Intelligent design [Miller's term for multiple creations] does a terrible disservice to God by casting Him as a magician who periodically creates and creates and then creates again throughout the geologic ages.

⁹⁰ E.g., Berry, "This Cursed Earth"; Ross, 61–64; C. Menninga, "Disease and Dying in the Fossil Record: Implication for Christian Theology," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 51 (1999): 226–230.

⁹¹ P. G. Nelson, Correspondence, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Belief* 12 (2000): 166–167.

⁹² P. Duce, Comment on "This Cursed Earth," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Belief* 11 (1999): 159–167.

⁹³ R. Wennberg, "Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil," *Christian Scholar's Review* 21 (1991): 120–140; A. Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 55; see also notes 52–56 in this paper.

⁹⁴ J. O. Morse, "The Great Experimenter?" *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 49 (1997): 108–110.

⁹⁵ J. Stambaugh, "Creation, Suffering and the Problem of Evil," *CEN Technical Journal* 10 (1996): 391–404; Berry, "This Cursed Earth"; Menninga; Wennberg.

⁹⁶ Menninga; Berry, "This Cursed Earth."

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Those who believe that the sole purpose of the Creator was the production of the human species must answer a simple question—not because I have asked it, but because it is demanded by natural history itself. Why did this magician, in order to produce the contemporary world, find it necessary to create and destroy creatures, habitats, and ecosystems millions of times over?⁹⁷

Ironically, Miller's criticism strikes his own preferred view, theistic evolution, just as strongly. God is equally responsible whether He directly causes every evil event, or whether He simply established the laws that cause them to happen and then withdrew.⁹⁸ We do not exonerate a terrorist whose bomb explodes after he leaves the scene, but hold him just as accountable as the one who throws a grenade directly into a crowd.

A superficially more attractive but entirely conjectural answer to the problem of death before sin is the claim that pre-Adamic death and suffering are the result of Satan's rebellion.⁹⁹ This has a certain appeal, but it seems to be a strange way for a God of love to entertain Himself for billions of years. This idea also runs into serious difficulties with the problem of the lack of distinction in the fossil record between the supposed works of Satan and those of God. It is quite unsatisfactory to state that within what appears to be a single species, some individuals were actually the product of Satan's work while others were actually the product of God's work.¹⁰⁰ This becomes an especially onerous idea when applied to the human species. Most, but not necessarily all, theistic evolutionists seem to reject the existence of Satan. Thus, this explanation is primarily limited to advocates of long-age creation, who generally do believe in the existence of a personal devil.

Summary and Conclusion

We started this investigation with the question of how alternative models fare scientifically. The answer is—not very well. All of the models described here suffer from serious scientific problems or are entirely ad hoc and conjectural. It may be that there really is no way to find harmony between the biblical view of origins and current scientific thinking:

The various via media positions are attempting to reconcile viewpoints that are, in their simplest form, contradictory. . . .

These two perspectives [science and religion] can have, at best, some kind of uneasy truce. They can never be reconciled.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Miller, 128.

⁹⁸ C. Southgate, "God and Evolutionary Evil: Theodicy in the Light of Darwinism," *Zygon* 37 (2002): 803–824.

⁹⁹ A. Held and P. Rust, "Genesis Reconsidered," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 51 (1999): 231–243; see also references in note 5. Discussed in Wennberg and in Thompson.

¹⁰⁰ Satan's work is indistinguishable.

¹⁰¹ Giberson and Yerxa, 196.

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Biblical creation also suffers from serious scientific problems, but this does not distinguish it from the other models and seems a poor reason to prefer one of them. One may adopt an attitude of agnosticism, but this hardly seems appropriate for a Christian.

Only one family of models enjoys biblical support—the literal-phenomenal interpretation of Genesis. This is the model on which the biblical story of redemption is based and the model on which Seventh-day Adventist theology is based. Although many questions about the biblical model remain unanswered, abandoning it in favor of one of the intermediate models is like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

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Adventist Theology and Deep Time/Evolutionary Theory: Are They Compatible?

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The goal of this essay is to assess the compatibility of Adventist theology with deep time and the evolutionary reconstruction of the origins of earth history.¹ Should the Adventist church adopt one of the many “intermediate models of origins” that attempt to harmonize Christianity to evolution?² Can the church harmonize biblical creation to deep time evolutionary history without changing its essence and theological system? Would acceptance of deep time/evolutionary ideas modify only peripheral issues? Is deep time/evolution compatible with the inner logic of Adventist theology as expressed in the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan?

To achieve this goal and answer these questions, we will explore some systematic consequences of abandoning the historical-literal meaning of Genesis 1. We will start by considering the nature of the issue before us. Then, to gain a sense of the level of theological adjustment involved in harmonizing Adventist theology to deep time/evolutionary ideas, we will focus on biblical history, God’s actions, the inner logic of theological ideas, and the source of theological truth. To sense the extensive reinterpretation of Adventist doctrines involved in

¹ Deep time and evolutionary ideas in this essay refer to the origin of life on planet earth, not to the origin of the universe or life in other galaxies.

² I am referring to the many attempts of harmonizing creation to evolution already produced by Christian theologians and scientists. Jim Gibson calls them “intermediate” models (“Issues in ‘Intermediate’ Models of Origins” [paper presented at the *Second International Conference on Faith and Science*, Denver, CO, August 23, 2004]). For an introduction to various intermediate models, see Administrative Committee, “Report of the Creation Study Committee” (Atlanta: Presbyterian Church in America: www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics, 2000). Jim Gibson has convincingly shown that all intermediate models of harmonization have serious scientific problems. On this basis, he argues cogently that we should not adopt models that not only are unfaithful to biblical thought, but are also scientifically suspect.

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harmonization, we will underline the hermeneutical role that cosmology plays in the formation of theological thinking.

Nature of the Issue

The issue before us is not whether we can harmonize Genesis 1 with deep time/evolution, but whether deep time/evolution fits the entire system of biblical theology.³ In short, are the six 24 hours days of Genesis 1 an essential component of biblical religious truth?

Some assume that Adventist theology is compatible with deep time/evolutionary history. For them, all it takes to harmonize evolution with Adventist/biblical theology is to interpret Genesis 1 theologically, that is, not literally.⁴ If we were to make such a small concession, Adventist theology and doctrines would not only remain unchanged, but would also become “relevant” to those persuaded of the truthfulness of deep time and evolutionary ideas. The intellectual credibility of the church would increase and its intellectual appeal be broadened.

This view assumes that the deep time history of origins does not disturb the theological truths of Scripture, nor the Adventist theological system and fundamental beliefs. When it comes to the *theological* understanding of creation, “*time is not of the essence.*” Yet, if due to scientific and methodological convictions, Adventists take deep time and evolutionary ideas as true, they will have to harmonize not only Genesis 1, but also the entire system of Adventist doctrines. Then nothing would remain unchanged.

Those who assume that biblical creation and deep time/evolutionary history are compatible forget that in *biblical* thinking, *time is of the essence.* According to Scripture, God acts historically in human time and space. The truth of biblical religion is historical. If time is of the essence, deep time/evolutionary history conflicts with the closely-knit historical system of biblical theology. Biblical theology cannot fit the evolutionary version of historical development without losing its essence and truth. God’s works in history cannot follow evolutionary patterns. God’s history cannot become evolutionary history.

Consequently, before accommodating Adventist theology to deep time/macro evolutionary views, Adventists must make sure that deep time/evolutionary history does not change the order of theological causes assumed in Scripture, does not change the biblical history of God’s acts, strongly

³ Deep time cannot be separated from evolutionary processes. Although Progressive Creationism accepts multiple events of ex-nihilo creation, it also *de facto* accepts the evolutionary interpretation of life history on earth produced by evolutionary theory. Divine interventions in progressive creations adjust to evolutionary history, either explaining its gaps or saltations by transcendent divine interventions of creation ex-nihilo, or subsuming divine activity to macro evolutionary process via the providential-spiritual-immanent (non-historical) activity of the Holy Spirit.

⁴ See, for instance, Fritz Guy, “Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-first Century,” *Spec-trum* 31/2 (2003): 5-16.

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supports the pillars of the Adventist Faith, and strengthens the historical understanding of redemption embedded in the Sanctuary doctrine and the Great Controversy metanarrative.

Rewriting Biblical History

I agree with Fritz Guy when he invites us to read Genesis 1 theologically. Yet, we need to recognize that there are different theological readings of Genesis 1.⁵ Theological interpretations spring from our preunderstanding of God's nature and His actions in created time. Usually, Christian theologians derive their understanding of God's reality from Greek metaphysics, according to which "ultimate" reality is timeless. Since a timeless God does not act directly within a historical sequence of events, we can understand why in this view historical events do not belong to what is properly theological. We can also understand why for most Christian theologians the evolutionary rewriting of history does not affect theological (religious) content. This presuppositional perspective allows theologians to harmonize creation with evolution by separating the theological (religious) content of Genesis 1 (its truth) from its historical wrapping (the story). Accordingly, the period of six 24 hour days and the historical process the text describes are dismissed as "non theological," and God's creative action is displaced from the historical to the spiritual realm.

Yet, Adventists depart from Christian theological tradition at its deepest hermeneutical level. Decidedly rejecting the "timeless" definition of ultimate reality found in Greek metaphysics, they accept the biblical understanding of ultimate reality being "historical." Thus, Adventist theologians do not read Scripture from the perspective of Greek metaphysical timelessness, but from the biblical understanding of God's being and actions. The God of Scripture is not timeless, but infinitely and analogously temporal. He creates and saves by acting directly from within the sequence of natural and human historical events. For this hermeneutical reason, when Adventists read Genesis 1 theologically, they see God creating our planet in a historical sequence of seven consecutive 24 hour days. This sequence of integrated divine actions not only forms part of the history of God, but also the history of our planet. In creation, God is performing a divine act in a historical sequence within the flow of created time.

Harmonization of theology to evolution starts with accepting the evolutionary rewriting of the history of humankind, accepting that paleontologists, geologists, and biologists tell the right account of historical realities. Because the Genesis "story" does not fit the "facts" as understood by evolutionists, most Christian theologians assuming the Greek "timeless" understanding of ultimate reality seriously consider letting biblical history go. As these Christian theologians have come to understand that God's act of creation does not take place in

⁵ Progressive Creationism and Theistic Evolution are theological readings of Genesis 1; see below.

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history, they have felt free to read the biblical history of creation as myth,⁶ saga,⁷ or literary framework.⁸ Yet, the inner logic of theological thinking articulated by God's acts suggests that letting go of the biblical history of creation entails letting go of the biblical history of redemption and the future eschatological history of God with his redeemed church in eternity.⁹

For instance, theologians working from the Historical Critical Method of biblical interpretation apply the same evolutionary pattern to the entire sweep of biblical history. They are willing to let go of not only the history of creation, but also the entirety of biblical history, particularly when it presents God acting historically within the spatio-temporal flux of human history. We should not be surprised that according to this theological approach, the new earth will not be historical but spiritual.¹⁰

Can Adventist theology let go of biblical history? Is the reality and truthfulness of biblical history of the essence of Christianity? Can Adventist theology let go of the Genesis 1 history without also letting go of biblical and eschatological histories? At this point, we need to turn our attention to the actions of God involved in the process of creation. The answer to these questions depends on our understanding of "ultimate" reality.

Spiritualizing Biblical Theology

Theology revolves around reality and its causes. Evolution also revolves around reality and its causes. Genesis 1 explains the origin of the physical world as a historical sequence of divine creative acts in space and time. Evolution explains the origin of the same physical world by constructing a different history with a different length, different events, and different causes. Clearly, only one history took place. The two historical scenarios cannot be true at the same time. Thus, harmonization of biblical creation with evolution requires not only the acceptance of a different account of history, but also a different understanding of the causal role God had in generating the history of evolution. The systematic

⁶ Bultmann's demythologization program described sacred history as "myth." See, for instance, Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (New York: Meridian, 1960).

⁷ Barth favored the term "saga" to categorize theologically the type of history Scripture presents in Genesis 1–11. Barth argues that "in addition to the 'historical' there has always been a legitimate 'non-historical' and pre-historical view of history, and its 'non-historical' and pre-historical depiction in the form of saga" (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 13 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936): III/1, 81). Saga is clearly defined as "an intuitive and poetic picture of a prehistorical reality of history which is enacted once and for all within the confines of time and space" (*ibid.*).

⁸ See Gibson, 24.

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann applies the Greek understanding of ultimate reality to eschatology. Thus, the world to come will not have a continuation of human history forever, but will consist of a timeless reality in which the soul shares in the divine life of the trinity. *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

¹⁰ See note 9.

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centrality of this issue for theology cannot be overemphasized. Theological consistency requires that once we adjust our view of how God relates to evolutionary history, we will apply the same view throughout the entire range of human history.

This brings us to a central issue in any theological harmonization of Genesis 1 to evolution: namely, divine causality in evolutionary history. How does God operate in evolutionary history? Does God operate historically within the future-present-past sequence of time, as Scripture says, or spiritually (non-historically), as Christian theologies suggest? Let us review briefly the way in which the leading intermediate models harmonizing creation and evolution theologically conceive the nature of divine action in creation. Both Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism understand divine causality in evolutionary history spiritually rather than historically.

Theistic Evolution. Teilhard de Chardin, a French Roman Catholic priest, imagines a system of theistic evolution where God works from the inside of nature and history, not from their outside. God works as spiritual energy animating evolution in its lower stages (for God “could of course only act in an impersonal form and under the veil of biology”¹¹). Thus, according to Chardin, divine causality does not operate within the spatiotemporal order of historical causes, but as hidden energy from the non-spatiotemporal realm of the spirit.

Progressive Creationism. Bernard Ramm, an American Evangelical theologian, rejects theistic evolution because, according to him, it springs from a pantheistic view of God’s being.¹² Instead, he suggests Progressive Creationism as the theory that gives the “best accounting for all the facts—biological, geological, and Biblical.”¹³ “Progressive creation is the means whereby God as world ground and the Spirit of God as World Entelechy bring to pass the divine

¹¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 291-292.

¹² Bernard Ramm argues, “According to the Biblical view pantheistic identification with Nature is wrong. God is not Nature, but *world ground* to nature as both Augustine and Aquinas taught” (ibid., 108). He later explains, “God is world ground. He is world ground to all geological phenomena as well as to morality, ethics, and spirituality. God is in Nature for God is *in* all things. *All* is according to his divine will and by his power. The Spirit of God is the Divine Entelechy seeing that the Divine will is accomplished in Nature. Progressive creation is the belief that Nature is permeated with the divine activity but not in any pantheistic sense” (ibid., 227). Ramm builds on Augustine, from whom he quotes approvingly: “Whatever bodily or seminal causes, then, may be used for the production of things, either by the cooperation of angels, men, or the lower animals, or by sexual generation; and whatever power of the desires and mental emotions of the mother have to produce in the tender foetus, corresponding lineaments and colours; yet the natures themselves, which are thus variously affected, are the productions of none but the most high God. It is his occult power which pervades all things, and is present in all without being contaminated, which gives being to all what is, and modifies and limits its existence so that without him it would not be thus and would not have any being at all (Confessions, XII, 25, quoted in Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 107).

¹³ Ramm, 293.

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will in Nature.”¹⁴ God works creation by a combination of instantaneous miraculous fiat creation and a process of derivative creation. God operates fiat creation from *outside* history.¹⁵ Ramm suggests that several acts of fiat creation have occurred through deep evolutionary time.¹⁶ These acts help to clarify the starting point and gaps in evolutionary history that science cannot explain.¹⁷ Then God “turns the task of creation over to the Holy Spirit who is *inside* Nature.”¹⁸ The Holy Spirit is the energy that brings about the evolutionary side of God’s plan of creation.¹⁹

According to these theories, God works out the events of natural and human history, as constructed by the biological mechanism and laws of evolution. However, according to Scripture, God created our world by acting not from the inside or outside of the spatiotemporal series of historical causes, but from within its historical flow.²⁰

The difference between Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism consists in the way they see God’s involvement in the process of evolution. Both, however, share the conviction that evolutionary science tells the true story of what actually took place in historical reality. Moreover, following the dictates of timeless Greek metaphysics, both views assume that God does not work historically within the spatiotemporal sequence of historical events. Divine causality does not operate historically (sequentially), but spiritually (instantaneously). Thus, Christian harmonization of creation to evolution stands on the prior harmonization of reality to Greek metaphysical and anthropological dualisms that guided Augustine’s and Aquinas’ theological constructions.²¹ They systematized the dehistoricization and spiritualization of Christian doctrine on which Theistic Evolutionism and Progressive Creationism build their theological syntheses.

The way in which Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism deal with creation may help Adventists see that harmonizing biblical creation with deep time/evolutionary history requires more than a theological interpretation of the

¹⁴ Ramm, 115–116.

¹⁵ Ramm, 116.

¹⁶ Ramm, 116.

¹⁷ Ramm, 228.

¹⁸ Ramm, 116 [emphasis in the original].

¹⁹ Ramm, 116.

²⁰ Ramm claims that the way to fit evolution to creation is to understand it as “an element in providence” (ibid., 292). However, in Scripture, divine providence does not act from “inside” or “outside” nature and historical events, but from within their flow. Ellen White explains that “in the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, *behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will*” (Education, 173).

²¹ Bernard Ramm borrows freely from Augustine and Aquinas as he argues that “God is world ground”; see 106-108.

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Genesis 1 account. The way God acts in history must also fit the biological mechanism of evolution and the actual historical events it generates. How would this reinterpretation of divine activity affect Adventist theology?

A Conflict of Metanarratives

All systems of theological interpretation stand on the strength of their inner logic that revolves around the way theologians understand the being and actions of God and the way He relates to human beings. In theological method, this “preunderstanding” behaves as a hermeneutical “template” shaping all theological ideas, doctrines, and interpretations of Scripture. Changes in the theological template of any theological system necessarily unleash changes in the understanding of all its theological ideas, doctrines, and interpretations of Scripture. The template, then, ultimately decides whether we can integrate a new idea like evolution to the inner logic of the system of Christian theology.

Roman Catholicism and Protestantism share the same template, from which they ground and develop their theologies. For them the template is metaphysics, on which the notions of a timeless God, sovereign providence, and the immortal soul play a dominant role. Bernard Ramm recognized the defining role that the classical metaphysical template plays in his “progressive creation” model of accommodating Evangelical theology to evolutionary theory. “[A] theory *is antichristian when it denies something in Christian metaphysics*, i.e., when it attacks the very roots of the Christian faith.”²² Ramm goes further, “If it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of all that evolution is contrary to Christian metaphysics then we must brand theistic evolution [and progressive creationism] as an impossible position. We shall be either Christians or evolutionists.”²³ Obviously, theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists believe that evolutionary theory is not contrary to Christian metaphysics. Evolution fits within the metaphysical template Christian philosophers constructed from Plato’s and Aristotle’s views. Historical contradictions are not important, metaphysical contradictions are. Does evolution fits within the Adventist theological template?

Does Adventist theology have a theological template? Does Adventist theology have a metaphysics? Here we are facing an issue we seldom discuss in Adventist theological circles. As far as I know, Adventist theology has a theological template. Adventist theology has implicitly rejected the metaphysical template on which Christian theology stands and replaced it with the Great Controversy metanarrative Adventist theologians find in Scripture itself. Ellen White testified to the existence of an Adventist template when she explained that “The subject of the sanctuary . . . opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God’s hand had directed the great Advent

²² Ramm, 291 [emphasis in the original].

²³ Ramm, 292.

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movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of his people."²⁴

The main difference between the classical metaphysical template and the biblical metanarrative template is that the former places God and his acts in a spiritual, timeless, non-historical realm of reality, while the latter places God and his acts in the historical continuum of created reality. This methodological template helps us understand why Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians correctly argue that since evolution fits the template of classical metaphysics, they can harmonize it to Christianity without changing its theological structure and inner logic.

From the perspective of the biblical metanarrative template, we also easily understand that evolution does not fit the biblical template embodied in the Great Controversy metanarrative that includes the six twenty-four hour consecutive days of divine creation of life on our planet, the inner historicist logic centered in the sanctuary, and the eschatological prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. The reason for this situation is simple. Evolution is a metanarrative about the origins of human history that fits well in the timeless non-historical template on which Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies stand. By the same token, the evolutionary metanarrative collides with the Great Controversy metanarrative because both attempt to explain the same historical reality using different views of the causes involved in the process. As Ramm correctly pointed out, we should reject deep time/evolutionary history if it contradicts Christian metaphysics. Because biblical thought deals with metaphysical issues by way of historical metanarrative, it unavoidably conflicts with the deep time/evolutionary metanarrative. Evolution and biblical creation are rationally incompatible metanarratives between which theologians and believers must choose.

The Role of Cosmology in Theological Hermeneutics

To understand the way in which acceptance of deep time/evolutionary history will affect Adventist theology and doctrines, we need to realize the macro hermeneutical role cosmology plays in Christian theology. In theological thinking, cosmology is not a side issue, but one of the few broad high-level issues (theories) that condition the understanding of all biblical teachings, including redemption and eschatology. In Scripture, the design and history of creation sets the stages from which sin, covenant, sanctuary, redemption, atonement, and eschatology draw their meaning and logic. Changes in these far-reaching ideas necessarily unleash changes in the entire theological system. Besides, biblical cosmology assumes and depends on the biblical view of divine reality.

²⁴ *Great Controversy*, 424. The doctrine of the Sanctuary is the backbone of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan that takes place as an ongoing historical battle for the destiny of the universe.

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Those attempting to accommodate Genesis 1 to evolutionary history will find themselves not only changing the length of time of creation, but also its actual content and history.²⁵ This will take place because we cannot accommodate Genesis 1 to deep time history without also accommodating the theological order of causes implicit in the biblical text to the order of causality implicit in the mechanism of evolution. In short, accommodating the biblical six twenty-four hour consecutive days to deep time/scientific history require accommodating not only the length of time, but also the understanding of the order of reality and the causes involved in the generation of life on earth.

Changes in cosmology require changes in divine reality and action. In turn, the changes in the understanding of divine reality and actions required to accommodate biblical thinking to evolutionary history will unleash a wholesale reinterpretation of the entire range of Adventist doctrines. Moreover, the project of accommodating Adventist theology to evolutionary history stands on a paradigmatic shift in theological authority. Science and philosophy replace Scripture as the source of what has truly happened in history.

In the end, the inner logic of accommodation will lead to a spiritualized panentheistic view of God's reality. The pillars of the Adventist faith will be discarded, and the Sanctuary doctrine will no longer open to view a complete system of truth, harmonious and complete.

Conclusions

From the theological perspective, the issue before us is not to decide between a literal and a theological interpretation of Genesis 1, but between two rationally conflicting metanarratives that affect the entire scope of Adventist theology. One, of philosophical origin, understands God and ultimate reality as timeless/spiritual; another, of biblical origin, understands God and ultimate reality as historical. These two incompatible metanarratives attempt to explain the entire history of reality. In postmodern times, incompatible metanarratives are equivalent to incompatible metaphysics in classical and modern times. We cannot harmonize or rationally overcome conflicting metanarratives. Therefore, Adventist theology cannot harmonize biblical creation to deep time/evolutionary

²⁵ For instance, Langdon Gilkey explains with clarity the necessity of extending the same hermeneutical principles involved in the acceptance of deep time/evolutionary history to the entirety of biblical contents. "Not only, for example, do the six days of creation, the historical fall in Eden, and the flood seem to us historically untrue, but even more the majority of divine deeds in the biblical history of the Hebrew people become what we choose to call symbols rather than plain old historical facts. To mention only a few: Abraham's unexpected child; the many divine visitations; the words and directions to the patriarchs; the plagues visited on the Egyptians; the pillar of fire; the parting of the seas; the verbal deliverance of covenantal law on Sinai; the strategic and logistic help in the conquest; the audible voice heard by the prophets; and so on—all these 'acts' vanish from the plain of historical reality" ("Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," *JR* 41/3 [1961]: 196).

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history without changing its essence, doctrines, and theological system.²⁶ Adventist theology has to choose the biblical metanarrative on which its theology stands.

If because of sociological, cultural, or political reasons, some Adventists continue to believe that Adventist theology should reject Genesis 1 as theological history and accept deep time/evolutionary history, they should explain to the rest of the worldwide body of believers the systematic consequences of such a paradigmatic change *in theological detail*. For instance, they should make it clear that deep time/evolutionary history 1) does not change the order of theological causes assumed in Scripture; 2) does not change the biblical history of God's acts; 3) strongly supports the pillars of the Adventist faith; and 4) strengthens the historical understanding of redemption embedded in the Sanctuary doctrine and supports the Great Controversy metanarrative. For the reasons presented in this paper, however, such an attempt will only reveal with greater clarity the incompatibility of evolutionary history and Adventist theology.

If Adventist theology were to adopt deep time history as truth, the Great Controversy metanarrative on which the Adventist system of theology stands will be replaced, most probably by some combination of classical metaphysics and modern evolutionary patterns. The pillars of the Adventist church will be changed. The *sola-tota-prima Scriptura principle* will be replaced by the *authority of science*. In time, the methodological function of these ideas and the inner logic that they ground will require a reinterpretation of the entire content of Adventist theology and fundamental beliefs. For instance, God's act of redemption may become a continuation of His act of creation. Divine activities of creation and redemption will no longer be understood as historical but as spiritual, working either from outside or inside the flow of the spatiotemporal continuum of human history. In this context, Adventist doctrines such as the Sabbath, the law, the nature of sin, the sanctuary, redemption, and eschatology will no longer be speaking about historical realities, but will become metaphors pointing to the spiritual realities. God will be understood in a panentheistic fashion. Evil will be a part of God's design and method of creation. The cross will no longer be the historical cause of eternal salvation, but only a part in the process of historical evolution through which God is achieving its plan of creation. There will be no real historical heaven, but a spiritual timeless contemplation of God.

The various presentations discussed during three sessions of the *Faith and Science International Conference* reveal that Adventist theology needs to de-

²⁶ In 1982, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy "concluded that adherence to six consecutive twenty-four-hour creation days is non essential to belief in biblical inerrancy" [Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1994), 156]. In other words, "By refraining from dogmatic statements on the creation date, the ICBI hoped to keep the creation time scale from becoming an issue for inerrancy, doctrinal orthodoxy, evangelism, and missions" (Ibid. 157).

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velop in the areas of Fundamental and Systematic theologies. Studies in Fundamental theology, investigating issues such as the sources, principles, and methods of theology, will greatly help present and future generations of Adventists to understand and articulate the authority of the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura principle*. These studies are the necessary condition for engaging in constructive interdisciplinary dialogue between theological and scientific disciplines. Studies in Systematic theology will help present and future generations of Adventists to discover the inner logic of biblical thinking and its power of explanation. These studies are the necessary condition to assessing the compatibility that may exist between Adventist theology and scientific teachings.

During the Faith and Science International Conference no argument or evidence has been presented that may intellectually compel the Church to adopt the deep time/evolutionary version of the history of life on our planet. Consequently, Adventists need to reaffirm the fact that a theological understanding of Genesis 1 as describing the literal-historical-six-24-hour-consecutive-days period through which God created our planet is essential to the theological thinking of Scripture, and therefore, to the harmonious system of truth that gave rise to Adventism and its global mission.

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The God of Job and Our Adversary¹

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God is for us and never against us! And if God is for us, who can be against us? Satan tries hard through his many inventions to separate us from God, but he is totally unsuccessful with his various activities if we stay in a close, intimate, and personal trust relationship with the Lord. Paul assures us that nothing and nobody on earth or in the whole universe can separate us from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39). In order to demonstrate this truth, I want to explore the Old Testament book that was most probably written first (along with Genesis²), and thus provides a preface to the whole of God's revelation, introduces the Pentateuch, and gives significant insight into the great controversy issue. I want to examine with you the drama of the life of Job.

First of all, let me stress that the book of Job is not primarily about Job, but about the God of Job, about who He is. It reveals the characters of the three main protagonists pictured in the book, namely, God, Satan, and Job (even though it is true that the three friends of Job—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, as well as Elihu—are also described and characterized in the book), but let's bear in mind that the book is first of all a revelation about our God.

¹Sermon presented on Sabbath, July 24, 2004, at the Sixth South American Biblical-Theological Symposium, on the theme "Pentateuch—Going Back to the Origins," held at Peruvian Union University in Lima, Peru. For additional details, references, and study material, see my article "Issues in the Cosmic Controversy Between God and Satan According to the Prologue of the Book of Job," in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley*, ed. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs: Old Testament Department, Theological Seminary, 2003), 47-67.

²See Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View: Pacific, 1903, 1952), 159; *idem*, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific, 1958), 251. For further discussion regarding the authorship of the book of Job, consult Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 505–511; Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 200–201; Roy B. Zuck, *Job* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 8–9.

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A. Setting

The book opens with a prologue (Job 1:1-2:13) which describes two heavenly scenes of intense controversy between God and Satan (1:6-12; and 2:1-7a). We are informed that there was a heavenly assembly before a Sovereign Ruler of the whole universe when the sons of God (*b^enê hā'elohim*) gathered before Him. Satan, the Adversary, “also came among them” (Job 1:6; 2:1). The word “also” (*gam*) suggests that he was not a regular member of that group, but in addition to them. The text itself does not state the reason for it; however, the immediate context gives the impression that he behaves like the one to whom the earth belongs: he was “roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it” (Job 1:7). From intertextuality of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, one can deduce even more about his antagonistic activities (see texts like Gen 3:1-10; Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:11-19; Zech 3:1-7; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; 2 Cor 11:14; Rev 12:7-12, 17). Satan is, therefore, presented here as an intruder; he is playing the role of the accuser and the possessor of planet earth, although he is not the Creator and this territory was not given to him. In the background of the story might be a tradition that considers Satan among the sons of God as a representative of the earth. Significantly, Jesus calls Satan “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11), as he defeated Adam and seduced him into sin (Gen 3), thus usurping his position as the head of humanity.³

According to Job 1:8 and 2:3, God justifies Job in front of the solemn assembly gathered before Him. God Himself declares Job right, i.e., blameless (*tām*), upright (*yāšār*), fearing God (*y^ere' 'elohim*) and shunning evil (*sār merā'*)—twice in the first two chapters.⁴ His character is without a spot, but not because he is sinless. Job knows he is a sinner (Job 7:21; 10:6; 14:17); he can be blameless only by God's transforming grace. In these two encounters, which God initiates, God directs His words to Satan, and He engages with him in heightened dialogue.

From the very beginning of this biblical book, God is presented as the One who is passionately and wholeheartedly standing up for Job. He stands on his side. However, Satan does not share God's loving affection for Job; he does not like it. In reality, he tries very hard to prove God is incorrect. He does not bow before God and applaud His decision! On the contrary, in order to win his case, he involves Job in his acute argument against God, and his evil devices go to the very root of his dispute with Him.

³Jesus Christ is called “the second Adam” (1 Cor 15:45, 47) because He took upon Himself the position of Adam as the head of humanity after He defeated Satan in His life and death. The cross is the unforgettable mark of His decisive victory because it was there that Satan totally lost face. Jesus Christ was obedient to His Father and defeated Satan, thus becoming our true representative after His death and resurrection. His victory on the cross gives us hope and a new life (see especially Rev 12:7-12).

⁴Besides these two declarations of God, there is an identical statement about Job's integrity in the very introduction of the book by the narrator (Job 1:2).

B. The Issue in the Great Controversy: For Nothing, Disinterestedly?

Satan does not agree with God pronouncing Job righteous; he opposes His standing on Job's behalf and tackles Him with a frightful, subtle, and seemingly innocent question: "Does Job serve God for nothing?" (Job 1:9). This cynical question introduces the theme and the whole plot of the book. At first glance, it is directed against Job, but in reality it is Satan's backstabbing attack on God by attempting to disprove His statement about Job. Thus the main theme of the book of Job is the justice of God. The real drama turns about the fact that He is for us and proclaims us just.

Is God just when He is justifying us? Satan's question demonstrates his hidden thoughts. To understand Satan's point, it is necessary to study the keyword in the question that reveals the heart of the whole book, namely, the expression FOR NOTHING. The Hebrew term "*ḥinnām*" which occurs four times in the book (1:9; 2:3; 9:17; 22:6; literally "out of favor") can be translated also as "gratis," "gratuitously," "without a reason," "for nought," "freely," "disinterestedly," "for no purpose," "in vain," "without cause." Satan's question can be stated, thus, in the following way: Does Job serve God disinterestedly? Is his piety unselfish and devotion wholehearted? Or expressed differently: Does he serve God out of love, i.e., for nothing? To follow God from love is really to serve Him without interest, gratis.

C. Motives

Why is Satan's question—whether Job serves God out of love (or let us state it existentially, whether we serve God out of love)—so evil? Why is it so bad if somebody attacks our motives? Because in such situations we cannot defend ourselves. We can try to present facts for our defense, but who will believe us when the shadow of doubt lies over us? Only time (and very often a quite long period of time) and difficulties of life (problems, persecution, suffering) will reveal who is correct—us or our accuser. The problems of life reveal our motives, what is truly in us. Every time people attack (not discern!)⁵ the motives of other people, they put themselves on the side of Satan. If somebody would like to hurt you and hurt you badly, the "best" way they can do it is by attacking your motives, because in such a situation you are immediately defenseless.

⁵It is not easy to discern right motives. Let's imagine that a rich girl has two boyfriends. Both are telling her, "I love you." Both are bringing flowers, taking her to lovely restaurants, but one loves her for the money and position he would get after marrying her, and the other loves her for her personality and inner values. How can she know the true motives of these two young, attractive, and charming young men? How she can discern who really loves her unselfishly? It is impossible to know it right away, instantly. Only time, pressures, and problems of life will reveal the inner attitude of the two gentlemen.

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D. Satan's Claim

Satan has nothing in his hand against Job's actual behavior, but he claims that there is something wrong with Job's attitude toward God. He claims that no one serves God unselfishly because, according to him, that is impossible. He declares that God is surrounded only by hypocritical sycophants who confess their love to the Lord, but in reality serve Him only because He blesses them. Satan asserts that created beings are not following God because of His goodness, kindness, beauty of character, and personality, but for the many benefits and abundant privileges, they are receiving from Him. They are religiously devoted to Him because He is bribing them. They are loyal to Him because they are afraid of losing His favor. God is not only blessing them now, but even promises them eternal life. Why not then serve Him for all these wonderful things?

Satan thus presses God to "face reality" and not speculate about something that does not exist, namely, that people really love Him. Humans do not worship the Lord for nothing, even if they claim to, but for gain—for selfish reasons. Satan is depicted here in his restless activities as someone who constantly discovers holes in people's characters. Satan will never accept the possibility that someone can serve God for His loving kindness, for His sake, for just God being God. He denies the existence of unselfish service to God.

E. Satan's Request

Satan argues that God is encircled by good actors and actresses! To prove his argument, he boldly demands that God take everything from Job, because only in this way will God see Job's facade fall down and see revealed his real attitude toward Him—"He will curse you into your face" (Job 1:11)! Satan requests that God remove His blessings from humans because in this manner, God will see their masks torn off. God will experience great disappointment because they will spit into His face. When humans are naked before Him, their real selves will be revealed. When God will not bless them any more, then humans' praises and faithfulness will vaporize as mist over boiling pots or water on one's fingers. When people lose everything, they will not be good nor behave well, because they are only using God for their own interests.

Satan, therefore, shoots against God: "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land" (Job 1:10). It is as if Satan were saying: "Of course it is easy for Job to serve you, because you give him everything he wants—wealth, reputation, position, a nice family. He has all that humans desire!" It is highly interesting to observe that even Satan has to admit that our God blesses His followers, cares for them, loves them, gives them prosperity, and protects them. But of course, he now turns it upside down and tries to use the goodness of God against Him.

Will Job serve God when he loses everything? In such circumstances, will he still maintain his integrity or will he reject God?

F. The Scandal of the Book

When Satan attacks Job's integrity, stating that Job serves God hypocritically, God allows Satan to harm Job! He permits him to try Job: "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands" (Job 1:12). What a horrible and incredible statement! This is more than a simple puzzle or a riddle.

Each time I read this verse I am irritated, upset, and even angry. I am sure that this scenario disturbs all of us (if we really understand what is going on behind such a statement), and we naturally revolt against it! We do not like this scene. Those who believe in a good, loving, just, and all-powerful God have an immense problem with this picture of God! With God there is no sin, pain, problems, or suffering. Believers confess that the Creator and the King of the Universe is the Protector of life, Giver of happiness, Prince of peace, Intervener into human affairs, and Friend of humans; however, they are caught by tragic and unexplainable realities of life. It seems that the God of Job is a different kind of God than they know from other parts of biblical revelation. Faith makes no sense and to some extent it makes the situation even worse.

Why didn't the Omnipotent God protect His servant and defend him? Instead He placed him into the powerful destroying hands of Satan. Couldn't He silence Satan by one stroke or even just a sentence? But He chose not to do it, and this is the real scandal in the experience of Job. This is what is so hard to understand, and we do not want to accept it. We rebel against such divine benevolence! Shame on God! We would like to see the Omnipotent God intervene and immediately silence Satan's accusations and prevent him from harming Job. We wish that God would stop at once the abuse of children, rape of women, concentration camps, murders, suffering, car accidents, plane crashes, collapse of towers, pain, violence, tsunamis, and many other tragic events (compare with Jer 14:8-9).

People are asking poignant questions in times of tragedies, loss, and war: "Where is God? Where was He when my son was killed? Where was He when my wife died because of cancer? Where was He when my daughter was raped and murdered? Why does He not intervene when I am in desperate need of His help and deliverance?" How often we wonder why God allows these tragedies.

The book of Job starts with a tension. On the one hand, God is putting a hedge around Job, protecting him from any harm, caring for his prosperity, blessing him so generously that Job becomes the Bill Gates of his time; on the other hand, he is abandoned (for some time) by God (*Deus absconditus!*) and left in the hands of Satan. There is no logic behind this paradox. This situation seems contradictory. We live in a world where evil reigns and evil is irrational; therefore, let us not try to find a logical answer to the problem of evil. We need to learn how to live with our unanswered questions! From that angle, the book of Job is really a quest for God's visible presence in life.

How is it that our good and omnipotent God is leaving us (sometimes, not always) in the hands of the evil Satan? And you know very well that nothing

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good can occur when we are left in his bad hands. Let me recount the tragedies of Job from a contemporary point of view in modern terms. Imagine on your way home from church worship someone stops you and reports that your children were involved in a car accident, and, unfortunately, all of them died on the spot. Then arriving home, instead of seeing your house, you see only a cloud of smoke going up. After such tragedies you cannot concentrate well at your work; therefore, after several weeks, your boss comes to you and says: "You cannot work for me like that; I also need to feed my family. I am sorry, but you are fired." Then you go to your physician for help and after examining you he says: "I am very sorry, but I have to tell you that you have cancer!"

In a situation like that, when you lose the most vital "things" in your life, when you are "naked" before Him, when you have lost His external blessing and when you are seemingly abandoned by Him, what would be your attitude toward Him? Will you serve or curse Him? And if you stay with Him, from what motives would you follow Him? Out of fear of losing eternal life, being punished even more if you do not, or out of gaining His favor or special awards?

When I was in Ruanda, I was in places where our brothers and sisters were killed only because they were from a different tribe. Hutus were murdering Tutsis. In one of our churches, our Tutsi members and their families were invited to the church, where they were promised safety and security. Then militiamen were "invited," and our brothers and sisters in Christ were massacred with machetes. They were crying to God for help, but God was silent. He left them in the hands of a mad mob. All of them were brutally murdered. Today there is in this place a memorial in their honor.

When I was a pastor in the former Czechoslovakia, Communists were laughing at me, saying: "Mr. Moskala, you are a fool. You believe in God, and you say that He is a good God. Why then is He allowing concentration camps, the abuse of children, torture, rape, exploitation, killing, floods, earthquakes and diseases? Why does He not intervene and stop it all?"

When I was a pastor in Europe, an eight-year-old girl from my congregation was killed in a car accident. She was hit by a drunk driver while crossing the street at the crosswalk. It was not easy for me to speak at the funeral service—not only because the parents of this girl were our good friends, but mainly because we do not have a simple answer as to why such tragedies occur.

Many parents are desperately asking: "Where was God when our son was killed? Where was God when our daughter was murdered? There is a vast array of different tragedies that cannot be even enumerated. The only answer to all these pertinent questions and tragic situations is: "God was exactly in the same place where He was when His son was murdered at the cross!"

God is always on the side of the oppressed, suffering person. In our suffering, He suffers. Isaiah emphasizes it very eloquently: "In all their distress he too was distressed . . . In his love and mercy he redeemed them" (Isa 63:9)!

G. How Can Satan Be Defeated?

All these pertinent, disturbing inquiries go back to the core of the problem: How can Satan be defeated? And with what weapons? These questions need to be answered in order to shed greater light on the whole conflict of the book of Job and the standpoint of God.

Can Satan be defeated by arguments? Can he be defeated by logic or proclamations? No, because against each argument is a counterargument, and to corner somebody only with facts has no lasting results. If Satan could be defeated by arguing, God would have done it a long time ago, for He is the Truth (Exod 34:6; Deut 7:9; 32:4; 2 Sam 7:28; 1 Kgs 17:24; 2 Chr 15:3; Ps 31:6; Jer 10:10; John 17:17).

Can Satan be defeated by force? Nothing would please him more than to face force in whatever form. This is exactly what he wants to prove about God. He wants to accuse Him of using force, but he lacks evidence; he cannot demonstrate it. Of course, Satan could be silenced by God's power if He chose to do so, because the Omnipotent Creator is also the Mighty Warrior (Exod 15:3; Judg 6:12; Isa 42:13; Jer 20:11). However, in that case God would be accused of not playing fair and thus having an advantage over Satan. The great controversy needs to be won, but in a different way.

The best way we can understand this is by a story my father told me when I was a small boy that made a great impact on my mind. Two boys were fighting; the one who was older, taller, and more muscular won over his opponent. It was obvious that the other didn't have a chance. After his victory he was boasting: "I am stronger; I won!" A bystander approached the haughty boy and asked: "Who won?" "I won," the bigger boy boasted. "Who is stronger?" asked the elderly man; "I am," the boy replied proudly. The elderly man then asked him: "Are you not ashamed to beat someone who is weaker than you?"

If God were to use force to gain the victory, Satan would be the first to confront the Lord and smash into His face the sharp words of defiance: "God, are you not ashamed to beat me who is weaker than you? You won because of power, not because of truth."

Satan and his allies draw evil weapons from an ugly arsenal to use against God—ambition, pride, selfishness, lies, deceit, violence, anger, hatred, prejudice, racism, terrorism, low passion, addictions, and manipulation. God would never employ these! Satan can be overcome only by love, truth, justice, freedom, and order. God uses only these clean and pure weapons. Satan, however, exercises any means and any strategy necessary—including fear, pain, torture, suffering, abuse, false wonders, unsound teaching, and murder.

How often we marvel why our Almighty God is silent and allows tragedies to happen in the lives of good people, not knowing or forgetting that Satan can be defeated only by someone who is weaker than he is.

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H. Victory Through Weakness

This is the reason for the incarnation. The God of the whole universe had to become weak in order to defeat evil. Only with the frailties of humanity could He defeat Satan. On the cross of Calvary, the Creator God demonstrated His love, truth, and justice. The suffering God, hanging on the cross, is a victorious God! Only the Lamb can overcome the dragon and wild beasts paraded before the readers in the book of Revelation. What a paradox! Sin started with pride, but was overcome by humility (Phil 2:5-11; Isa 14:12-15).

In the story of Job, only Job himself, who is weaker than the devil, can refute Satan's argument, defeat him, and thus prove that God is right when He is justifying him and standing on his side. Job overcame the devil not because he was so good or strong (he knows he is a sinner—Job 7:21; 10:6; 14:17), but because he totally surrendered his life to God. He did this in full confidence and trust in the God who gave him strength and victory (Job 13:15; 19:25-27; 42:5). When he was weak, he was strong. Paul says eloquently: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

When in our weakness we cling to God, we are strong. This is a true paradox of life. When we realize our complete dependence on God, when we humbly admit and accept our fragility, when we trust God and not ourselves and allow Him to work in our lives, victory is ours because He fights for us! This battle we cannot win unless we stay in a close personal relationship with Him. We need to fight a good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), not against sin, but for a close relationship with Christ, who is the only one who can give us victory. Without Christ we are not able to overcome temptations and bear good fruit to eternity (John 15:5). It is like darkness in a room. We cannot fight against it, thinking that by force darkness will be banished; rather, we need to turn on the light and the darkness will be gone. When we are weak in our strength and we totally surrender to God, admitting that we are not able to defeat our enemy, He will fight for us. Because of the relationship with God, we are strong and unbeatable. Only in total submission to God—by the resignation of our own power, strength, achievements, and abilities—is our strength. It is then that we are allowing God to fight for us (Exod 14:14; Isa 30:15). He can give and bring us victory because He is the Victor. He came to earth with a clear purpose—to save us from sin and not in sin (Matt 1:21). In Him and because of Him, we are victors, too (Rev 12:11).

I. What Was Left to Job When He Lost Everything?

This is a paradoxical question, but what was left to Job when he lost God's blessing described in the book? Let me briefly point to seven things which remained to him:

1. His life, though a very miserable life. In a sense, it would be easier for Job to die and not to undergo the painful suffering and to live in such troubles.

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God as the Sovereign One sets a boundary for Satan: "But you must spare his life" (Job 2:6; compare with 1:12). The good news is that God promises we will never be tested beyond our ability to cope with the test (1 Cor 10:13). In the controversy between God and Satan, Job's death was not necessary. His death would not serve any special purpose and would not answer the issue under contention. Jesus Christ had to go through the ultimate test of loyalty. When Jesus died, Satan was defeated, and once and for all it was demonstrated that pure love and obedience do exist and are possible. We overcome Satan only because of Jesus' victory (Rev 12:10-11).

2. His wife. She advised him: "Curse God and die" because she loved him. Out of love she gives him bad advice, not realizing that by doing so, she is putting herself on the side of Satan.

3. His friends. We usually say harsh words about them. But when they heard about Job's misery, they immediately came to visit him. When they arrived and saw what kind of tragedy had happened to him, they tore their robes, sat down with him for seven days, and didn't say one word! What an important series of acts of solidarity!

One man was asked what for him was the best comfort he received when he lost his child. He said: "The best comfort I have received came from a man who visited me, embraced me, held my hand, cried with me, and said not one word. After twenty minutes he left. His silent solidarity was the best comfort I received."

The three friends of Job were doing the same. When they heard about the calamities in his life, they immediately hurried to visit him. Perfect! Then Job started to speak and "cursed the day of his birth" (Job 4:1). His friends could not bear his bold and open speech. They accused him of self-righteousness. Their false and very simplistic theology burst up on the surface (see especially Job 4:6-9), and they started to rebuke Job (see, for example, Job 8:2-4; 22:3-11). They were miserable comforters (Job 16:2). They were servants of Satan because they only continued the accusations he started. One can say: "Where Satan cannot enter, he sends friends." Unfortunately, how often this is true in everyday life.

4. His voice. Job spoke openly but honestly with God. He said things we sometimes think devoted Christian should not say. But Job is an example of a man sincerely questing for truth. He wanted to know the truth, the mysteries of life. We need to learn how to dialogue truthfully with God without hiding anything.

At the end of the book, God Himself twice stated that what Job said about Him was correct. His three friends were rebuked (Job 42:7-8). Very often people who say harsh things about God because they have been hurt by the unrighteous, or by the unjust things of life, can be closer to God and to the truth than those who always try to defend God!

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5. His mind, capacity to reason. To think, to be able to analyze, and to evaluate is a very important gift.

6. His God, God's presence in the midst of His silence. Job was longing and searching for God's perceptible presence in his life because God was seemingly hidden and far away.

In one cell in Auschwitz, where thousands of innocent people were tortured and murdered, someone engraved in the wall: "Here was Jesus!" An unknown author in the Warsaw ghetto wrote aptly: "I believe in the sun, even though I do not see it; I believe in love, even though I do not feel it; I believe in God even though He is silent!"

I am quite sure you have heard the story of one man who in his dream saw that he was walking with Jesus, and two sets of footprints always appeared in the sand. Later he was in big trouble, but when he looked at the footprints there was only one set of footprints instead of the two, as before. He felt totally abandoned by God. When the different scenes of his life appeared before him, he noticed that many times there was only one set of footprints, and it was at the lowest and saddest times of his life. In the dream, he finally asked Jesus: "Why did you leave me when I needed you most? I had to face the problems of life alone!" Then Jesus replied: "My son, when you were down and the difficulties of life pressed you, I was always with you. You are right, you saw only one set of footprints, but those footprints in the sand were mine, because at your roughest time, I carried you in my arms!" God never forsakes His people, even though sometimes it seems that they have to walk without His visible blessings.

Paradoxically, God's invisible Presence helped people in Rwanda to die a martyr's death, to die in dignity. God's presence helps us go through all the difficulties of life. The great news is that God is with us in our problems and carries us through them. He suffers with us in our sufferings (Isa 63:9)! He never abandons us, even though it seems very often that He is a far-away God! He gives victory over all kinds of temptations, struggles, problems, and suffering. He is always with His people giving them power to overcome and persevere. Paul correctly states: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13).

7. His personal trust in the personal God. Job, with full confidence toward his God, whose actions he did not understand, confessed: "Even though you would kill me, still I will hope in you" (see Job 13:15). He knew that He is the best. This is why he proclaimed: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27). Note how often he used "I," "me," and "my." His personal faith in a personal God triumphed.

Job's relationship with God was severely tested, but by faith, he clung to God with all his strength. He trusted Him and served unselfishly. Nothing, even

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pain, suffering, or unanswered questions, could separate him from God. His integrity was vindicated.

Because Job had cultivated a trusting relationship with God in the past and was relying on His promises, he could victoriously go through the present crisis. Past experience with God helped him to survive this current intense attack from Satan, which did not make sense.

Troubles of life, suffering, and persecution have no power to create faith in us, but instead they reveal our faith. Difficulties of life help us to discover what really is inside us, and they may also further develop and strengthen faith (Rom 8:28). Job himself declares that his relationship with the Lord was deepened, even though he was in the fire of life without a specific personal reason: “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (42:5). Even though he did not understand his existing situation, he completely trusted His God. Job retained his faith in Him, even though he lost everything, because his confidence was anchored in God, not in the prosperity of life. He preferred to fulfill God’s will before his own; he was willing even to die for Him, to lose everything. Job’s obedience and faithfulness to God was stronger than his desire to preserve his well-being and happiness. He served God even though God’s promises apparently failed.

J. Final Outcome—God Is Just and Always on Our Side

In the darkest situation of life, God reveals Himself to Job as the Creator (Job 38–41). This was His answer to Job’s questions, frustrations, problems, and suffering. Strangely enough, God answered his hard questions with His divine questions. How can this picture of God as the Creator provide a solution? It looks like a puzzle, and even though we cannot explore this issue in this study,⁶ let me stress that God, by presenting Himself to Job as the Creator, declared that He is above all, He is in control, He is the Source of life, He is able to recreate. Thus He showed that He is the Re-Creator, Omni-powerful God, transcendent, and full of ultimate wisdom. He is not a Destroyer! He is able out of nothing, even chaos, to create something new, valuable, and permanent. Job saw that nature as well as his life was full of mysteries that could not be explained, but an insightful look into God’s creation activities provided him with the assurance that he lay in the mighty hands of the Creator.

When Job demonstrated that he loved God above all, even in the very desperate situations of life, God’s standing for him was vindicated. His justice prevailed. God is just while justifying us because His grace and presence, even though very often unseen and silent, sustains His people. God demonstrates that

⁶See an excellent study on this particular point in Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Record of Job: The Ancient Wisdom, Scientific Accuracy, and Life-Changing Message of an Amazing Book* (Green Forest: Master, 2000).

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He rules in justice. Satan's slander, jibes, and taunts are openly proven to be without any substance. Evidences of Job's life eloquently cry against Satan!

Paradoxically, Job became even stronger as a result of the bitter crisis he went through; his agony of life made him more firm. According to the narrator of the book of Job, God Himself said: "He [Job] still maintains his integrity" (2:3). "The stem (Hifil) of the verb 'maintains' indicates a strengthening of the grip he already had."⁷ Instead of cursing God, he was praising Him (1:21).⁸

The book of Job demonstrates that it is possible to serve God for Himself and not for a certain reward. Devotion to God and human integrity are an expression of love and gratitude to Him for who He is. This devotion and integrity can endure even in times when disasters come and tragedies of life strike and raise questions that cannot be easily answered. Faith triumphs despite the problems of life. It is possible to follow God for nothing, i.e., out of love. It is possible to give preference to God before our own life or skin. A person with faith in God can triumph over suffering. Atkinson states it well: "Faith is learning to trust God in the dark, in unknowing, in apparent failure. Faith is what God gives us to help us live with uncertainties."⁹

Thus, Job gives a penetrating insight into the key issue of the great controversy between God and Satan, and we need to ask ourselves: Why do we serve God? What are our motives? What is our reason? Everything in our lives depends on our motives, and every deed is judged according to them. Ellen G. White also stresses that God judges us according to our motives: "Not by their wealth, their education, or their position does God estimate men. He estimates them by their purity of motives and their beauty of character."¹⁰

At the end, God rewarded Job even more than in the beginning (Job 42:10-16). Does it prove, therefore, that he nevertheless served God for a final reward? Not at all! God gives rewards; it is His nature. As our good Friend, He blesses us not in order to buy our love, but because He loves us. His faithful followers do not serve Him because of these gifts. This point was demonstrated clearly in Job's afflictions. After it was proven that he loved God disinterestedly, he received double blessings. God is good; He wants us to know that He will never leave us empty. Because I love my wife and my children, I always come home from a trip with gifts for them as a token of my love, as a demonstration I was thinking about them while I was in a foreign country. But my love for them is

⁷Elmer B. Smick, "Job," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 4:884.

⁸Job used the same word (*barah*) that Satan used in v. 11, but with the opposite meaning (an example of euphemism)—he was blessing God! It was proven that Job's faithfulness was genuine. He did not fall into desperation, resignation, or bitterness after losing his family, health, and wealth. He endured the test with flying colors. Job's theocentric orientation and attitude proved Satan wrong.

⁹David J. Atkinson, *The Message of Job: Suffering and Grace*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 27.

¹⁰Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, Boise: Pacific, 1905, 477.

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not limited to these physical expressions of my love, but based upon deep bonds that have been built between us. I am convinced that they do not love me because of these gifts, but because they have experienced my loving relationship with them. Life would certainly be less enjoyable and empty without tangible presents of love.

K. Conclusion

The experience of Job is a principal case in which God unfolds mysteries and perplexities of our own existence. Job's case is a model which each of us must go through. His experience is our experience in principle. Situations of life will be different, but the issues will always be, in principle, the same. Everyone has to endure trials of life (for some prosperity, positions, luxury, leisure, and/or the comfort of life can be a worse trial than suffering) just like Job! Satan tries, and unfortunately often very successfully, to separate us from the love of God through his many inventions. In the battle between good and evil, we are all on the stage. No one stands outside being only a spectator, somehow in a neutral position. We are all playing an active role whether we want to or not.

Job knew his identity; he knew that he was a son of God! Let me, therefore, close our reflections on the message of Job with a modern parable. A hen found an egg, and she understandably thought that it was an egg just like all of the others of her own. She took this egg as her own, and after some time a small chicken was born. Or so she thought. In fact, the little chick was not a chicken at all. It was an eagle. She looked at him and was very disappointed, because her other chicks were very different: different beaks, claws, wings, etc. It did not even behave like the others. Everybody in the courtyard was laughing at him; cocks were even beating him. One day he noticed that everybody was hiding; therefore, he also hid himself. Everyone was looking up, so he looked up as well, and there he saw a beautiful bird flying so nicely. "Mom, look at that bird over there!" he whispered. What kind of a bird is that?" "That is an eagle, the king of all the birds." "Mom, I would also like to fly like this eagle." His mom looked at him and finally in a very disapproving voice said: "You, you never will, you are only a chicken, and besides a very bizarre chicken." The little eagle put down his head and said: "Mom, I know I am only a chicken, and a very bizarre chicken." The author of this parable ended the story with a sad note. "It happened that this little eagle lived for several years in this courtyard always thinking that he was a chicken, until he finally died." What a sad story.

I wish the parable had a different ending, that one day a man came to this little eagle and said to him: "Do not believe what others are saying about you. You are not a chicken; you are an eagle! And because you are an eagle, you can also fly like an eagle!" I wish the parable told us that the little eagle believed in this good news and behaved accordingly. Because he knew his new identity, he tried to fly.

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In the beginning it was not easy, but later on he soared so high, with so much grace, that all the chickens in the courtyard gazed at him with admiration and said: “Now we know who you are! You are an eagle, a king among birds!”

In God’s hands, we are absolutely safe and no one can remove us out of His caring arms! We are His sons and daughters. Our identity lies in Him. He is always for us and never against us. Paul rightly states in Romans 8:35-39 that absolutely nothing and no one on earth or in the whole universe can separate us from the love of God, even though Satan is a master in his attempts and intrigues and tries very hard! Neither persecution, tragedy, suffering, or death, nor prosperity, wealth, or a good position in life can do it! Of course, this can be true only on the condition that we stay in a close, intimate, and trusting relationship with our loving, holy, and awesome Lord. Glory be to our great, loving, mighty, and incomparable God! Victory is His! Therefore, if someone boasts, let him boast in the Lord (Jer 9:23-24)! The Lamb of God has the final word in the cosmic controversy between good and evil: “They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 17:14). Our God is God of love, truth, and justice.

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Reflections on the Wrath of God

Marvin Moore

Paul's comments in Romans 1:18-32 provide us with significant insight into God's wrath. This issue has become somewhat controversial within the Adventist church in recent years.

The Bible speaks repeatedly of God's wrath. Psalm 2:5 says, for example, that God rebukes the kings of the earth in His anger "and terrifies them in his *wrath*." God said to Jeremiah, "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my *wrath* and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it" (Jeremiah 25:15). Revelation echoes the same theme in the New Testament. In the most vivid description of God's wrath anywhere in the Bible, it says that those who accept the mark of the beast will "drink of the wine of the *wrath* of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of his anger" (Revelation 14:10, NASB). And Paul spoke several times about God's wrath in both Romans 1 and 2:

- "The *wrath* of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18).
- "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up *wrath* against yourself for the day of God's *wrath*, when his righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:5).
- "For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be *wrath* and anger" (Romans 2:8).

The Bible clearly speaks of God's wrath, including what Paul said in Romans. So what's the Adventist debate all about? Why is anyone questioning what the Bible seems to teach so clearly?

Active, Passive, and No Wrath

The issue is whether God's wrath is active or passive—or whether He has no wrath at all. Each alternative has its proponents. So let's examine them.

Active Wrath. The "active wrath" model proposes that God has intervened personally, intentionally, and in some cases forcefully (violently) to put down

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evil in the past and that He will do so even more forcefully in the future. The purpose of His active exercise of wrath is either to punish evil people for their sins or to deliver His own people from their grasp, and often both purposes merge into one. An obvious example of God's active wrath in the past is His destruction of the sinful world at the time of the Flood. Another is His destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. A third example is His deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery with hail and fire and storm and the slaying of the first born of Egyptian animals and people. The destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea was also active wrath.

The Bible also predicts that at least twice in the future God will intervene actively to punish evil and deliver His people. Most Christians are familiar with Revelation's description of fire coming down from heaven and devouring the wicked in the lake of fire at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:9). God will also intervene forcefully in human history at the beginning of the millennium with the second coming of Christ. Revelation 6:12-17 and 16:17-21 picture God destroying the earth with a violent, global earthquake at Christ's second coming, and chapter 19:11-24 shows Christ engaging the world's armies in a violent war that concludes with the destruction of the forces of evil.

Paul spoke of this active form of God's wrath in Roman 2. In verse 5 he said, "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for *the day of God's wrath*" (verse 5). "The day of God's wrath" is clearly a reference to the second coming of Christ, and Paul said that unrepentant Jews were preparing themselves to experience that wrath. He said essentially the same thing in verse 8: "For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger." Again, the words "there will be wrath and anger" are in the future tense, suggesting that the wrath and anger will be manifested at Christ's second coming.

Passive Wrath. The active model of God's wrath has prevailed exclusively within the Adventist church throughout most of our history. However, the passive wrath model gained a small but resolute following during the last three decades of the twentieth century. This model proposes that God's wrath is primarily exercised by His abandonment of evil and evil people to the natural outworking of their choices. And here is where Romans 1 is particularly relevant. In chapter 1 Paul said that "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (verse 18). This verse could be interpreted to support the active wrath model. However, Paul wrote in the present tense—"the wrath of God *is being revealed*"—and there's scant evidence of God's active intervention in the lives of evil people at that time in history. Furthermore, several other statements Paul made in chapter 1 suggest that the passive wrath model is what he had in mind:

- "Therefore God *gave them over* [the pagan sinners] in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another" (verse 24).

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- “Because of this, *God gave them over* to shameful lusts,” and they “*received in themselves* the due penalty for their perversion” (verse 26).
- “[*God*] gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done” (verse 28).
- “Men committed indecent acts with other men, and *received in themselves* the due penalty for their perversion (verse 27).

These verses support the passive wrath model, because they state that God simply *gives sinful people over* to the natural outworking of their sins, letting nature take its course. They “receive in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”

There is a third possibility: The “no wrath” concept. This is actually a common theme of those who propose the passive wrath model. They often argue the passive wrath model in no wrath terms, claiming that anger is contrary to God’s character of love. We’ll discuss this argument momentarily. For now, we need to ask, Is God’s wrath active or passive?

Active or Passive? Provided we exclude “no wrath” from the passive wrath model, I believe God’s wrath is both active and passive. Romans 1 makes it clear that God’s wrath is passive at times. In fact, the proponents of the passive wrath model are close to being correct when they suggest that this is the exclusive way God expresses His wrath. The incidents of His active intervention to put down evil with force in the history of our world are few and far between. And there’s a reason why. Throughout nearly all of history we humans have lived in probationary time. During this time God has for the most part allowed evil to run its course as a demonstration to the universe of what evil is really like.

However, I believe it’s a mistake to make the passive model the complete explanation of God’s wrath. There’s too much biblical evidence that God has intervened actively to put down evil in the past and that He will do so again in the future.

Anger, Force, and God’s Love

Several years ago we received a letter at *Signs of the Times*[®] that illustrates the objection many proponents of the passive and no wrath models have to the idea that God’s wrath can also be active. This letter was in response to an article about Armageddon that appeared in the November 1999 issue of the magazine:

I believe the view presented pictures God as arbitrary, vengeful, and severe, using His power to put down evil—the very characteristics that Satan attributes to God but that are actually characteristics of Satan himself. I do not believe that in the end God will finally resort to force to put down evil.

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This letter raises a very significant question: How does the idea of God's wrath—especially the concept of his active wrath—square with the primary attribute of God's character, which is love?

The Relationship of Love to Evil. We can safely begin by saying that any teaching about God's ultimate dealing with sin and sinners must be consistent with His love. The problem for us humans is how to bring together everything we know about God without creating unacceptable contradictions. How should love respond to evil? Does love always sit back and wait for evil to resolve itself by itself, or does love at times intervene actively to prevent evil from carrying out its harmful designs? I propose that active intervention may be the most loving thing that a loving being, divine or human, can do. Several years ago I heard a couple of stories that illustrate the point well.

The first story is about a family in which the father sexually abuses his daughter. One day he goes into the girl's bedroom, and a few minutes later the mother hears the daughter crying out, "No, Daddy, No! Please, Daddy, stop!" So the mother goes to an adjoining room, kneels down, and prays for God to intervene.

In the second story, the teenage daughter of a black sharecropper gets pregnant, but she hesitates to tell her parents, because she fears that her father will kill her. Finally, however, it becomes impossible to hide the evidence, so before her father guesses the problem, she approaches him on the front porch of their cabin. When he learns that she's going to have a baby, he attacks her violently. In the midst of her screams, the front door to the cabin bursts open. The girl's mother leaps out, points a rifle at her husband, and shouts, "You strike my daughter one more time and you're a dead man!"

The question is, which mother showed the most love for her daughter—the one who prayed passively or the one who intervened actively? I think the answer is obvious. In the face of severe abuse, active intervention is the most loving thing that a loving being can do. Not to do so would be unloving.

Is Anger Bad? Those who favor the no-wrath concept argue that God doesn't get angry. That's what the correspondent who wrote to *Signs of the Times*® apparently believed. He said that the active wrath model "pictures God as arbitrary, vengeful, and severe." However, I believe this view involves a fundamental misunderstanding of anger, namely, that it's always bad. Unfortunately, many Christians have grown up with the idea that anger is bad. I can recall as a child being told that anger was bad, but "righteous indignation" was OK. Nobody ever defined righteous indignation, but plain old anger was always bad. And the proponents of the passive model of God's wrath argue that, just as hot is the opposite of cold and light is the opposite of dark, so love is the opposite of anger and therefore anger is sinful, which is why a loving God will never get angry.

But let me ask you a question. What feeling would you experience if you saw a mother beating her five-year-old child on his bare back with a piece of

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garden hose? Name the feeling you'd have if you saw a father hold the lighted end of a cigarette against his son's bare skin. Or how about the parents who keep a child tied to the bed post or locked in a dark closet day after day for weeks on end, wallowing in its own excrement. These are extreme examples, to be sure, but they do happen. So what feeling did you get when you read about these examples of abuse?

I hope you said *anger*! Anger is our normal human response to injustice, and it's also a very loving response. Anger is bad only when we respond to it inappropriately, such as when we lose our tempers.

God's Anger. God never loses His temper, but I propose that God's anger—His wrath—is a very appropriate and a very loving *divine* response to injustice. We all want an angry God from time to time. The cry, "Where was God when . . . ?" is a plea for an angry God. If we can feel anger over the little bit of abuse humans perpetrate against each other that we observe, how must God feel, who sees all the abuse that ever has happened and ever will happen? I hope He feels intense anger!

I have a friend who believes that anger is contrary to God's character of love, so I asked him one day how he would feel if an intruder were to break into his house and rape one of his teen-age daughters. He said, "Murderous." Then I asked him how he would want God to feel. He thought a moment, and then he said, "Murderous." I rested my case.

My wife and I visited the World War II concentration camp in Dachau, Germany, a number of years ago, and we felt profound anger as we saw how Hitler treated Jews and other "undesirables." That was an entirely appropriate response.

Those who propose that God doesn't get angry are rightly concerned to avoid compromising His mercy. But mercy and justice need each other. Justice without mercy results in tyranny, abuse, and torture. But so does mercy without justice, for mercy without justice allows evil people to take charge, as in the case of the mother who prayed instead of intervening with force to protect her daughter. Justice that refuses to intervene to protect the victims of abuse is very unmerciful.

How About Force? But should anger intervene with force? Our *Signs* correspondent said No. Claiming that force is a characteristic of Satan, he said, "I do not believe that in the end God will finally resort to force to put down evil." However, the stories of the two mothers that I shared with you a moment ago help us to understand that sometimes forceful intervention against evil is the most moral and the most loving thing we can do. The mother who loved her daughter the most was clearly the one who felt so much anger over the abuse her husband was inflicting on their daughter that she took strong steps to stop it. The other mother should have felt angry, and she should have intervened forcefully. In some situations, love has failed if it doesn't intervene with force.

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My correspondent at *Signs* said that force is a characteristic of Satan. It's true, of course, that Satan uses force—but to *impose* suffering, not to *prevent* it. Often, Satan uses force to get people to obey him. That God will never do. All who obey Him must do so by choice.

But does God ever use force? Is force ever an appropriate response for any loving being? I believe the answer has to be Yes. Force is simply the exercise of power to bring about a desired result, and situations do exist where it's absolutely essential that good people exercise force in order to prevent horrible evil from gaining control and creating chaos and suffering. I propose that in the presence of intolerable evil, force is also an entirely appropriate response from a loving God. The Bible says that when Lucifer and his angels chose to rebel against God's law of love in heaven, Michael and His army of angels cast them out. That was force—God using His power to expel rebellion and evil from heaven. And the Bible teaches that an all-wise God will eventually exercise the same force to expel rebellion from the entire universe.

The Final Destruction of the Wicked

What about God's wrath in the final destruction of the wicked that's described so graphically in Revelation? Those who argue for passive wrath as the exclusive way God exercises His wrath point out, correctly, that Revelation is highly symbolic. However, it doesn't follow that everything in Revelation is symbolic. Certainly the image of Christ riding a white horse at His second coming is symbolic. This is simply a way of stating the literal truth that His second coming will be a time of war. *And war is always an act of violent intervention.* The images of birds eating the flesh of the wicked and of beasts being thrown into a lake of fire are highly symbolic, but the idea behind these images, that Christ will destroy evil and evil people with force at His second coming, is very literal.

The proponents of the passive and no wrath models are quite horrified at the suggestion that God will exercise His active wrath in the final punishment and destruction of the wicked. I suspect this is because they consider all anger to be bad. But when we consider anger an appropriate response to evil and injustice, then it makes perfect sense for a loving God to be active as well as passive in dealing with it. And the biblical teaching about the final punishment of the wicked in the lake of fire is simply a picture—symbolical, perhaps, but true in a very real sense—of God intervening actively to put an end to evil.

Let's consider the prospect of God truly refusing to intervene with force to destroy the wicked, allowing their eternal demise to be simply the natural outworking of their choice to be evil. To do that, God would have to place them in a world all by themselves long enough for them to become extinct through degeneration, disease, and the reign of "tooth and claw." They would suffer a miserable, prolonged, pathetic extinction. When I have a dog or cat with a painful terminal illness, in mercy I ask the veterinarian to "put it to sleep." In the same

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way, I see God's forceful destruction of the wicked as a merciful alternative to truly allowing nature to take its course.

The Revelation of God's Glory. A common explanation suggested by those who support the passive model of God's wrath is that, rather than God Himself bringing fire down on the wicked, they'll be destroyed by the revelation of His glory in the final judgment. But to absolve God of the responsibility for the death of the wicked by saying "He'll just unveil His glory" hardly gets Him off the hook. Imagine for a moment that I have a laser beam in my forehead that will kill people if I take my hat off in their presence. If I ever did that and were hauled into court for murder, what do you think the judge and jury would say to my plea that "I didn't kill anyone; I just took off my hat"? If it's within my power not to take off my hat, then I'm responsible for those who die when I take it off, even if I didn't strike them.

The Bible's description of the final destruction of the wicked—fire coming down from God out of heaven—sounds like a releasing of the forces of nature that heretofore God has held in check. That's pretty violent! A proponent of the passive model of God's wrath might argue that God won't personally destroy the wicked in the lake of fire; He'll simply release the forces of nature. That's like saying that I'm not responsible if my pit bull attacks and injures you, because all I did was let go of the leash. I hardly think a judge would acquit me on that basis. If it's within my power to restrain the dog, then I'm responsible for the consequences when I let it go. Similarly, if it's within God's power to restrain the forces of nature, then it's hardly an argument in favor of the passive model of His wrath to say that the destruction of the wicked in the lake of fire is simply the result of His releasing the forces of nature.

Is God Vengeful and Severe? My correspondent at *Signs* said that "God is not arbitrary, vengeful, or severe." It's true that God isn't arbitrary in His dealings with the wicked. An arbitrary God would destroy them with no consideration for what His loyal subjects thought. That's why God refused to eradicate sin the moment it arose in heaven many eons ago. He allowed it to continue for several thousand years so that all created beings could pass judgment against it for themselves.

Is God vengeful? No—by which I mean He isn't spiteful. Is He severe? If by *severe* we mean "malicious," No, but if we mean "strict," Yes. God is always strict in dealing with evil.

I propose that the life of every creature is ultimately in God's hands. Therefore, when the time comes that the wicked are permanently destroyed, God will be responsible for their death, and whether He takes personal action to make that happen or merely "allows" it to happen is irrelevant. I also propose that His justice is the reason why He'll not only allow it to happen but will actually initiate its happening. And in the long-range scheme of things, that tragic event will be the most merciful thing a loving God could *do*!

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Implications for the Atonement

The idea that God doesn't get angry—that He doesn't experience wrath—has major implications for our understanding of Christ's atonement for sin. In order to explain the problem, I need to share with you a couple of theological explanations for why Jesus died.

One explanation is called the "substitutionary model" of the atonement. The substitutionary model is based on the very biblical concept that the punishment for sin is death. However, a loving God didn't want to see His children die, so He devised a plan whereby Jesus would take the guilt of their sins upon Himself and suffer God's punishment in their place. His death would *substitute* for theirs. This would meet the demands of God's justice for the death of the sinner and give His erring children another opportunity to accept Him and allow His Spirit to control their lives. This model is strongly supported by both the Old and New Testaments.

The Substitutionary Model in the Old Testament. The sacrificial system described in Leviticus is an excellent example of the substitutionary model of the atonement. When a person sinned, he was instructed to bring a lamb, a goat, or a bullock to the altar of sacrifice, confess his sins over it, and kill it in the presence of the priest. The priest would then sprinkle the blood of the sacrificial victim either on the altar or on the curtain inside the tabernacle. The Bible says that "in this way the priest will make atonement for the man's sin, and he will be forgiven" (Leviticus 4: 26). The conclusion seems inescapable that the animal took the sinner's guilt symbolically upon itself, died in the sinner's stead, and released the sinner from both the guilt for his sin and its punishment. It would be difficult to find a more obvious illustration of sacrificial substitution.

Isaiah 53 applied this concept to the suffering Servant, that is, the Messiah: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." "For the transgression of my people he was stricken." "The Lord [made] his life a guilt offering." "He was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the transgression of many" (Isaiah 53:5, 8, 10, 12).

It's impossible to miss the concept in these verses that the suffering Servant took upon Himself both the guilt of human sin and its punishment. And there's an obvious use in verse 10 of the language of the Old Testament sacrificial system: "The Lord [made] his life a guilt offering." The King James Version says, "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," and the New American Standard Bible says, "He would render Himself as a guilt offering."

The Substitutionary Model in the New Testament. Several New Testament passages affirm the concept of sacrificial substitution. One of the best is Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" The tree is a reference to Christ's cross, by which Paul obviously means His death on the cross. And notice that Paul said, "Christ became a curse for us," and by His

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death Christ “redeemed us from the curse of the law.” That’s clear substitutionary language.

The concept of substitutionary sacrifice is also evident in Ephesians 5:2, where Paul said that “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul said, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” And Peter said that “Christ suffered for you,” and “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:21, 24).

There’s no question that the Bible teaches sacrificial substitution in both the Old and New Testaments.

The Moral Influence Model of the Atonement. According to the moral influence theory of the atonement, Christ didn’t die as a substitute for sinners. His death on the cross was simply a demonstration of God’s supreme love for human beings. Seeing this profound example of love, sinful people will be *influenced* to respond by seeking His forgiveness.

There’s no question that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was a marvelous demonstration of God’s love for the human race. Many texts in the New Testament attest to that. One of the best known and best loved is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Ephesians 5:2, which I cited a moment ago, also declares clearly that Christ’s death on the cross demonstrated His love for us: “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The idea of the cross as a demonstration of God’s love for lost sinners is so pervasive in the New Testament that it hardly needs further corroboration.

So what are we to make of these two theories of the atonement? It would be impossible for any one model of the atonement to encompass all that Christ’s death on the cross accomplished. Human analogies are too limited for that. Our best understanding of the atonement is provided by examining the strengths of each model (including several that we haven’t considered here). The moral influence model helps us to understand the great love that God and Christ have for human beings and the great drawing power of their love. The substitutionary model helps us understand something of God’s justice, the importance of His law, and the seriousness of sin in His sight.

The problem with the moral influence theory is in what it denies rather than in what it affirms. As I pointed out a moment ago, the moral influence theory denies that Christ died as a substitute for human sin. It claims that God didn’t need satisfaction for His justice. The law didn’t demand a penalty that had to be paid. Christ’s death was exclusively for the purpose of drawing human beings to Himself in love. And I have a major problem with that.

The Atonement and the Wrath of God. But what does this have to do with God’s wrath? The issue can be summed up in one simple question: What did Christ suffer on the cross? According to the substitutionary model of the

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atonement, by His death on the cross Jesus paid the price for human sin. *And the price of human sin is to suffer the wrath of God that He will exercise against the wicked in the second death.*

So did Christ suffer God's active wrath or His passive wrath on the cross? Certainly, He suffered God's passive wrath—God's abandonment of sinners to the results of their sins. Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" That's passive wrath.

Did God take an active hand in the death of His Son? The Bible isn't so clear on that. However, if God took a hand at all in removing life from His Son on Calvary, that would be active wrath. If wrath is God's punishment for sin, and if sinners will suffer God's active wrath at the time of the second death, then it would certainly be consistent for God to have taken an active role in the death of His Son on the cross.

If Jesus didn't suffer God's wrath for sin on the cross in any sense, then the substitutionary model of the atonement makes no sense, and we're left with the moral influence model. Jesus' death was a demonstration of God's love for His children and nothing more. But this would make about as much sense as a father jumping off a high bridge and drowning in the river below to show his son how much he loved him. If the son had fallen into the river, then the father's jumping off the bridge to save him would truly be a demonstration of his love for his son. But jumping for no good reason would be a demonstration of the father's foolishness, not his love.

I conclude that at the very least, Christ suffered God's passive wrath on the cross and very likely His active wrath as well.

In conclusion, the wrath of God that Paul spoke about in Romans 1 was largely God's passive wrath. But in Romans 2 he clearly had in mind God's active wrath at the end of the age, because in verse 5 he said, "Because of your unrepentant heart, you are *storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath.*" That's an eschatological statement. Again, in verse 8 he said, "For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, *there will be wrath and anger.*"

I conclude, then, that God *does* have wrath, and that this quality is perfectly in harmony with His character of love. Indeed, if He didn't experience anger over all the pain and suffering He observes in our world, He'd be like my cat, that could observe all manner of abuse going on around it—and sleep through it all. I don't want a God like that!

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A Concept of Sexual Immorality and Its Consequences in the Bible

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Our post-modern time is famous for having no absolutes. The law is no longer needed, and people prefer to do as they wish to, almost as it was in the days of the Judges when “all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 21:25). On the endless list of modern lawless deeds are adultery and a variety of sexual perversions, such as incest, rape, bestiality, and homosexuality. These sins spread fast and even sneak into the Adventist church.

The purpose of this paper is to show the biblical position on the topic of sexual immorality. Before the presentation of the negative part of sexual human behavior, the original plan of marital purity will be discussed, followed by Jesus’ teachings on this subject. A brief discussion of the biblical view of homosexuality will constitute the major part of this paper. The last segment will discuss the tragic consequences that function as the strongest warning to those who choose to follow after the passion of their fleshly desires and not according to the biblical teachings.

Original Purity of Marriage

Creation Account. From the first till the very last page of the Bible the reader encounters reoccurrence and confirmation of the marriage covenant established by the Creator, His regulations to protect it, His promises to bless it, and all this is manifested in His love to the church that He calls His bride and wife. Marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden on the sixth day of creation, when God created Adam and Eve. Both of them shared in the image of their Creator and completeness of sexes. The Lord made Eve to be Adam’s companion, friend, helper, and love. Seeing Eve for the first time, Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23).

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The Hebrew words for “man” and “woman” are *iš* and *iššah* or “husband” and “wife,” respectively. It should be noted that the assonance of *iš/iššah* focuses the reader’s attention on both the differentiation of functions and the oneness of man-and-woman. Adam “cleaved” to his *iššah*. He entered into lasting community of life with Eve because of his love for her. This means much more than just socializing with her; he engaged in “very personal concern, fidelity and involvement.”¹ This unity of two human beings of “sexual gratification finds its legitimate expression only within the confines of marriage.”²

It is important to note here that human beings were created in the image of God and united in His love. The Creation account presents the model of the family as a unit of two loving people of opposite sex mutually united by covenants and promises under God, when both a husband and a wife willingly leave all their old friends, even parents, “and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Biblically based marriage is more than a contract between two adults who agree to share their lives under certain conditions. A marriage is used as an “earthly picture of the divine love. Marriage is a reminder of God as the One who loves. More specifically it presents the exclusive nature of the divine love.”³

Another important aspect of marriage has a procreation note. In the Garden of Eden the Lord not only blessed *iš* and *iššah*, but He also gave them a power to reproduce themselves. He said, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28).

Be Holy for I Am Holy. Biblically based purity of marriage is rooted in the very Decalogue. The Lord Himself pronounced, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). This commandment not only prevents from adultery, but also from all kinds of sexually transmitted diseases. The Lord wants His earthly children to enjoy the original purity of their sacred union of marital relationship.

In the next book of the Bible, Leviticus, the reader finds numerous times the following expression, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:44). In this and other verses God calls humans to holiness, but this holiness is not their own holiness. God’s holiness requires a total separation from all forms of sin, including adultery. At the same time, He who created humans knows that they can’t be holy in their own power. Therefore, the Lord “who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).

Holiness of God also calls humans to the higher standards of God’s perfection. It requires a separation from all things, whatever they might be, to God, who has superior plans for human beings and their marriage relationships. As

¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 234.

²Calvin B. Rock, “Marriage and Family,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 726.

³Stanley J. Grenz, “Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships,” *JETS* 41/4 (1998): 623.

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Bruce Wilkinson states, “Holiness is the center of God’s will for you.”⁴ Thus, holiness requires submissiveness to God’s will, His “good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2), known from His commandments and revelations.

Jesus’ Teachings. The Savior of the world, who is also its Creator, has not changed with the time. He taught the people the same truth about marital purity as He did at the creation and on Mount Sinai. Knowing sinfulness was leading humans to their own destruction, Jesus reminded them in Matthew 5 about the spirit of the law. In His antithesis *You have heard . . . But I tell you* “Jesus does not contradict what was said but brings it into sharper ethical focus. Hill calls it ‘a radical intensification of the demands of the law’ (p. 119).”⁵

According to Jesus in Matthew 19:6, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Marriage as a faithful unity is a principle that shelters “the couple from outside attacks, and from frivolity, capriciousness, and unfaithfulness within the marriage (Ex 20:14). The Christian enters this covenant with total devotion, pledging his or her utmost to love and cherish, in sickness and in health.”⁶

It is very important to note here that a loving devotion of a husband and a wife to each other has nothing to do with the supremacy of one party and the fearful dependency of the other party. Godly relationship involves both sexual parties in the unity of their marriage to present their unique perspectives as loving gifts to each other. Paul declares that in the Lord, “neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man” (1 Cor 11:11). Human sexuality is not a means to gain power over the other person. “Instead, God has entrusted our fundamental masculinity and femininity to us for the sake of serving each other.”⁷

Sexual Perversions

Moral purity and spiritual commitment to their Creator had to keep Israelites as a separate people to witness God’s love to the surrounding nations. As one part of the Moral Code, marriage unity had to be kept clean and unbroken, for family represents society. In spite of God’s given law, prescriptions, and suggestions to keep the marriage bonds unspotted, throughout history human beings have rebelled and continually committed adultery and other sexual perversions.

Most of the adulterous cases and their perversions found in the Bible testify of a sexual relationship with a member of the opposite sex. The seventh commandment of the Decalogue clearly testifies, “You shall not commit

⁴Bruce H. Wilkinson, *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1998), 14.

⁵Robert H. Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody: Hedrickson, 1991), 44.

⁶Miroslav M. Kiš, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 690.

⁷Grenz, 629.

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mandment of the Decalogue clearly testifies, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod 20:14). This law applies to both men and women, and in Israel if a couple was caught in a violation of this commandment, punishment for both of them was death: “The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death” (Lev 20:10). The Jewish attitude toward adultery is also the Christian attitude—it is against the will of God. Those who commit adultery are judged by God and will be excluded from the heavenly kingdom (Heb 13:4; 1 Cor 6:9).⁸

In Israel there were also sexual perversions such as incest, for example when two daughters of Noah became pregnant from their father (Gen 19:36) or when Reuben slept with his father's concubine (Gen 35:22). The tragic consequences of both stories are clearly narrated in the Bible. The Ammonites and the Moabites were the fighting enemies of the Israelites, and Reuben was cursed by his father and lost his privileges as first-born son.

Rape is another cruel part of sexual perversions. When biblical writers describe rape, they tell of the man seizing (*tapaš*) a woman or overpowering (*hezik*) her before he lies with her.⁹ This is evident from the story of David's son Amnon raping his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:11-14). The Bible also testifies about prostitution. The Hebrew term for prostitute or harlot is *zonah*, which comes from a root that suggests a person who is wanton, on the outside, and perhaps even repugnant. It is important to note here that a priest could not marry such a woman, for she was unfit for service (Lev 21:7, 14; 19:29), and even her money from prostitution could not be used for temple dues (Deut 23:18). These ladies were part of the society, yet apart from it. The Bible has nothing good to say about prostitution, but there are many narratives where prostitutes left their adulterous ways and through faith became new creatures. For example, there are Rahab from Jericho and Mary Magdalene.¹⁰

In the Scriptures are also several indications of bestiality, when a man or a woman had sexual relationships with an animal. Moses clearly writes about such a distortion: “Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion” (Lev 18:23).¹¹ The outcome of bestiality in the Bible is very clear: anyone, man or woman, who engages in sexual relations with an animal deserves death. Leviticus 18:24 reveals even more that because of these sexual perversions entire nations were wiped out. Such sins not only have the power to absolutely distort the

⁸Gerald Larue, *Sex and the Bible* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1983), 82-90.

⁹See Deut. 22:25-29; Larue, 102-107.

¹⁰Rather strong allusions in Luke 7:37-50, *SDA Bible Commentaries* (5:764-767, additional note on Chapter 7), and also *Desire of Ages* (558-560, 566-ff.) suggest that Mary Magdalene was not only freed from demon possession, but also from prostitution.

¹¹See also Exod 22:19; Lev 20:15, 16; Deut 27:21.

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image of God in the mind of human beings, but also to destroy them physically. Therefore, the Lord's straight message regarding bestiality has an annotation to protect His own people from physical, mental, and spiritual disorders.

Homosexuality

One more form of sexual perversion is homosexuality. Throughout its pages the Bible refers to it at least seven times. Four times the acts of homosexuality are mentioned in the Old Testament and three times in Pauline writings. All of these references are negative and are specified as a crime. In spite of the fact that postmodernism tries to justify homosexuality by developing new theological ideas, the biblical view will never be changed. As Angel Rodríguez says, "The Biblical understanding has been questioned and rejected in some sectors of Western culture. When that happens, it is the responsibility of the church to witness to Biblical truth."¹²

As we saw above, the aim of human sexuality should be not personal satisfaction but interpersonal completeness and wholeness between husband and his wife. The Bible tells us clearly, "The two shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). In contrary to that clear statement, homosexuality functions as one of the opposites to the purity of marriage. Together with other extreme movements which have led humans away from God's original plan, homosexuality represents one of the consequences of the Fall, and it should only be seen in this light.¹³ In order to demonstrate the biblical viewpoint, which never approves any form of sexual love within a homosexual relationship, we have to briefly focus on all seven references mentioned in the Scriptures.

Sin of Sodom. The angels of God visited Abraham, and the Lord said to him concerning Sodom, "the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave" (Gen 18:20). The wickedness of this city is also mentioned in Gen 13:13: "the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord." Sodomites threatened Lot and his two guests—angels (Gen 19:4-11). They were seeking to get the visitors out of Lot's house in order "to know them" (v. 5). The Hebrew word *yāda'* in this verse has raised numerous arguments from pro-homosexual movements. For example, Sherwin Bailey¹⁴ argues that this story has nothing to do with homosexuality. Sodomites were just a mob who interrogated visitors to find out who they were, or they just wanted to get acquainted with them. His standpoint is the following: the word

¹²Mark Kellner, "Adventist Church Responds to Same-Sex Unions," *Adventist Review*, 11 March 2004, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1511/news.html>. Reprinted as "Adventists Respond to Same-Sex Unions," *Record*, 109/13 (10 April, 2004): 3.

¹³P. Michael Ukleja, "A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982), 136.

¹⁴Sherwin Bailey was an Anglican scholar who first reevaluated the traditional view of the biblical prohibitions. In 1955 he published *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*.

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yāda' occurs 943 times in the Old Testament, while only 12 times does it mean “to have intercourse with” someone. In other occurrences it is translated as “get acquainted with” or “have knowledge of.” Bailey explains that intercourse, as a means to personal knowledge, depends on more than copulation.¹⁵ Thus, that narrative of Sodom could not fit the sexual implications of the word *yāda'*.

Bailey also argues that the rest of the Old Testament in no place suggests that the sin of Sodom was homosexuality. Instead, he presents that Isaiah (1:10-17, 3:8-9), Jeremiah (23:12-14), and Ezekiel (16:48-50) speak of such sins as hypocrisy, social injustice, adultery, general wickedness, arrogance, greed, and indifference to the poor and in no place of homosexuality. He concludes that imposing homosexuality on Sodom’s story derived later as a Christian tradition from apocryphal Jewish sources.¹⁶

Bailey’s arguments regarding the sin of Sodom may convince only a person who does not know the Scriptures very well. To his first argument about the word *yāda'* is a very strong counterargument. Of the 12 times this word occurs in Genesis, 10 times it means “to have intercourse with” someone and, by the way, once in the current passage. It tells about Lot’s offering of his two virgin daughters who had not *yāda'* a man (Gen 19:8). It would be an absurd gesture to make such an offer if Sodomites wanted only a social knowledge of Lot’s guests.

Ukleja points out that “In narrative literature of this sort it would be very unlikely to use one verb with two different meanings so close together unless the author made the difference quite obvious. In both verses 5 and 8 *yāda'* should be translated ‘to have sexual intercourse with.’ The context does not lend itself to any other credible interpretation.”¹⁷

When Bailey presents the sins of Sodom taken from the Prophets, he does this only partially. For the prophet Ezekiel writes, “they were haughty and committed abomination” before the Lord (16:50). Kittel’s Hebrew Bible uses four separate words for abomination. The word used in this passage has the thought of inherent repulsiveness to God in whatever act the word is referring to. Also, this particular word for abomination, *toevah*, is found in Leviticus (18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30; 20:13) in the command to abstain from lying with a man as with a woman.¹⁸ This word comes from the root meaning “to hate” or “abhor” and therefore it is something that is hated by God and is detestable.¹⁹

If Scripture is compared with itself, one can see that the Apostle Peter explains the sexual nature of Sodom’s abomination. He writes, “turning the cities

¹⁵P. Michael Ukleja, “Homosexuality and the Old Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140/557 (July-September 1983): 259-266.

¹⁶John Stott, *Same-Sex Partnerships?* (Grand Rapids: 1998), 21.

¹⁷Ukleja, “Homosexuality and the Old Testament,” 262.

¹⁸Ukleja, “A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement,” 149.

¹⁹See Proverbs 6:16; 11:1; also, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 196.

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of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy²⁰ conduct of the wicked” (2 Pet 2:6, 7). Jude adds, “as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh” (v. 7).

In addition to these biblical texts, Thomas Schmidt points out general homosexual acts of Sodom taken from early literature:

The second-century BC Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs labels the Sodomites “sexually promiscuous” (Testimony of Benjamin 9:1) and refers to “Sodom, which departed from the order of nature” (Testament of Nephthali 3:4). From the same time period, Jubilees specifies that the Sodomites were “polluting themselves and fornicating in their flesh” (16:5, compare 20:5-6). Both Philo and Josephus plainly name same-sex relations as the characteristic view of Sodom.²¹

Without any doubt, Sodomites were guilty of many sins and homosexuality was one of them, and probably it was the main reason why this city was severely punished and fully destroyed by fire, which, by the way, serves as a prototype of the final destruction of the wicked.

Holiness Code. The two following texts in Leviticus belong to the Holiness Code: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev 18:22); “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (Lev 20:13). These biblical verses are set in the context of God’s judgment upon sexual misdemeanors and are an expansion of the God’s holy law.

The Canaanites’ idolatrous practices were on the verge of being spread among the Israelites. God, through Moses, had to build walls of protection to prevent His people from idolatry with all its violent and vicious practices. Throughout these two chapters God strictly forbids temple prostitution, where homosexuality is one of the crimes. But is this only one side of such a strong homosexual prohibition? According to some scholars it is. For example, Blair writes,

²⁰The Greek term of the word filthy is *aselgeia*, which basically means living without any moral restraint, lustful indulgence, especially indecent and outrageous sexual behavior, flagrant immorality. See also Rom 13:13.

²¹Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexual Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), quoted in Joe Dallas, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the “Gay Christian” Movement* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1996), 190-191.

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That the very pronounced Old Testament judgment against a man's having sexual relations with another man is included in the priestly Holiness Code of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) is significant because the concern of the priests was one of the ritual purity. It was not the moral preaching of the prophets. From this priestly point of view, it is clear that above all else, Israel was to be uncontaminated by her pagan neighbors. In all things, she was to remain a separate "pure vessel unto the Lord." At this time, male prostitutes in the temples of the Canaanites, Babylonians, and other neighboring peoples, were common features of the pagan rites. There, it is understandable that this "homosexuality" connected with the worship of false gods would certainly color Israel's perspective on any and all homosexual activity.²²

In order to argue with Blair regarding these passages, we have to understand that ritual purity and morality go together. In no place does the Bible differentiate between these aspects. In contrast to understanding, Blair divides the priests with their ritual purity from the prophets with their morality. "But the prophets preached to the needs of their day. Anything not included in their teachings is more logically explained by that particular sin's absence among the sins of that generation, rather than by a rigid distinction between ceremonial and moral purity."²³

Homosexual movements argue that Levitical texts prohibit only religious practices which have come to their end a long time ago and therefore have no application to modern homosexuality. But they fail to see that this prohibition refers to every kind of homosexual practices, for ritual purity is just an expansion of morality. They also compare the prohibition of homosexuality with the ceremonial law which was dispelled in Christ's death and resurrection. But this proscription does not point to or anticipate Christ. As Bahnsen correctly argues, the character of the Holiness Code is moral, and its content is still required today.²⁴

In other words, according to pro-homosexual theology, idolatry is not morally wrong, for the ritual purity of the Holiness Code is not a part of the moral law or Decalogue. The same is true of child sacrifice and bestiality. But this would be illogical, for it clearly contradicts the moral law, and Blair does not want to end on that absurd note; thus he simply adds that cultic and moral purity *often* coincide.²⁵

It is very important to note that the content of sexual relations in Leviticus 18, as a part of the Holiness Code, is framed by God's own signature, "I am the Lord your God" (vv. 4, 30). Emphasis on God follows in the next chapter as

²²Ralph Blair, *An Evangelical Look at Homosexuality* (Chicago: Moody, 1963), 3.

²³Ukleja, "Homosexuality and the Old Testament," 263.

²⁴Kaiser, 118.

²⁵Ukleja, "A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement," 152.

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well, where there is a call to general holiness, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (19:2).

The clear explanation of these two Leviticus texts is the following one: obviously the Lord wanted to separate His people from idolatry for a special purpose, to spread His message among the surrounding nations, but at the same time He wanted to preserve that which He created in the Garden of Eden—a pure marital relationship of husband and wife and their family unit.

Gibeah Narrative. Another Old Testament reference to homosexuality is written in Judges 19:22-26. The Gibeah narrative is very similar to the story of Sodom. In this parallel account of sexual crime, the men of the town of Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin attacked an old man’s house asking for his guest, a Levite, to be given to them for the same reason as Sodomites asked for Lot’s guests. They wanted to have intercourse with him, to *yāda’* him. In order to be hospitable, the owner of the house offered them his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine, who was seized and put out of the house. The men of Gibeah raped her to the point of death in substitution for the Levite.²⁶

Verses 23 and 24 suggest that the violent intention of the men of Gibeah was homosexual lust. The host tells the people, “do not act so wickedly. . . do not commit this outrage . . . do not do such a vile thing.” The verb *rā’ā*, “to do evil,” “to act wickedly,” deliberately links the Gibeahites’ behavior with the general spiritual and ethical degradation of the nation during the days of the judges. The second expression, *hannēbālā hazzō’t*, translates literally “this foolishness.” It denotes emptiness, vanity, without moral, spiritual, or reasonable restraint.²⁷

The gang rapers and murderers of the Levite’s concubine were active homosexuals who were not only engaging in practices clearly condemned in the earlier writings of the Scripture (Lev 18:22; 20:13), but also violating the norms of hospitality. As Weston Fields writes, “The introduction of these sexual crimes into the narrative relegates the men of Gibeah to the category of ‘Sodomites,’ people who are a by-word for this particular sexual aberration. Such brazen, public behavior and legal climate should have precluded it.”²⁸ But that was not so, for the last verse of the book of Judges concludes, “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Jdg 21:25).

²⁶At this point we will not discuss a Levite’s cruel act of self protection by allowing his concubine to be raped while remaining ignorant of her fate until morning, when he found her dead. From this account as well as from other biblical passages it is seen that women often were considered the property of a man, expendable if the alternative was harm to a man.

²⁷Daniel I. Block, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 6:536.

²⁸Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 126.

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The night of horror made a powerful impact on the whole of Israel, for the result of this violent action, in which all the townsmen were involved, was a civil war and the ultimate destruction of the city. Even some centuries later the prophet Hosea recalled the depth of Gibeah's corruption when addressing the sins of Israel. He writes, "They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah . . . Since the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel" (Hos 9:9; 10:9).

Throughout history of humanity written in the Old Testament God has dealt with people in different ways and different times. At the same time, His standards for righteousness have never changed. If God's morality has changed, then the character of God has changed, too, because the basis of morality is in the character of God. But as Malachi writes, God does not change: "For I am the Lord, I do not change" (Mal 3:6).

Paul's Address in Romans. Greco-Roman world was very well acquainted with homosexuality and regarded it highly, as is evident from Plato's and Plutarch's writings. It was a feature of social life, indulged in by their gods and emperors. The homosexual reputation of the women of Lesbos was also well established.²⁹

The Apostle Paul, who was raised and educated in Tarsus, was familiar with Greco-Roman philosophies and practices. He knew about homosexuality with all its detestable acts. It is no wonder that when he wrote his letter to the Romans he clearly mentioned Sodom's sin: "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Rom 1:26, 27).

In this passage pro-gay movements see two points supporting their own position. They argue that Paul is speaking about heterosexuals who have consciously committed homosexual acts, thus going against their real nature. Consequently, for them, homosexuality, if committed by true or natural homosexuals, is not a sin. And secondly, Scripture describes here idolaters and not gay Christians who worship the true God.

To prove that such theology is wrong, we have to look more closely at the context of this Scripture passage. Here is an allusion to God's creation of 'iš and 'iššah as complementary sexual beings. Robert Gagson states that "The reference in 1:24 to the same-sex intercourse as a 'dishonoring of their bodies,' combined with the reference to 'natural use' in 1:26-27, confirms that Paul viewed same-sex intercourse as an 'unnatural' use of the gendered body because of the clear anatomical 'discomplementarity' of such intercourse."³⁰

²⁹James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 38A:65.

³⁰Robert Gagson, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 258.

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In this text Paul uses specific words to emphasize human biology: *arsenes*, “male,” and *theleias*, “female.” When these words appear in the New Testament they usually emphasize the masculinity and femininity of the subject. In this context, Paul is clearly saying that the homosexual activities committed by these people were unnatural to both males and females; he is not taking into consideration such things as sexual orientation. He is saying that “homosexuality is biologically unnatural—not just unnatural to heterosexuals, but unnatural to anyone.”³¹

Another argument used by pro-homosexuals is idolatry. In this passage Paul describes the silliness of both homosexuals and idol-worshippers. The last are foolish for trading “the glory of the incorruptible God” for “an image” (v. 23), the Creator for a creature. In the same way, those who practice any kind of homosexuality actively disgrace their own bodies, pursue dishonorable obsessions, and ignore “the natural use for what is against nature” (v. 26). The self-degrading and shameful character of both actions is integrally linked to the obviousness of their error.³²

Homosexuality of both inverts and perverts has a connection with idolatry and as a part of human’s sexual perversions, it began with a break in the communion with God and has its own consequence, Paul says: “God gave them up” (vv. 24, 26, 28) to reap their own choices. Paul is saying in these verses that not only idolatry, but also homosexuality changed the created order.

Besides idolatry and homosexuality, this passage names a number of other sins and speaks about God’s wrath on unrighteousness. Paul presents the whole list of wicked actions that lead to the ultimate fate of death (vv. 18-32). These are wickedness, covetousness, murder, strife, deceit, etc. (vv. 29-30). If verses 26 and 27, testifying to men and women substituting ‘natural use for unnatural,’ apply only to idolatrous homosexuals and lesbians, and thus their acts are not sinful if committed without a link to idolatry, then the same rule must be valid to the sins we just mentioned above. This would mean, Dallas jests, that Paul condemned wickedness, murder, strife, and other sins only because they were committed by people involved in idolatry. Otherwise they are acceptable.³³ Obviously, that such theology is ridiculous and unreasonable.

Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. There are two more biblical texts that mention homosexuality. These are 1 Cor 6:9-10 and 1 Tim 1:9-10. Scholars usually consider both of these verses together because the verses use a word that is unique to the New Testament: *arsenokoitai*. 1 Corinthians 6:9 characterizes homosexuality as a sin that cannot be practiced by those who wish to inherit God’s kingdom, and 1 Tim 1:9-10 emphasizes a number of rebellious

³¹Dallas, 195.

³²Gagnon, 266, 267.

³³Dallas, 196, 197.

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types of people for whom the law was made. Among the ungodly, unholy, murderers, kidnappers, liars, etc., sodomites are also mentioned (NKJV).

1 Corinthians 6:9 uses two words that describe sexual perversions: *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. The literal translation of the first word is “the soft ones,” which may relate to the Greek practice of *paidierastia* (“loving of boys”), homosexual relations between men and boys. The second word, *arsenokoitai*, combines two Greek words together: *arsane*, “male,” with a strong emphasis on gender, and *koite*, “bed.” This word can be translated “male-bedders” or “males who take other males to bed.”

Pro-homosexuals argue about the point of the word *arsenokoitai*, which appears in both references. They say that because this combined word does not appear in any other New Testament passages, most likely Paul refers here only to male prostitution, which was common at that time. But Paul has adopted this unique word from the Holiness Code in the Septuagint, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which strongly forbids homosexuality.

It is interesting to note that the other word, *malakoi*, is placed between the word adulterers, people who commit immoral sexual acts, and *arsenokoitai*, those who practice an immoral act of same-sex intercourse. Thus, immoral sexual intercourse would be an identifying mark of the *malakoi*, where the description “soft” itself suggests passive males playing the female role in sexual intercourse with other males.³⁴

Peter Coleman agrees that the two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* “have precise meaning. The first is literally ‘soft to the touch’ and metaphorically, among the Greeks, meant males (not necessary boys) who played the passive role in homosexual intercourse. The second means literally ‘male in bed,’ and the Greeks used this expression to describe the one who took the active role.”³⁵ In other words, *arsenokoitai* refers to same-sex intercourse and is strengthened by its pairing with *malakoi*. Paul is not writing only about male prostitution or *paidierastia*, but he strongly points out that any form of homosexuality, passive or active, is immoral, and those who practice it will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

What Are the Outcomes?

Having examined some biblical texts dealing with sexual perversions, especially homosexuality, and identifying these acts as sins or crimes, it is a time to briefly focus on the outcomes of those who commit sexual immorality. In many places the Bible presents only two ways for fallen humans to choose: the way of life or the way of death. There is no third option. “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and

³⁴Gagson, 308.

³⁵Peter Coleman, *Christian Attitude to Homosexuality* (SPCK, 1980), 95, 96.

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cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19a).

Any sexual perversion, including homosexuality, is a sin against God and a fellow human being. If people sin openly and even defend their sins by their own theology, the Bible tells us to love such people, but defy their sins as did Christ. His way does not conflict between God’s holy law and His love. Jesus spoke of love in terms of fulfilling the law (Matt 5:19). Love is “that which seeks the will of God in the object loved”³⁶ and the will of God for mankind is to “choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19b).

However, any sexual perversion contradicts the will of God and, therefore, should be addressed clearly by condemning sin in a loving manner. For a sinner there is only one way to get free from a sin with its inclinations and to become a new person—it is through Jesus Christ. Paul declares, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Jesus gives a new heart and a new life even to homosexuals (Ezek 11:19).

The way for those who commit wicked acts is death. The Bible is not silent about the consequences of sin. Paul clearly states in the book of Romans, “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23a). The same is true in the Old Testament. There were three types of penalty for the most serious crimes against family, religion, and life itself. They were “(1) ‘cutting off’ an offender from his people (Lev 20:5, 6), (2) restitution of the stolen property or goods (Lev 6:4), and (3) the death penalty.”³⁷

Among the punishments for murder and adultery were also punishments for sexual perversions—for these the sentence was the strongest. Walter Kaiser describes the sexual crimes for which the death penalty was invoked:

Adultery—Lev 20:10; Deut 22:21-24.
Incest—Lev 20:11, 12, 14.
Bestiality—Exod 22:19; Lev 20:15, 16.
Sodomy—Lev 18:22; 20:13.
Homosexuality—Lev 20:13.
Rape of betrothed virgin—Deut 22:25.
Priest’s daughter committing fornication—Lev 21:9.³⁸

The only way to satisfy the demands of the law was by death, for sin has no excuse (Rom 1:20). Not only has sin disrupted the relationship between human beings and their God, but it has also poisoned the relationship among human beings. The consequences of sin is death, but this did not come as a surprise to

³⁶Charles C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Biblical Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) in P. M. Ukleja, “A Theological Critique of the Contemporary Homosexual Movement,” 174.

³⁷Kaiser, 297.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 298.

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the first couple who first sinned, for God had warned them of it (Gen 2:17), and it should not be a surprise to those who consciously continue in sin.

If in the times of the Old Testament the sinners often were punished right away, in the New Testament era they reap the consequences of their poor choices during this life, while the death sentence is postponed till the later time. Death is a natural result of sin and, at the same time, it is also the final punishment that comes to all impenitent sinners in the form of “the second death” or final eradication (Rev 20:10, 14, 15).³⁹ Jesus, in Matthew, describes the second death: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matt 25:41).

The second death will be similar to the experience of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. As we saw it earlier, these two cities were annihilated because of their cruel wickedness, including homosexuality. The destruction of these cities was complete and not reversible, and Jesus Himself compared it with the last events of this sinful earth. He said, “Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot . . . on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:28, 29). The second death is the ultimate fate of everyone who consciously rebels against their Creator and Law-giver.

Conclusion

This brief study demonstrates that the Bible presents the original purity of marital relationship, which is based on the creation account as well as on the holiness of God and His law. The Bible is not silent on human sexual perversions such as adultery, incest, rape, bestiality, and homosexuality. The punishment for these sins was immediate death in the Old Testament times and ultimate annihilation by fire of every unrepentant sinner during the final eschatological judgment or at the time of the second death. The only way to a clean and pure life is through Jesus Christ, as in the case of any other forgiven sinner.

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³⁹John M. Fowler, *Sin*, in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 252, 253.

“Conscience” in the New Testament

Edwin Cook

The term “conscience” can have broad application in various fields of study related to the mind, such as theology and psychoanalysis. Likewise, there is a broad range of meaning given to the term based on which perspective one is speaking from.¹ This paper approaches the study of the term from a strictly theological perspective.

As an introduction to analyzing the term “conscience,” it is appropriate to note that the *experience* of what we term “conscience” is as old as man himself and can be noted in tragedy and comedy. The first recorded usage in “discursive reflection and analytical description,” however, was by Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C. to 50 A.D.). The only other author writing in Greek who employed the term as frequently was the apostle Paul.² Since the focus of this paper is upon the biblical usage of the term, Philo’s writings will not be analyzed. Another delimiting factor is that the term “conscience” is never employed in the Old Testament.³ The only Hebraic term that approximates the term “conscience” is “heart”⁴ and the scope of this paper does not allow for a detailed examination of

¹ James A. Knight correctly identifies differences regarding the nature of man as the reason for differences of interpretation of “conscience” among various disciplines relating to the study of the mind. He states, “Possibly men will always view the conscience differently, for each will interpret it in the light of his orientation about the nature of man” [James A. Knight, “Conscience,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 19 (January 1964): 139]; Joseph Fletcher concurs, “Theological, philosophical and psychiatric students of ethics may vary (and do) in their explanations of *how* conscience comes about, but all are agreed that it *is* a factor in human personality” [Joseph Fletcher, “Concepts of Moral Responsibility,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 6/1 (Spring 1952): 39 (italics original)].

² H. J. Klauck, “Accuser, Judge, and Paraclete—On Conscience in Philo of Alexandria,” *Skrif en Kerk* 20/1 (1999): 108.

³ Ernesto Borghi correctly states that the term is used only three times in the Old Testament *if one considers the Apocryphal writings* as part of the Old Testament canon. If one rejects such writings from the canon, then there are no uses of the term in the Old Testament [“La notion de conscience dans le Nouveau Testament,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 10 (Mayo-Noviembre, 1997): 86].

⁴ Helen Costigane, “A History of the Western Idea of Conscience,” in *Conscience in World Religions*, ed. Jayne Hoose (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1999), 3–4; Knight, 132; Wayne Barton,

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each usage found in the Old Testament. Thus, this paper focuses upon New Testament usage of the term "conscience."

The format used to research this topic relies heavily upon the New Testament itself, where the term "conscience" (*συνείδησις*) is used thirty times, the majority of them found in the Pauline pastoral epistles⁵; additionally, the verb form (*συννοιδά*) is used four times in the New Testament.⁶ While non-biblical articles are included in the process of investigation, the foundation of this paper is based on exegesis of the text as found in the King James Version and the Greek New Testament.⁷

While the primary purpose of this investigation is to broaden and enhance the author's knowledge in this field, the results of this investigation may also be useful for others.

"Conscience" in the New Testament

The Greek Term *συνείδησις*. The Greek term for "conscience" (*συνείδησις*) derives from the two Greek words *συν* (meaning "together with") and *οἶδα* (meaning "I know"). Thus, the term *συνείδησις* literally means "I know together with."⁸ In Greek society, its usage was usually limited to those cases that involved civic or societal relationships and was rarely used in reference to an individual alone.⁹

Despite the limited application found in non-biblical Greek literature, the usage of the term *συνείδησις* as found in the New Testament allows for a more comprehensive application, especially in relation to the believer and God. To properly understand the breadth of its usage in the New Testament, those passages that employ the term will be analyzed.

New Testament Passages Employing the Terms *συννοιδά* and *συνείδησις*. There are three basic categories into which the New Testament passages referring to "conscience" may be divided. The first, describing the function of "conscience," includes the following passages: Acts 5:2; 12:12; 14:6; 23:1; 24:16; Rom 2:15; 9:1; 13:5; 1 Cor 4:4; 8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27–29; 2 Cor 1:12; 2:4. The second category, referring to the types of "conscience," can be

"The Christian Conscience in an Age of Crisis," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 4/2 (April 1962): 100.

⁵ Jan Stepien, "Syneidesis: La Conscience dans L'Anthropologie de Saint Paul," *Revue D'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 60/1 (January–March 1980): 1; Borghi, 88; So also, Roy B. Zuck, who insightfully notes, "If the 'Adulteress Pericope' (Jn. 7:53-8:11) is not accepted as part of the original manuscript of John's Gospel, then the number of occurrences is 29" ["The Doctrine of Conscience," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126/504 (October–December 1969): 329].

⁶ Zuck, 330.

⁷ Kurt Aland et al, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, third corrected edition (Stuttgart: Biblika-Druck, 1983).

⁸ Costigane, 3; Zuck, 329; Barton, 101; Paul W. Gooch, "'Conscience' in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10," *New Testament Studies* 33/2 (April 1987): 244.

⁹ Costigane, 6.

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further subdivided into the categories of a “good” conscience (2 Cor 5:11; 1 Ti. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 13:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 3:16, 21) and an “evil” conscience (1 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:15). The third category describes the process of how the “conscience” can be cleansed and includes Heb 9:9, 14 and 10:2, 22.

The Function of Conscience. There are four occurrences of the Greek verb *συννοῖδα* in the New Testament, three of which clearly indicate an *internal process of thought*. In Acts 5:2, Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, is described as “being privy” to the sale of some of their land. A more literal translation would be “she knew along with him about the sale of the land.” Similarly, in Acts 12:12, when Peter had been led out of his prison cell by an angel, the Bible says that “when he had considered the thing [his release], he came to the house of Mary.” Likewise, in Acts 14:6, when Scripture describes the apostles when they faced an angry mob of Jews and Gentiles intent on killing them, it says that they “were ware of it, and fled” (a more modern rendering would be, “when they realized [within themselves] it, they fled”). In each of these verses, the Greek verb *συννοῖδα* is used and reflects the idea of “internal thought, or consideration,” or even an “internal awareness.” These usages coincide perfectly with the Greek definition of the term and could easily be translated as “[he, she, they] knew within [himself, herself, themselves] of this thing.”¹⁰

The one verb usage remaining, in 1 Cor 4:4, poses a slightly more difficult challenge in translation. The KJV reads, “For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” The Greek text employs the perfect tense of *συννοῖδα* with the reflexive pronoun *ἐμαυτῷ*, which equates the verb actually being used as a substantive form (*συνείδησις*, rather than *συννοῖδα*). Thus, a more accurate translation would be that of the RSV, “I am not aware of anything against myself,” or even, “My conscience is clear.”¹¹

Thus, from analysis of the verb forms used in the New Testament, “conscience” may rightly be understood as “an inner awareness, or knowledge of something.” In order to capture more fully the intricate functions of “conscience,” it is helpful to exegete the remaining biblical passages that use the substantive form (*συνείδησις*) in describing the role of “conscience” as it relates to the individual.

Acts 23:1. In order to better understand the significance of Acts 23:1, it is necessary to briefly recount the events that preceded it. The historical context of this occasion¹² reveals that Paul had entered the temple the day before to complete the days of purification according to Jewish law. Several of the Jews from Asia had roused other Jews and brought the charge against Paul that he had been teaching men in opposition to Jews, to the law, and to the temple. In response, Paul obtained permission from the Roman chief captain to speak to the Jews

¹⁰ Zuck, 330.

¹¹ Zuck, 330.

¹² Acts 21:15–22:30.

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who had gathered before the temple. Paul gave his testimony in Hebrew, bearing testimony in favor of Christ and the Christian way. The whole city responded in an uproar, and the Roman chief captain brought Paul into the castle for protection. The following day, Paul appeared before the Sanhedrin (συνέδριον), the highest Jewish council in civil and religious matters.¹³

This verse reveals several elements related to the idea of "conscience." First, Paul relates the Greek verb πολιτεύομαι (to live, to conduct one's life¹⁴) to the term *συνείδησις* (conscience) when he states, "I have lived in all good conscience." The textual idea brought forth from the Scripture implies that the role of "conscience" is in *relation to the conduct of one's life*. Ernesto Borghi elaborates further by stating, "The syntax *πάντα συνείδησις ἀγαθὴ* explicitly reveals the individual faculty of discernment between good and evil."¹⁵

Furthermore, Paul introduces another element into this understanding. Not only is "conscience" related to how one lives, but it is also *how one lives* "before God." In this phrase there is the subtle hint that links the conscience to the divine sphere. This is not to say that the conscience is a divine element in man, nor the voice of God,¹⁶ but it suggests that since God is the Creator of man, then He is the Originator of the conscience in man as well.¹⁷ As Allen Verhey consistently argues from a philosophical perspective, "A person's conscience is the product of the inescapability of God."¹⁸

¹³ Aland, 172.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁵ Borghi (90), "le syntagme *πάντα συνείδησις ἀγαθὴ* explicite pleinement la faculté de discernement personnel du bien et du mal."

¹⁶ Larry Gates states, "It is a psychological truth that conscience is perceived by many as the voice of God. The faithful take inner moral imperatives as divine and consider them to be more important than any merely human wishes" ["Conscience as the Voice of God: A Jungian View," *Journal of Religion and Health* 31/4 (Winter 1992): 282]. In contrast, Alfred M. Rehwinkel states, "That the voice of conscience stands in some relation to God is true," but if conscience were the voice of God then "conscience would have to be infallible" [*The Voice of Conscience* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), 7, cited in Barton, 101; Zuck (331) concurs with Rehwinkel and Barton. For additional comment on this point from Ellen G. White, see Appendix A at the end of this paper.

¹⁷ Barton, 99; Don E. Marietta, Jr., describes how, even in non-biblical literature, the conscience was referred to as being divine in origin ["Conscience in Greek Stoicism," *Numen* 17 (December 1970): 181].

¹⁸ Allen Verhey, "The Person as a Moral Agent," *Calvin Theological Journal* 13/1 (April, 1978): 12. James A. Knight (133), commenting on "conscience" from a theological point of view, states "Conscience is the voice of moral man speaking to himself as a moral being and making moral judgments. This voice was placed by God in man at his creation, and man cannot rid himself of it. . . . God created man to be a moral being. Thus, he endowed him with the faculty to be moral"; Barton (101) likewise, states, "Whereas we secure the content of conscience from various sources, it was God who created this capacity for self-knowledge." J. Olbert Kempson concurs, "It appears, however, that conscience can be defined as a God-given capacity, which, when developed in an adequate, healthy manner, can enable the individual to choose a course of direction in achieving a degree of wholeness" ["Comments on Structure of the Conscience," *The Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 4/1 (Lent 1961): 15].

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Moreover, since the context of this verse reflects the *conflict* between a group of men recognized as having authority to judge in religious and civil matters and an *individual* (Paul), the idea is introduced of *individual accountability before God*. Paul here demonstrates that it is to God alone that the individual must answer for the conduct of his life. Significantly, this passage clearly establishes that in matters of belief, and especially of conduct based on those beliefs, *the ultimate arbiter is God*.

Last, and perhaps the insight that strikes most strongly upon the subject of “conscience,” is that in this instance, Paul was confronted by those with whom he had once associated. At one time he had believed, advocated, and zealously defended the traditions and teachings of his Jewish upbringing.¹⁹ However, having met Christ on the road to Damascus, he was converted to Christianity. This conversion experience of Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle offers insights into the subject of “conscience.” Consider for a moment, based on Paul’s conversion, the following points. 1) Conscience can be a faulty guide. His experience teaches that one can sincerely follow one’s conscience and yet be sincerely wrong in God’s view.²⁰ Saul thought he was sincerely serving God when he persecuted Christians.²¹ As John M. Espy comments on Paul’s conversion, “Full consciousness of sin came only on the Damascus road, where the charge of persecuting God’s people, and the Son of God Himself, brought him face to face with his rebelliousness against God—and, after a fashion, with the Law.”²² 2) An educated conscience does not necessarily mean a converted conscience. Paul had received a formal education in the rabbinical schools and had even been taught by Gamaliel,²³ one of the most prominent religious leaders among the Jews in Paul’s day,²⁴ yet he did not know Jesus.²⁵ 3) It is the role of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God to convict the conscience, as when Jesus spoke to Paul, saying, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks (Gk., κέντρον, literally “goads,” but translated as “pricks” in KJV).” When one compares the term “goads” of Acts 9:5 and 26:14 with the “goads” of Ecclesiastes 12:11, it is

¹⁹ Galatians 1:13, 14; Philippians 3:4–6;

²⁰ Barton (106) argues that one can be true to oneself by following one’s conscience, and yet be false with God and one’s fellow man. Additionally, Frank Mobbs posits that one can even sincerely follow one’s conscience and still be wrong. He states, “If I have good reasons for my belief, then it is true. Now all sorts of reasons can make a belief true. But of one thing I can be certain—the *fact that I believe something is not a reason that makes it true* [“Conscience and Christian Morality,” *St. Mark’s Review* 160 (Summer 1995): 33 (italics his)];” Jeong Woo Lee further notes, “Conscience, of course, is not the ultimate standard of righteousness [“To Every Man’s Conscience in the Sight of God,” *Kerux: A Journal of Biblical-Theological Preaching* 15/3 (December 2000): 17].”

²¹ Acts 26:9–12.

²² John M. Espy, “Paul’s ‘Robust Conscience’ Re-Examined,” *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 175.

²³ Acts 22:3.

²⁴ Acts 5:34.

²⁵ Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15.

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evident that it refers to the writings of Scripture that serve to instruct the wise. From these verses, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit was convicting Saul from the Scriptures of his wayward course, but he was stubbornly resisting such promptings.

Acts 24:16. Acts 24:16 is a continuation of Paul's previous defense. By the usage of the Greek term ἀσκέω ("to endeavor, to do one's best"²⁶; KJV "I do exercise"), the concept of the "will" is introduced as the volitional force that follows the dictates of "conscience." From this verse, it is evident that the "will" is not to be confused with the "conscience," yet the two are inter-related. The conscience is the "bull's eye" to which the "arrow" of the will must fly. Paul states that he "exercises," "endeavors," or "does his best" to have always an ἀπρόσκοπον (blameless, faultless; inoffensive; clear [of conscience]²⁷) συνείδησιν. Roy B. Zuck, commenting on Paul's statement, says, "*Disciplining himself he strived deliberately and continually to avoid known sin.*"²⁸

By introducing the concept of the "will," the corollary of "choice" also enters the discussion of "conscience," which in turn involves the action of rationalization, or reason. Realization of this point aids in establishing that, from the Scriptures studied thus far, the conscience is linked to both the will and the rational faculty within man. Of further significance, this understanding is foundational to the vindication of God's judgment of each person. Since man is created with not only reasoning ability, but also with the moral faculty of conscience, he is therefore accountable for the life he lives, and God is justified in the judgment rendered toward each person.

Additionally, when Paul states "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men," the spectrum of the "conscience" is broadened to include not only a man's relation to God, but also to his fellow men. The implications of this point are significant in the formulation of "conscience," especially from the perspective of societal ethics. To what extent is a man's "conscience" to be educated or influenced by his fellow men? What criteria should guide in this process? While the answers to these, and related questions, lie beyond the scope of this paper, the focal point of "conscience," and thus the individual's religious experience, in relation to one's fellow men mitigates against the common notion of isolationism in the Christian's walk with God. Vast territory is here opened with respect to the biblical subjects of ecclesiology (the individual Christian in relation to the community of fellow believers) and religious liberty (the individual Christian in relation to society and government).

Furthermore, as Paul uses the term "conscience void of offense", or "blameless" (ἀπρόσκοπον συνείδησιν), the text implies that "conscience" fulfills a *role of judgment* toward the individual. Roy B. Zuck even goes as far as defining

²⁶ Aland, 27.

²⁷ Ibid., 24.

²⁸ Zuck, 340 [italics mine].

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one function of the conscience as “that of a judge.”²⁹ When one lives in harmony with one’s conscience, one may state that one is “without blame.” Contrariwise, if one lives in opposition to one’s conscience, then one is worthy of blame.

Romans 2:12–16. In Romans 2:12–16, based on the grammatical construction in verse 15, the idea of *the law in relation to “conscience”* is introduced. This observation implies a standard, the law, to which the conscience is oriented.³⁰ Elaborating this point further, Douglas Straton refers to the primary principles of conduct that are found “in all of the major cultures of mankind, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Zoroastrian, Greek, Judeo-Christian, [and] Islamic.” He concludes by stating,

Finding the main content, then, of *the last five of Moses’ commandments*, the ethical “laws,” or close parallels to them, widely throughout human civilization, constitutes strong historical or empirical evidence *that basic qualities of conscience, or ideas of moral law, are similar or native to mature human life on a universal scale.*³¹

Roy B. Zuck succinctly concludes, “Therefore, based on ethnology and New Testament usage, the conscience can be defined as ‘the inner knowledge or awareness of, and sensitivity to, some moral standard.’”³²

Additionally, Paul here refers to the Gentiles who do not have the law, as do the Jews or Christians. Paul seems to introduce the idea of an “active conscience” apart from conversion. This very point has been the subject of much debate among Protestant and Catholic theologians, the former group emphasizing the consequences of Adam’s fall upon his posterity (referred to as “total depravity,” and thus affecting our mental and moral faculties to the extent that we need the divine revelation of God as an act of grace and mercy to make known the divine will),³³ and the latter group contending for a concept of “natural law,”

²⁹ Zuck, 333.

³⁰ Zuck, 333; William E. May, “The natural law, conscience, and developmental psychology,” *Communio* (Spring, 1975): 10; John Coulson cogently argues, “To disobey the moral law is to disobey our natures, since they are created by God, the author of that law, and this is perhaps how the metaphor of conscience as an inner voice or dialogue arises.” He further contends (157), “To admit the claims of conscience is to admit the existence of a law which has conditioned that conscience and of a law-giver, the author of that law” [“The Authority of Conscience,” *The Downside Review* 77/248 (Spring 1959): 151]; Verhey (5, 6) argues the same point; V. A. Rodgers even refers to the relationship, in non-biblical literature, between the gods and men, and [divine] law and men’s uneasiness when approaching death for not having kept it [“Συνεσις and the Expression of Conscience,” *Greek-Roman-and Byzantine-Studies* 10/3 (Autumn 1969): 248].

³¹ “The Meaning of Moral Law,” *Andover Newton Quarterly* (January 1965): 31 [italics mine].

³² Zuck, 331.

³³ Raymond E. Peterson, “Jeremy Taylor on Conscience and Law,” *Anglican Theological Review* 48 (July 1966): 250–253; T. James Kodera, “Reshaping of Conscience: Religion, Education, and Multiculturalism,” *Anglican Theological Review* 78/3 (Summer 1996): 475, 476; George F. Thomas identifies five areas for consideration regarding divine revelation: “(1) principles of authoritative revelation are found in the Bible, not in moral philosophy; 2) biblical revelation requires a

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by which they argue that we all have the ability to discover the righteous claims of God's law through reason alone (apart from divine revelation through the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit).³⁴ A more detailed deliberation that would set forth both views more fully is beyond the scope of this paper³⁵ and would be tangential to its purpose, but suffice to say, for the purpose of this paper, that both groups concur that all men have a conscience that is amenable to God's law,³⁶ whether it be through revelation of the Holy Spirit, or whether through reason alone.

Furthermore, the "conscience" is here referred to in a way that distinguishes it from the individual. Paul states, "their conscience also bearing witness," not "they bear witness," inferring that while the conscience is a part of the individual, yet it is not the individual *en toto*. Rather, "it integrates a whole range of mental operations," including such mental faculties as reason, emotion, and will.³⁷ While "conscience" is not to be equated with the individual, it should not be viewed as autonomous, nor as an absolute authority unto itself, either.³⁸

Moreover, "conscience" is also distinguished from the "thoughts" of the individual, since Paul refers to them separately.³⁹ Thus, "conscience" cannot be simply the memory, although there is a direct relationship between the memory and "conscience," since they are both associated in the role of accusing or excusing the individual. Exploring the relationship between thoughts and the role

Christian to 'use reason fully in determining its meaning and implications for his life'; 3) revelation is 'mediated through their moral experience'; 4) 'Christian ethics is inseparable from the Christian faith that God has revealed His will in Christ'; and 5) in examining the facts of moral consciousness 'the Bible must be accorded a privileged position'" [*Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, 373–375, quoted in I. G. Whitchurch, "A Forum for Conscience," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (March 1969): 65, 66].

³⁴ May, 5, 6.

³⁵ For a comprehensive comparison and analysis of both views, see Robert M. Zins, *On the Edge of Apostasy: Evangelical Romance with Rome* (Huntsville: White Horse, 1998), 31–65, 82–87; James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome*, (Eugene: Harvest House, 1995), 21–121; James R. White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 39–44, 130–138; William Cathcart, *The Papal System*, Watertown: Baptist Heritage, 1989 [originally published in Philadelphia by Ferguson and Woodburn, 1872], 261–262; John Armstrong, *The Catholic Mystery* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1999), 42–43; John Armstrong, *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and Unites Us*, (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 76–77; and "Original Sin," and "Of Justification" in J. A. Wylie, *Papacy* (London: Hamilton, Adam, 1867), 271–285; 286–293.

³⁶ Stepien, 11, 12; Marcelino Zalba, "Papel de la conciencia en la calificación de los actos morales," *Gregorianum* 62/1 (1981): 142, 143; Harold J. Berman, "Conscience and Law: The Lutheran Reformation and the Western Legal Tradition," *The Journal of Law and Religion* 5/1 (1987): 181–182.

³⁷ William C. Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development," *Theological Studies* 61/1 (March 2000): 123.

³⁸ Stepien, 10; Gooch, 246.

³⁹ Zuck (333) observes that the Greek does not equate the conscience with the condemning and approving thoughts.

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of “conscience” to a further degree, Page Lee adds that “conscience” embraces not only activity regarding past actions, but also is active with respect to *future, contemplated actions not yet performed*.⁴⁰ William C. Spohn describes the same idea, but with different terms, when he states, “The term is used in two senses: ‘anterior conscience’ for all the searching and deliberation that leads up to a moral decision, and ‘subsequent conscience’ that reflects back on decisions we have made.”⁴¹

Romans 9:1. In Romans 9:1, Paul describes the role of the “conscience” as supporting the truth he has spoken. The Greek verb used here to describe the action of the “conscience” is *συμμαρτυρέω*, which can be translated as “to show to be true” or “to give evidence in support of [something].”⁴² This indicates that the “conscience” fulfills the role of bearing witness to an individual’s *conscious thought and action*.⁴³

What is even more enlightening is that Paul declares that such action performed by the “conscience” is done “in the Holy Ghost” (*ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*), thus defining the role of the “conscience” as the medium through which the Holy Spirit speaks to an individual.⁴⁴ John Webster emphasizes this point by explaining how a correct understanding of “conscience” must be established upon recognition of God’s initiative and man’s response as a created being:

In speaking of conscience by speaking of God, Christian moral theology will emphasize (1) that conscience is a *created* reality. As such, it is contingent, not necessary; limited, not infinite; first of all a hearing, rather than a form of speech. Above all conscience is not a form of autonomy, a kind of moral *possessio sui*. We have conscience, as we have reason and will, in our creatureliness; and thus we have them spiritually, in the event of the grace of creatureliness. We have conscience by the gift of the Father.⁴⁵

To take this analysis a step further, Paul describes the role of the “conscience” and the accompanying work of the Holy Spirit in the context of telling the truth. This implies various levels of activity within the mind. On one level, Paul knows that what he is saying is truth, so he speaks that truth. On another level, Paul is also conscious of the work of his “conscience” bearing witness to himself that what he is saying is the truth, and on a third level, that the Holy Spirit has confirmed to him, through his conscience, that what he speaks is indeed the truth. To take the opposite view for a moment, we may hypothetically

⁴⁰ “‘Conscience’ In Romans 13:5,” *Faith and Mission* 8/1 (Fall 1990): 88; Borghi (91) concurs.

⁴¹ Spohn, 122.

⁴² Aland, 170.

⁴³ Stepien, 11.

⁴⁴ Page Lee (90–91) correctly states, “In Romans 9:1, Paul made an explicit connection of conscience with Christ and the Holy Spirit. The behavioral consequences of this transformation of the context of conscience amount to a revolution in the ethical role and significance of conscience.”

⁴⁵ “God and Conscience,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 33/1 (April, 1998): 117.

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state that an individual can assess the truthfulness or falseness of an item before stating it, corresponding to level one of mental activity. Next, he may decide to speak falsely and the Holy Spirit, through his conscience, will counter the activity of level one by reminding him that what he is about to speak is a falsehood. If he decides to speak falsely anyhow, then the Holy Spirit performs the work of convicting him of his guilt for having lied, and the consequent result is guilt for the sin committed.⁴⁶

By the association that Paul makes between his "conscience" and his heart (τῆ καρδία μου, v. 2), the "conscience" fulfills a role of bearing witness to one's feelings and emotions. Zuck elucidates this point: "Here his conscience indicated internally to Paul himself that his statement about his felt grief for Israel was in accord with his actual feelings. If Paul had been speaking falsely when he expressed his deep concern for Israel, his conscience, like a witness in a court trial, would have called his attention to his falsehood."⁴⁷

Romans 13:5. From the context of the passage (Rom 13:1–5), Paul is referring to the civil duties expected of Christians. As pertaining to our study of the "conscience," this passage distinguishes "conscience" from other motivating factors, such as fear (v. 5). It implies that even in the absence of motivating factors based upon feelings, "conscience" fulfills a role that could be appropriately termed "duty" or "obligation." "Rehwinkel calls this prompting action the "obligatory" aspect of the conscience,⁴⁸ and Strong calls it "the claim of duty, the obligation to do the right."⁴⁹ This suggests that while feelings are valid motivational factors, they are not to be confused with "conscience." Duty takes precedence over feeling. Obligation to God is paramount to self-concern.

Additionally, the idea of "submission" to "just authority" is evident in this passage.⁵⁰ Taking into account this understanding, it follows that in order to

⁴⁶ Zuck (332) cites Rehwinkel and other authors in support of a three-fold function of conscience: "1) it distinguishes the morally right and wrong, 2) it urges man to do that which he recognizes to be right, and 3) it passes judgment on his acts and executes that judgment within his soul." The position taken in this paper concurs with the view set forth by Zuck, et al; however, the point of distinction is that, based on the Scriptural passage, the Holy Spirit has a much more active role than is acknowledged by Zuck, et al. To overlook this point means: 1) denial of the Scriptural description of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the conscience, as brought forth in Romans 9:1, and 2) to imply that man is a moral monitor unto himself, apart from the activity of God, a position that approaches Pelagianism and traditional Roman Catholic teaching on moral theology regarding the "natural law" theory.

⁴⁷ Zuck, 333.

⁴⁸ Alfred W. Rehwinkel, "Conscience," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (136), quoted in Zuck, 332.

⁴⁹ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (498–99), quoted in Zuck, "The Doctrine of Conscience," 332, 333.

⁵⁰ Torleiv Austad, "Attitudes Towards the State in Western Theological Thinking," *Themelios* 16/1 (October–November 1990): 20; Stanley E. Porter, "Romans 13:1–7 as Pauline Political Rhetoric," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 3/6 (November 1990): 126–127; Robert H. Stein, "The Argument of Romans 13:1–7," *Novum Testamentum* 31/4 (October 1989): 334; Paul D. Feinberg, "The Chris-

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submit to a just authority so that the demands of “conscience” can be fulfilled, the individual must exercise his reasoning, or rational, powers. Thus, the relationship between “conscience” and rational faculties of the mind are inseparably linked.⁵¹

1 Corinthians 8:7, 10, 12. The central idea reflected in 1 Cor 8:7, 10, 12 is that of Christian influence among believers, with special emphasis upon concern for those newly converted whose “conscience” is weak. Those believers who have the knowledge that there is only one true God can eat food sacrificed to idols without their conscience becoming guilt stricken. When those believers who don’t have this knowledge, referred to as having a “weak conscience,”⁵² eat food sacrificed unto idols, their conscience is defiled because they think they have worshipped other gods.

From the perspective of “conscience,” the most solemn point this passage teaches is that it is a sin to violate one’s own conscience (the weak brother perishes), and an even greater sin to lead another person to violate his conscience (“when you sin so against the brethren”). Since only one of the scholarly works consulted for this paper addressed this issue,⁵³ it is proper to develop it further. By the usage of the term “sin,” the concept of “conscience” is moved from the area of *human* ethics to *divine* ethics. *Realization of this truth establishes the*

tian and Civil Authorities,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 10/1 (Spring 1999): 98; James D. G. Dunn, “Romans 13:1–7—A Charter for Political Quietism?” *Ex Auditu* 2 (1986): 67–68; and Susan I. Boyer, “Exegesis of Romans 13:1–7,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 32/4 (Autumn 1987): 215, who all argue for submission to “a just state,” one that does not assume the prerogatives of God by attempting to control man’s conscience or deny the civil rights of its citizens. Charles Hodge speaks of the “legitimate design of government” as not including the “abuse of power by wicked men” [*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (rev. ed., 1886; thirteenth printing, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 407].

⁵¹ Stepien, 11; Straton, 31–33; Verhey, 9–11; and Walter Redmond, “Conscience as Moral Judgment: The Probabilist Blending of the Logics of Knowledge and Responsibility,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 26/2 (Fall 1998), *passim*.

⁵² Zuck (338) refers to the “weak conscience” as “one that is overscrupulous or oversensitive.”

⁵³ Paul W. Gooch (248, 249) argues that the passage does not refer to an issue of “moral conscience,” since the unenlightened brother is the one who “has a defective apprehension of Christian moral principles which requires alteration.” While this observation is true, it nonetheless overlooks the stated fact in Scripture that such action by the enlightened brother is termed “sin.” In order to resolve this apparent paradox, it seems that while the issue in this passage does relate to an “overscrupulous” brother who needs correction by knowledge of the truth, Paul is primarily concerned with the *timing* of when such correction should occur. Until I have informed my brother of the knowledge I have that allows me more liberty than he practices, I should refrain from any course of action that would encourage him to act in violation of his conscience. This interpretation is more in harmony with Paul’s emphasis upon “charity [love] that edifies” rather than “knowledge that puffs up” (Borghesi, 89–90). Thus, the central point brought forth in this paper is still valid: the conscience of an individual in relation to God is so sacred that not only a correct knowledge of the truth should be shared with him, but also the proper timing regarding when to do so should so modify my practices that I do not “wound” his “weak conscience.”

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sacredness of the relationship between God and each person, a relationship so sacred that no person is held guiltless who violates it.

Additionally, this passage introduces the idea of "an informed conscience." Paul refers to those believers who had knowledge about the one true God in contrast to those who did not. Not only does this reiterate the relationship existing between "conscience" and reason, but it establishes how a "weak conscience" may be made strong. Since the knowledge that Paul refers to is about God, and thus based on the Scriptures, the Bible plays a central role in strengthening the conscience of the believer.⁵⁴

When Paul speaks of an emboldened conscience," the term used is "οἰκοδομεω" ("to build up, to edify, to encourage").⁵⁵ From the context of this passage, it seems that Paul teaches that a person's "conscience" can be influenced by *external factors*, such as the practices of a fellow believer. This insight affords an even broader understanding of "conscience" than developed in this paper thus far. While it is evident from the passage that Paul admonishes those "with knowledge" to accommodate those "without knowledge" by not living according to the liberating truths they know, yet the idea is introduced regarding how the Holy Spirit can effect transformation in the life of fellow believers. When a Christian takes the time to become informed about biblical truth and lives by it, the Holy Spirit can influence the life of another believer to search out the truth for himself so that he may not have a "wounded" conscience. Of course, in harmony with Paul's counsel, one must act at the proper time (i.e., adapting my lifestyle practices to the beliefs of another believer until I have had time to inform him of the knowledge I possess).

1 Corinthians 10:25, 27, 28, 29. Since 1 Cor 10:25, 27–29 is a continuation of the issues set forth in 1 Cor 8,⁵⁶ only two other points will be addressed here. First, the passage raises the idea of differing levels of growth regarding "conscience" among believers.⁵⁷ Basing the interpretation of this passage with 1 Cor 8, Paul offers practical ideas of how to deal with issues that could be viewed differently among fellow believers. Perhaps the comment of O. Hallesby is appropriate here: "conscience is an individual matter. Conscience sits in judgment on oneself and ought not therefore properly to sit in judgment on anyone else."⁵⁸

Second, Paul addresses the issue of Christian contact with non-believers. The practical counsel he gives teaches that the best method of "enlightening the conscience" of non-believers is to wait for them to make a statement that opens for discussion matters of Christian faith. Also, the passage plainly establishes the need for believers to adhere steadfastly to the truth once it is introduced.

⁵⁴ Zuck, 338.

⁵⁵ Aland, 124.

⁵⁶ Zuck, 338.

⁵⁷ In the Greek text, the plural tense is used when referring to "you" in verse 27: "and if ye (plural) be disposed to go," or "and if all of you desire to go."

⁵⁸ *Conscience*, (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1950): 30, cited by Barton, 101.

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Once the issue in question is evident to the non-believer, Paul admonishes, “Eat not for his sake that showed it.”

2 Corinthians 4:2. Since Paul states that the apostles commended themselves “to every man’s conscience” (2 Cor 4:2), the most evident teaching from this passage regarding the conscience is that the “conscience” is innate and every person possesses one. Paul indicates this same idea when he refers to his “conscience” and that of a fellow believer (1 Cor 10:25, 27–29).⁵⁹ It is true that some people act as if they did not possess a conscience, and this idea will be dealt with further in the section on 1 Tim 4:2.

2 Corinthians 1:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:11. In both of these passages (2 Cor 1:12; 5:11), Paul speaks of the “conscience” as a “witness” or “testimony.” Of note here, Paul first speaks of the “conscience” of himself and other apostles (see 2 Cor 1:19) as bearing witness to their joy in service to the Corinthian church. More significantly, Paul describes how his and the other apostles’ ministry was “made manifest” to the Corinthian church. The idea that Paul presents here is that the church at Corinth *in collective capacity* performs a role of judging the ministry of the apostles. While this insight does not provide sufficient basis for supporting the teaching of absolute ecclesial authority, yet it does establish the ecclesial prerogative to review the apostles’ performance in ministry.

Types of Conscience

A “Good” Conscience (Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21). In each of these passages (Heb 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21) the basic idea of a “good” conscience is the believer in relation to God. In Heb 13:18, Paul concludes his letter appealing to his readers to pray that he may live in harmony with God, based on the terms of the New Covenant that he wrote about in the epistle.⁶⁰ In 1 Peter 3:16, 21, Peter emphasizes the individual’s relation to God⁶¹ and the resurrection of Jesus as the basis of that relationship.⁶² It is when one experiences such a relationship that he can have a “good” conscience that will bear the reproach of all ungodly people.⁶³

A “Good” Conscience and Faith (1 Timothy 1:5 and 1 Timothy 1:19). Both 1 Tim 1:5 and v. 19 intimately link “faith” with a “good conscience”⁶⁴ (συνειδήσεως αγαθῆς; ἀγαθὴν συνείδησιν). The implication of this point with respect to the “conscience” of every person clearly distinguishes between those who are Christians and those who are not. The complexity of this point as it relates to Romans 2:12–16 can hardly be emphasized. How can those who

⁵⁹ Zuck, 331; Stepien (4) argues the same conclusion, not from 1 Cor 10, but from Rom 2:15, where Paul speaks of “those without law” who have an active conscience.

⁶⁰ Borghi, 94.

⁶¹ Borghi, 95.

⁶² Stepien, 17.

⁶³ Zuck, 337.

⁶⁴ Stepien, 14, 15.

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have no faith in God still have a conscience guided by "natural law" that is acceptable to Him? This is an area of investigation that can be pursued perhaps by another scholar.

A "Pure" Conscience (1 Timothy 3:9 and 2 Timothy 1:3). In 1 Tim 3:9 and 2 Tim 1:3, Paul refers to the ἐν καθαρῷ (pure, clean, innocent)⁶⁵ στυγνείῃσει in relation to service to God. In the first instance, he refers to the qualification of a deacon and in the second, he refers to his own service to God.⁶⁶ Paul here refers to the "conscience" as "a norm for the Christian life,"⁶⁷ and more importantly, the need for "irreproachable service to God."⁶⁸

A "God-like" Conscience (1 Peter 2:19). Although there are many possible interpretations of 1 Peter 2:19, the two most likely are that it refers to believers coming into such close relation to God that they manifest the divine characteristics of submission to suffering, even in the face of death, because of the example of Christ set before them.⁶⁹ The second interpretation is that the verse refers to believers faithfully adhering to the obligations resulting from their relationship with God, which results in persecution.⁷⁰ In either case, the central issue is based on the individual's "conscience" in relation to God. For the purposes of this paper, this verse suggests that one way for the believer's conscience to mature enough to manifest the Christian graces is to spend time in close relation to God. It further indicates that the Christian path is not free from suffering if one faithfully follows one's conscientious convictions based in the Word of God.

A "Defective" Conscience (1 Timothy 4:2). The most basic teaching of 1 Tim 4:1–3 provides an explanation of how one's conscience may become defective. Paul first speaks of such people as "speaking lies in hypocrisy" (ἐν ὑποκρίσει⁷¹ ψευδολόγων⁷²). Based on the Greek text, Paul links the idea of seducing spirits and doctrinal error resulting in believers who live hypocritical lives and speak lies. Those who succumb to such influences eventually have a "seared conscience" (κεκαυστηριασμένων τὴν συνείδησιν). The verbal idea expressed here is in the perfect participial tense, meaning that what Paul describes here is a *fixed continuous result*. In other words, those who arrive at this condition will continue to live in hypocrisy and lies with no possibility of being re-converted. The verbal idea correlates perfectly with the verb that Paul chose to use here, which is καυστηριάζω (to burn with a hot iron so as to deaden to feeling).⁷³

⁶⁵ Aland, 89.

⁶⁶ Zuck, 337.

⁶⁷ Borghi, 93.

⁶⁸ Stepien, 16.

⁶⁹ Borghi, 94.

⁷⁰ Stepien, 20.

⁷¹ Aland, 189.

⁷² Aland, 200.

⁷³ Aland, 98.

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As this passage relates to “conscience,” it is first evident that the conscience can become so deranged by sin that it renders one incapable of responding to the Holy Spirit. Second, the passage teaches the importance of doctrinal truth to fortify the conscience against the influence of demonic spirits. Third, it teaches the fearful truth about a person reaching the “point of no return.” For this cause, it is vitally important for one to promptly resist any influences that would lead contrary to convictions based on the teachings of God’s Word and to just as promptly follow the convictions of the Holy Spirit as it leads one in the way of truth.

Titus 1:15. In Titus 1:10–16, Paul again associates a “defiled conscience” (v. 15) with unsound doctrinal beliefs and with a lack of faith. Paul is here describing the condition of believers who have succumbed to the wrong influences of those who teach falsehoods. He describes such believers as βδελυκτοί (detestable, vile),⁷⁴ ἀπειθεῖς (disobedient, rebellious),⁷⁵ and ἀδόκιμοι (failing to meet the test, disqualified; worthless; corrupted [mind]).⁷⁶ With such a horrid description of a defective and defiled conscience, it is essential to focus the remainder of this paper on how one can have a pure conscience.

How to Have a Pure Conscience (Hebrews 9:8–14; 10:2, 22). The overall theme of the book of Hebrews addresses the deficiencies of the Old Testament Covenant and priesthood. In contrast, Paul presents the “new and better” way into the Heavenly Sanctuary by the sacrifice and mediatorial ministry of Jesus Christ as the High Priest of the New Covenant. It is against this background that Paul addresses the subject of how the Old Testament cultic ritual could not provide cleansing from sin. As Gary Selby observes, “The old system, because it was primarily external and ceremonial, was not able . . . to resolve a problem that was internal and spiritual—a guilty conscience.”⁷⁷ Rather, it served to continually remind the worshippers of their sins. Under the New Covenant, Paul refers to the “dead works,” which actually refers to “sin,”⁷⁸ that the believer needs to be cleansed of. The hope brought out by the New Covenant is based on the shed blood of Jesus and His role as Mediator of that covenant. As Selby further states, “. . . because Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses the conscience, it allows for *unhindered access to God* (εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῶ),”⁷⁹ thus making it far superior to the old system. Ernesto Borghi takes the benefits of the New Covenant even further: “By consequence of such a union with the Lord, every notion of

⁷⁴ Aland, 32.

⁷⁵ Aland, 18.

⁷⁶ Aland, 4.

⁷⁷ “The Meaning and Function of Συνείδησις in Hebrews 9 and 10,” *Restoration Quarterly* 28/3 (3rd quarter, 1985/86): 150.

⁷⁸ Stepien, 19.

⁷⁹ Selby, 150 [original italics]; Jeong Woo Lee (18) concurs with Selby when he states, “In Jesus Christ, the time of external, ceremonial cleansing is superseded by the time of internal, efficacious cleansing of one’s conscience.”

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evil, with all wicked conscience, can be removed from man."⁸⁰ Thus, God has provided the solution to man's guilt-stained conscience. It is through the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ that man may have a clean conscience and be able to enjoy fellowship with God.

Summary and Conclusion

From this study, the term "conscience" may be defined as "an inner knowledge about oneself." The function of "conscience" is above all related to the ethical conduct of an individual in relation to God and his fellow man. While the "conscience" is distinguished from such mental faculties as the will, memory, and reason, it is associated with them in its performance. The "conscience" serves as judge and witness regarding the individual and is active in man's conscious thought. It is the moral faculty placed in all men by God that holds them amenable to His divine law and is the medium through which the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and effects their conversion.

There are various types of conscience, varying from weak to strong, as well as from good to evil. The central element of the good conscience is faith. The primary characteristic of an evil conscience is unbelief. For one to have a "strong conscience," one must take the time to study the Scriptures and follow their teachings. The danger of tampering with one's own conscience by not heeding the promptings of the Holy Spirit is that one becomes "deadened" to the Holy Spirit's influence.

For the Christian, it is necessary to take into account the various levels of conscience among believers, especially those new to the faith. For such ones, it is necessary to instruct them patiently in the way of truth and to abstain from any lifestyle practice that might be misinterpreted, as lawful as it may be, until such new believers have had the time to become fully informed of the principles related to the practice in question. Above all, the conscience of each person in relation to God is of such importance as to be regarded as sacred and inviolable.

The solution that God has made available for us to have a "clean and pure" conscience is faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus is more than sufficient to wash away the sins of each repentant, believing individual. By His sacrifice, Jesus takes away the believers' guilt, thus making it possible for them to approach God in full assurance of faith.

Appendix A

Ellen White seems to support the view that "conscience" is the voice of God, *contrary* to Rehwinkel and Hallesby. A word search of the CD-ROM containing all of her published works, finds the term "conscience" appearing 2,476 times. The combination of "conscience" and "voice of God" yields 26 total hits, with only 11 of them being originally cited (the other 15 are quoted from the

⁸⁰ Borghi, 91.

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original 11). **Of these 11 usages, there are 4 references** where she equates “conscience” with the “voice of God” (“Conscience is the voice of God” 5T 120.1; “the voice of duty” as “the voice which speaks from God” 1 SM 27.3; “strong promptings and the conviction of duty” as “the voice of the God that bids me shake off the lethargy of the world” RH, September 19, 1893; and “that I seem to feel almost conscience-stricken and inquire, Am I in the way of the Lord? I expect to hold myself in readiness to obey the voice of God and do the bidding of the Lord”—Letter 95, 1890, p. 1. (To W. C. White, July 17, 1890.) {8MR 125.1}). **In 2 other references**, she uses a grammatical structure that parallels “conscience” with the “voice of God” (“Satan uses his influence to drown the voice of God and the voice of conscience” {1MCP 320.3}; “The conscience becomes less and less impressible. The voice of God seems to become more and more distant” {TMK 243.3}). **In 4 other statements**, she indicates that the “voice of God” is heard through the voice of God’s messengers, the Word of God, and in one instance, through the weekly income, which obligates the individual to tithe ({Sept. 11, 1894, paragraph 4}; {GC88 93.1}; {RH January 17, 1893, paragraph 7}; {4T 474.2}). **In a solitary use**, she does not make a parallel reference to “the voice of God” and the “conscience.” (She refers to an individual whose “conscience has lost its sensitiveness,” and therefore, his “voice no longer echoes the voice of God, or gives expression to the music of a soul sanctified through the truth” {ST, June 27, 1900 par. 3}).

An explanation of her position could be based on the theological foundation from which she wrote. As a Methodist converted to Adventism, her theological perspectives were grounded in Methodism. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was influenced by James Arminius. According to Arminius, each man is endowed with a moral conscience at birth through the work of the Holy Spirit. While he did not equate this with conversion, he nonetheless acknowledged the work of God not only in creating each person, but also in providing each one with moral faculties by which he was enabled to respond to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

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