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PRINCIPLES OF ORDINATION IN THE EARLY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, 1844-1900

THEODORE N. LEVTEROV
Loma Linda University

Seventh-day Adventists began to practice the ritual of ordination even before their official organization in 1863. The issue did not stir any controversies within the denomination until several decades ago when the question of women's ordination arose. Many opinions have been expressed on both sides of the issue, as authors have tried to defend their positions from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. Few, however, have asked the question: What were the guiding principles and motivations that prompted the early Sabbatarian and Seventh-day Adventist leaders to begin to ordain people to ministries? The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine and analyze three broad reasons that guided early Adventist practices of ordination. The essay will finish with short concluding remarks.

The Beginning of Ordination as Practical Necessity

The Sabbatarians (later Seventh-day Adventists) did not doubt the biblical validity of ordination from the very beginning of their existence. They believed that the practice was rooted in the New Testament and played a necessary role within the early Christian church.¹ Beyond that, James White and Joseph Bates, two of the founders of the Sabbatarian movement, had been ordained by their Christian denomination before they became Adventists. Therefore, the earliest discussions and practices of ordination within the Sabbatarian movement did not come as a result of theological controversies, but rather because of pragmatic and ecclesiastical necessities.

The first substantial discussion of ordination among Sabbatarians began during the 1850s when the movement had experienced rapid growth. The growth brought its own challenges, however. Since the movement lacked any kind of organization, believers were open to various fanatical teachings and extreme views prevalent at that time.² Anybody, for example, could claim to be an Adventist minister, as there was not a system by which to check one's credibility. Moreover, since 1853, the Sabbatarians had dealt with the first offshoots, the "Messenger party," and the "Age to Come" movements, that came out from their midst. The Messengers also started to publish the first

¹James White, "Gospel Order," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 20, 1853, 188-189; J. B. Frisbie, "Church Order," *RH*, Jan. 9, 1855, 153-155; J. H. Waggoner, *The Church: Its Organization, Ordinances, and Discipline* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1886), 15-16; J. N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order, and Discipline* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1907), 66-71.

²George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 58-60.

periodical against the Sabbatarians as they questioned some of their major teachings.³ It is in this context that James and Ellen White began to discuss the necessity for more formal organization and the need for a recognized ministry.

On December 6, 1853, James White wrote that gospel order had been “much neglected, and that the attention of the church should be turned to this subject. . . .”⁴ Two weeks later he noted further that “gospel order” included the ordination of ministers and gave three main reasons for that. First, the ordained ministers would know that they had “the sympathy of [the] ministering brethren and of the church.” Second, it would be a vehicle to “unite the people of God.” And third, it would “shut a door again Satan” and the “influence of false teachers.”⁵

The same year Ellen White wrote in a similar tone:

The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as God unites His children, Satan and his angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it. . . . *Men whose lives are not holy and who are unqualified to teach the present truth enter the field without being acknowledged by the church or the brethren generally, and confusion and disunion are the result.*⁶

The solution, she noted, was to have recognized ministers set apart by laying on of hands.⁷

Other Sabbatarians began to express the same relationship between “gospel order” and ordination. J. B. Frisbie, for example, wrote that “gospel order in the ministry” was that “which will bring us into the unity of the faith, and cause the watchmen to see eye to eye.”⁸ R. F. Cottrell also noted that the “order in the Church of God has been vindicated by different writers in the Review [sic], and has been established to a considerable extent by the ordination of officers in the churches.”⁹ Not surprisingly, the Sabbatarians began to ordain their ministers in the beginning of 1850s.¹⁰

³Theodore N. Levterov, “The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2011), 81-83.

⁴James White, “Gospel Order,” *RH*, Dec. 6, 1853, 173.

⁵James White, “Gospel Order,” *RH*, Dec. 20, 1853, 188-189.

⁶Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 97; emphasis supplied.

⁷*Ibid.*, 101.

⁸J. B. Frisbie, “Church Order,” *RH*, Jan. 9, 1855, 154.

⁹R. F. Cottrell, “What are the Duties of Church Officers?” *RH*, Oct. 2, 1856, 173.

¹⁰Loughborough, *The Church*, 100-102.

At the same time, the Sabbatharians also began to raise questions about the practical necessity of ordaining local officers to serve the Sabbatharian churches. In December 1853 H. S. Gurney wrote that the churches in Fairhaven and Dartmouth, Massachusetts, decided to select two brethren, “to act the part of ‘deacons,’ as denominated in the Bible.” Since Sabbatharian ministers had been “called to travel,” and believers had been deprived of the Lord’s Supper, he reasoned, “it seemed proper to set apart some one in the church for the purpose of more fully maintaining Gospel Order.”¹¹

In January 1855 John Byington wrote to the *Review* that many of the Sabbatharian churches were in a “distracted and discouraged condition.” He, therefore, wondered if elders and deacons should be appointed in “every church.” James White replied that the Bible supported the establishment of such offices. Based on Acts 14:21-23 and Titus 1:5-16, he believed that since the early church ordained local officers, they were also needed in the “last days” to prevent “confusion,” “disorder,” or “unscriptural notions.” He also urged the brethren to “express their opinion on the subject.”¹²

In January 1855 J. B. Frisbie published an article to explain the issue further. He noted that in the New Testament there were two kinds of “preaching elders.” One, the “evangelical or travelling elders or bishops,” such as Silas, Timothy, Titus, and Paul, who were responsible for the “care of all the churches”; and two, those who “had the pastoral care and oversight of one church.” Their primary role was to “administer all the ordinances of the church of God on earth. Matt. xxviii:19” and to look after “the spiritual affairs of the church.” On the other hand, there was the office of the deacons to take care of the “temporal affairs of the church essential to its prosperity. . . .”¹³ Interestingly, Frisbie expanded his position a year later, and noted that the early church also had deaconesses who served the local church and “were ordained to their office by the imposition of the hands of the bishop. . . .”¹⁴ It seems, however, that the early Sabbatharians did not follow Frisbie’s reasoning and did not ordain deaconesses, at least initially.

The reluctance to ordain deaconesses, however, appears to have been more a cultural than a biblically based decision, as later references show. In 1883 W. H. Littlejohn, for instance, acknowledged that the existence of deaconesses in the apostolic days was “highly probable.” And while some Seventh-day Adventist churches had the custom “to elect one or more women to fill a position similar to that which it is supposed that Phoebe and others occupied in her day,” it had not been “*the custom* with us [Seventh-day Adventists] to ordain such women.” The same was true with women being

¹¹H. S. Gurney, “From Bro. Gurney,” *RH*, Dec. 27, 1853, 199.

¹²James White, “Church Order,” *RH*, Jan. 23, 1855, 164.

¹³J. B. Frisbie, “Church Order,” *RH*, Jan. 9, 1855, 154-155.

¹⁴J. B. Frisbie, “Deacons,” *RH*, July 31, 1856, 102. Frisbie cited an extract from Adam Clarke’s commentary.

or acting as elders.¹⁵ Thus by the 1860s the Sabbatharians had begun to ordain ministers, elders, and deacons, and were happy with the results.

By 1863, when the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially established, the ordination practices were well in place, although questions related to ordination and its practical application continued to be examined and discussed.¹⁶ One can argue, therefore, that a major principle that guided the practice of ordination among the early Sabbatharians was based on the practical needs of the church rather than theological rationale.

Ordination as Public Recognition of Divine Appointment

A second general principle recognized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the belief that ordination was first and foremost a calling from God, while the ordination ritual itself was a simple confirmation of that calling. Thus ordination was related to the spiritual gifts that God gave to people in the church.

In 1856 J. B. Frisbie wrote that “the power and authority to ordain elders or bishops in the church came from the Holy Spirit of God.” The laying on of hands, on the other hand, did not bring any “higher power,” but was “the separating act by which the grace of God was imparted.”¹⁷ Ellen White also agreed that those who had “given full proof that they have received their commission of God” were to be set apart “to devote themselves entirely to His work” by ordination.¹⁸ G. I. Butler similarly explained that ordination was “simply an outward ceremony by which a body of believers set apart or installed a person into some official position, as that of minister, local elder, or deacon.” Using the example of Paul and Barnabas, he noted that it was the Holy Spirit who called them first, after which the people simply acknowledged their ministry by laying “hands on them.”¹⁹ Uriah Smith, likewise, noted that

the authority of the gospel minister rests upon a divine call to the work, and if he has not such a call, he has no authority to preach the gospel, no matter how many hands have been laid upon him, nor how pompous the ceremony of ordination performed over him. Christ can give authority to men to preach his gospel, as well in the nineteenth century as in the first. . . . So we say, again, that they have authority to preach whom the Lord calls to the work. If it is asked, why then have any outward ceremony of ordination at all, a sufficient answer is found in the fact that such a service gives unity

¹⁵W. H. Littlejohn, “The Church Manual,” *RH*, July 3, 1883, 426; emphasis supplied; idem, “The Duties of Local Church Officers,” *RH*, Nov. 22, 1887, 730.

¹⁶Some points of discussion were: reelection and re-ordination of officers, the validity of one’s ordination in case of moving to a different church, the validity of ordination of ministers and elders coming from other denominations; the proper pay of ministers, and others.

¹⁷J. B. Frisbie, “Church Order,” *RH*, June 26, 1856, 70.

¹⁸Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 101.

¹⁹G. I. Butler, “Ordination,” *RH*, Feb. 13, 1879, 50-51.

to the work, and is a means by which the church can show its acquiescence in, and its harmony with, what they consider the divine will.²⁰

Despite that belief, however, promising young people were initially issued licenses and went through a “trial” period in order to show their “fitness for the work” and to give evidence that they were “called of God to that service.”²¹ After an individual had worked for one or more years “acceptably,” it was “customary for the State Conference to ordain him and give him credentials, and a certificate of ordination.”²² This method seemed to work well. In 1886 G. I. Butler, the president of the Michigan Conference at that time, reported that they had received “quite a number of applications for labor in churches in various places” for consideration.²³

The ordination service usually resembled the order of the Protestant tradition. It was usually performed by several ordained ministers and included a sermon, a prayer (with laying on of hands), and a charge to the ordained.²⁴ An interesting detail, however, was the greeting of the ordained with a “holy kiss” by the officiating pastors at the end of the service to welcome them to the gospel ministry.²⁵ Thus, the ordination procedures among Seventh-day Adventists, with few exceptions, have not changed substantially through the years.

Early ordination services also seemed to be highly emotional and charismatic. The presence of the Holy Spirit was seen as an approval of the ordained. In 1861, for example, A. S. Hutchins reported that at the ordination of brother D. T. Bourdeau “the Holy Spirit fell sweetly and powerfully upon us, manifestly approving of the solemn and important step.” After his ordination, Bourdeau baptized ten people.²⁶ At the ordination of church officers in Indiana, S. H. Lane wrote: “The blessing of the Lord rested upon us, and as one after another testified of their love for the truth nearly all in the house were moved to tears and some wept aloud.”²⁷ At another ministerial ordination, that of Brother Nettleton, G. I. Butler testified that “the Lord’s Spirit came in and witnessed to the act, as it seemed to us all. Many were in tears, and a very tender, precious influence affected the hearts of all. And so our meeting closed, and the brethren and sisters went to their homes encouraged.”²⁸ Thus Seventh-day Adventists saw ordination to ministries

²⁰Uriah. Smith, “In the Question Chair,” *RH*, Oct. 20, 1891, 648.

²¹Uriah. Smith, “To Correspondents,” *RH*, June 27, 1878, 4; Waggoner, *The Church*, 19.

²²W. H. Littlejohn, “The Church Manual,” *RH*, Sept. 11, 1883, 586.

²³G. I. Butler, “Work in Michigan,” *RH*, Dec. 21, 1886, 793.

²⁴See, for example: Uriah Smith, “The Conference,” *RH*, Oct. 17, 1878, 124; James White, “Meeting at Oakland,” *RH*, Apr. 11, 1878, 112.

²⁵“The Church Manual,” *RH*, July 17, 1883, 457-458.

²⁶A. S. Hutchins, “Report of Meetings,” *RH*, June 25, 1861, 40.

²⁷S. H. Lane, “Indiana,” *RH*, Mar. 4, 1875, 78.

²⁸G. I. Butler, “The Nebraska Camp-Meeting,” *RH*, Oct. 11, 1881, 239.

as being a calling from God and the ordination ceremony as the outward confirmation of that calling.

Ordination and Fulfilling the Great Commission

A third general principle that guided ordination in Seventh-day Adventism was related to the fulfillment of the mission of the church. Although the small Sabbatarian group initially believed in the “shut door”²⁹ theory, by the beginning of 1850s they realized that they had a message to share with others.³⁰ The ritual of ordination, consequently, began to be seen as an integral part of the fulfillment of that mission.

As the church grew through the years and its mission expanded, the demand for more workers and missionaries became obvious. By the 1870s and beyond, Seventh-day Adventists began to urge people, especially young men and women, to get educational training and become involved in the work of the church. It is in this context that Adventists began to consider the participation of women in ministry of various kinds.

An interesting accident happened in 1867. James White reported that he ordained “Bro[ther] and sister Strong” to the ministry by “prayer and the laying on of hands.” “I mention the name of sister Strong on this occasion,” he explained, because “my views and feelings are that the minister’s wife stands in so close a relation to the work of God . . . that she should, in the ordination prayer, be set apart as his helper.”³¹ In 1870 the “Minister’s Lecture Association” offered a series of trainings for ministers. Both men and women were invited to enroll. The price of membership was “\$5 for men and \$3 for women.”³² In 1879 James White also wrote an article entitled “Women in the Church,” aiming to explain 1 Cor 14: 34-35 (“Let your women keep silent in the churches. . .”). Among other arguments, White noted that “in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, holy women held positions of responsibility and honor” and defended their full participation in the work of the church.³³ Similar articles continued to appear in the Adventist publications.³⁴

Ellen White similarly urged the participation of women in the work of the church. “Women who can work are needed now,” she wrote in 1879, “women who are not self-important, but meek and lowly of heart, who will work with the meekness of Christ wherever they can find work to do for the

²⁹The belief that no more people could be saved after October 22, 1844.

³⁰James White, “Call at the Harbinger Office,” *RH*, Feb. 17, 1852, 95.

³¹James White, “Report from Bro. White,” *RH*, Aug. 13, 1867, 136.

³²James White, “Minister’s Lecture Association,” *RH*, Jan. 10, 1870, 32.

³³James White, “Women in the Church,” *RH*, May 29, 1879, 172.

³⁴Some examples are: “Shall Women Speak in the Church?” *RH*, Mar. 14, 1871, 99; J. H. Waggoner, “Woman’s Place in the Gospel,” *ST*, Dec. 19, 1878, 380; N. J. Bowers, “May Women Publicly Labor in the Cause of Christ?” *RH*, June 14, 1881, 372-373.

salvation of souls.”³⁵ In 1895 she also specifically noted that women should be ordained for specific ministries. The context of her article clearly shows her concern with the noninvolvement of church members in the work of the church. “The burden of church work should be distributed among its individual members,” she wrote, “so that each one may become an intelligent laborer for God. There is altogether too much unused force in our churches.”³⁶ She then urged leaders to involve every member, including women, in the work. As she put it:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be *set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands*. . . . This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.³⁷

Whatever interpretation one may make of the above paragraph, Ellen White clearly indicated that ordination was appropriate for women who were willing to be involved in some capacity in the ministry of the church. Thus she broadened the concept of ordination and its true meaning. Ordination, in her mind, was not limited in scope as only belonging to men.

In 1898 Ellen White again asserted that women “should labor in the gospel ministry,” since there were situations where “they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God.”³⁸ Intriguingly, *The Review* and the *Signs of the Times* also began to report specific “religious news” of ordination of women among other Christian denominations.³⁹ Not surprisingly, we find that since the 1870s women began to be much more involved within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission.⁴⁰

The high point for women in ministry, however, came at the General Conference meeting in 1881. Prompted by the belief that all members were to participate in the mission of the church, the General Conference issued an official resolution stating that “*females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of*

³⁵Ellen G. White, “Address and Appeal, Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work,” *RH*, Jan. 2, 1879, 1.

³⁶Ellen G. White, “The Duty of the Minister and the People,” *RH*, July 9, 1895, 433.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 434; emphasis supplied.

³⁸Ellen G. White, “The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire,” MS 43a, 1898, HRC, LLU.

³⁹“Religious [Notes],” *ST*, Sep. 11, 1884, 558; “Religious [Notes],” *RH*, Feb. 28, 1893, 143.

⁴⁰For a list of Seventh-day Adventist women in ministry see: Josephine Benton, *Called by God: Stories of Seventh-day Adventist Women Ministers* (Smithsburg, MD: Blackberry Hill Publishers, 1990), 229-234.

the Christian ministry.” It seems that the issue was discussed for a while and then “referred to the General Conference Committee.”⁴¹ However, we find no further decisions concerning the issue.

The demands of missionary labor also called Seventh-day Adventists to become more flexible and accommodative to the vast challenges of the missionary tasks. Thus, for example, Adventist missionaries in the state of Tarapaca, Chile, baptized and ordained brother Julian Ocampas, who was previously a Methodist preacher. The need to ordain him immediately was “considered especially necessary.” Since there were others who were soon to “require baptism,” and the “distance” was “too great” for a Seventh-day Adventist pastor to visit, the two missionaries believed that this was the right action for that particular situation. “He has preached for the Methodists, and so far as we could learn fills the requirements of 1 Timothy 3,” they reported. “We have an abiding faith in God that he will increase this nucleus to his glory and to the salvation of souls. Let all God’s people pray that this may be.”⁴²

Ellen White also wrote of a certain Brother Tay, who went as a missionary to Pitcairn. Although he had a few people that were ready for baptism, he “did not feel at liberty” to baptize them “because he had not been ordained.” “That is not any of God’s arrangements,” Ellen White responded, “It is man’s fixing.” She then explained:

When men go out with the burden of the work and to bring souls into the truth, those men are ordained of God [even] if [they] never have a touch of ceremony of ordination. To say [they] shall not baptize when there is nobody else, [is wrong]. If there is a minister in reach, all right, then they should seek for the ordained minister to do the baptizing, but when the Lord works with a man to bring out a soul here and there and they know not when the opportunity will come that these precious souls can be baptized, why he should not [sic] question about the matter, he should baptize those souls. . . . Philip was not an ordained minister, but when the eunuch began to inquire about this matter, Philip opened to him the Word, and then what? He says, “What doth hinder my being baptized?” Sure enough, what did hinder? It was not considered that anything hindered, and Philip went down and baptized him.⁴³

Thus Seventh-day Adventists related ordination to the mission of the church. It was in this context that they also began to consider women in ministry much more seriously than before. Although there were several suggestions that women could be ordained as ministers, the issue seemed to wane by the first half of the twentieth century.

General Conclusions

Several conclusions can be made as a result of this study. First, Seventh-day Adventists began to practice ordination because of practical necessities and

⁴¹S. N. Haskell and Uriah Smith, “General Conference,” *RH*, Dec. 20, 1881, 392.

⁴²G. H. Baber, “Chile,” *RH*, Feb. 9, 1897, 89.

⁴³Ellen G. White, “Remarks Concerning Foreign Mission Work,” MS 75, 1896, HRC, LLU.

not strictly theological questions. Therefore, the function of ordination was to serve the church and its needs. It was related initially to “gospel order,” fighting fanatical religious extremes, establishment of local church ministries, and others. As the needs and the mission of the denomination expanded, however, Adventists were willing to reexamine and clarify questions related to the function and the practical applications of ordination and enlarge its meaning. It was because of this understanding that Seventh-day Adventism began to consider the ordination of women later on. Thus a guiding principle of ordination was its practicality for the church and its mission.

Second, it seems that early Seventh-day Adventists, including Ellen White, did not discuss ordination in terms of gender. Ordination was rather a calling from God and included a designation to a particular office, recognition of a spiritual gift, or a calling to a specific mission. Seventh-day Adventists, therefore, encouraged all to become engaged in the ministries of the church. At the same time, they refrained from ordaining women, although they deliberated it. The reason for that, however, was not based on biblical reasoning, but rather on a tradition or “custom.” There is not a single published article, up to 1900, that argued against women’s ordination based on the Bible. On the contrary, Seventh-day Adventists defended the role and participation of women in ministry and even began to include them in various ministries of the church. Thus the Adventist understanding of ordination was guided by a much larger principle than what some consider ordination to be today.

Third, the history of Seventh-day Adventism teaches us that the church should constantly consider and reevaluate its understanding of ordination and its function as it relates to the mission of the church. It is interesting to note that the more important the mission of the church became, the more willing the denomination was to include everyone, including women, in ministry. Since ordination among the early Seventh-day Adventists was guided by pragmatic necessities, was viewed as a calling from God, and was to serve the mission of the church, Seventh-day Adventism today has a good platform to take a new look at ordination and its meaning for the twenty-first century based on these broad principles.

WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY DID THE CHANGE FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY WORSHIP TAKE PLACE IN THE EARLY CHURCH?

ROBERT K. MCIVER
Avondale College of Higher Education
Cooranbong, Australia

It is evident that Jesus and his earliest followers all observed the seventh-day Sabbath prescribed in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:8-11) and seen as one of the signs of the covenant between God and his people (e.g., Ezek 20:20). After all, the earliest followers of Jesus were all pious Jews. That Luke observes—almost in passing—that it was Jesus’ custom to attend synagogue on Sabbaths (Luke 4:16) is only to be expected. Yet, today, most Christians observe Sunday as the day of worship, not the Sabbath. This article traces the evidence that has been used to answer the key questions, “When, where and why did the change in the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday take place?”¹ Each of the various time periods in which the change could have taken place will be examined, as will the arguments that are advanced by those who place the change within that period of time. A few writers attempt to trace this change back to the ministry of Jesus, others to the period of the early Church before the writings that make up the New Testament were composed. Yet others look to the early second century, while some look to the time of Emperor Constantine and the church that emerged under his patronage.²

Did Jesus Himself Instigate the Change of the Day of Worship, and Why?

The first possibility that deserves attention is that Jesus himself either changed the day of worship himself or created an attitude towards the Sabbath in his followers that very quickly led to its abandonment in the earliest period of Christian history. Willy Rordorf might serve as a representative of the several scholars who have argued for this or a similar position.³

¹Willy Rordorf has gathered together the primary evidence regarding the issue of Sabbath and Sunday in the earliest church in his *Sabbat und Sonntag in der Alten Kirche* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), where the source materials are cited in their original Latin or Greek, with a German translation; while Robert L. Odom’s book, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), provides English translations of most of the relevant source material.

²A useful summary of many of the principal contributions to this debate may be found in Henry Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God: How Jesus Came to Personify the Sabbath* (Zürich: TVZ, 2005), 17-32.

³Others who take this position include Christopher Fung and Paul K. Jewett. Fung argues, “The Old Testament Sabbath cause is a system of mutually reinforcing institutions. . . . Through Jesus’ earthly actions and death and resurrection, the above

Rordorf's book, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*,⁴ is quite correctly described as a "landmark study on the question of the Christian day of worship," and "a standard work on this question."⁵ Rordorf's position has been summarised thus: "While in the Old Testament the Sabbath came in as a day of rest and in time became a day of worship, in the New Testament Sunday began as a day of worship and in time became a day of rest."⁶ Even from this somewhat oversimplified outline of Rordorf's argument,⁷ it may be observed that Rordorf provides a sophisticated analysis of one possible way to interpret the historical data. He is most aware that the evidence of the Gospels does *not* portray Jesus as abandoning the Sabbath. He argues only that Jesus so diminished the Sabbath that it was natural to replace worship on the Sabbath with worship on Sunday. Here is how Rordorf argues this crucial point:

It is a misunderstanding to hold that Jesus did not attack the Sabbath commandment itself, but only the casuistical refinements of the Pharisees. . . . The people who were healed by Jesus on the Sabbath were suffering from unmistakable protracted illnesses and certainly not from acute ailments or infirmities. . . . If therefore Jesus in accordance with the unanimous testimony of the Gospel traditions purposely healed people on the Sabbath who were clearly not in acute distress, his deeds of healing were an offence and a provocation. . . . All these people who were healed could certainly have waited for their cure until the next day (cf. Mark 1.32ff). Why, then, did Jesus heal them on the sabbath of all days? Surely, not *only* because of his compassionate love, but also with the express intention of showing that for him the sabbath commandment had no binding force.⁸

Old Testament institutions have been transformed into a new set of institutions comprising the Lord's Day [Sunday], the church and the Kingdom of God." "Sabbath—A Biblical Understanding of Creation Care," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 36 (2012): 316. Paul K. Jewett states: "Jesus did not reject the institution of the Sabbath as such, but only the tradition of the elders regarding Sabbath-keeping. However, though he did not reject the Sabbath, Jesus' attitude towards it explains the freedom which his followers subsequently showed towards its observance by assembling for worship on the first rather than on the seventh-day of the week." *The Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 35.

⁴Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (London: SCM, 1968).

⁵The citations are from Herold Weiss, *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 3; and Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God*, 18.

⁶Weiss, *Day of Gladness*, 4.

⁷Weiss himself suggests that this "catch phrase . . . while doing an injustice to his [Rordorf's] full study, manages to signal in the right direction" (*ibid.*).

⁸Rordorf, *Sunday*, 63, 65-66. Cf. p. 70, where Rordorf concludes: "The sabbath commandment was not merely pushed into the background by the healing activity of Jesus: It was simply annulled."

As Rordorf reconstructs it, alongside the diminished importance of Sabbath that Jesus established amongst his earliest followers, a pattern of worship on Sunday was very quickly established in the earliest church. While admitting that “Unfortunately we have at our disposal very few sources which can help us by shedding any light on . . . [the] problem [of the origin of the Christian observance of Sunday],” “Everything . . . seems to indicate that the origin of the observance of Sunday is to be traced directly to the Easter event.”⁹ Rordorf traces the observance of Sunday to quite early times, but thinks that it was only over a long period of time, extending as late as Constantine, that the Christian Church also added the concept of rest from work on the Sunday. The reasons that he advances for the change are quite subtle. For Rordorf the change begins with Jesus’ proclamation of the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God. This brings the believers into a new relationship with the laws of the Old Testament and, in particular, the laws relating to the Sabbath. While Jesus himself did not make a final break with the Sabbath, he so weakened it in the minds of his followers that they found it natural to move from worshipping on the Sabbath—a day of restrictions—to Sunday, a day associated with the joyous freedom brought about by the resurrection of Jesus.

An analysis of Rordorf’s position needs to consider at least two sets of data: the first relates to the Sabbath controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees that are found within the Gospel accounts; the second requires an analysis of references to Sabbath and Sunday that are found in the New Testament writings that come from the period of the early church—something taken up in the next section of this article. First, then, what do the Gospel accounts reveal about the attitude of Jesus to the Sabbath?

Samuele Bacchiocchi argues against Rordorf’s position on Jesus’ attitude to the Sabbath by first citing the Rabbinic Mishnah, which states that “Any case in which there is a possibility that life is in danger, thrust aside the Sabbath law.”¹⁰ While this is written down at a period much later to that of the New Testament, it is not unreasonable to expect the Pharisees confronted by Jesus would have been comfortable with this line of argumentation. This observation, though, appears to support Rordorf, who insists that the type of healing that Jesus performed was often of those whose illnesses were chronic—i.e. they were not immediately life-threatening (e.g. Mark 1:29-31; 3:1-6). By the reasoning of the later Rabbis, Jesus apparently had deliberately broken the Sabbath. But, as Bacchiocchi himself asks,¹¹ although the Pharisees may have considered Jesus to be breaking the Sabbath, did *Jesus* consider himself to be breaking the Sabbath in performing such healing miracles? The answer in the Gospels seems to be a definitive “No.” For example, in Matt 12:10, after observing that his Pharisaic opponents would rescue a sheep that

⁹Rordorf, *Sunday*, 177, 234.

¹⁰Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian Press, 1977), 32.

¹¹*Ibid.*

has fallen into a pit, and arguing that humans are of more value than a sheep, Jesus concludes: “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Earlier in that same chapter, Jesus had defended the actions of his disciples against the charge that they were breaking the Sabbath, by declaring them guiltless (ἀναίτιους, Matt 12:7).¹² The conclusion seems inescapable, that while Jesus was attacking the Pharisaic interpretation of the Sabbath laws, he was not attacking the Sabbath itself. Indeed, on the contrary, by his actions and teachings Jesus was freeing the Sabbath from the burdens that had been placed upon it by the Pharisees (e.g., see the conjunction between Matt 11:28-29 and Matt 12:1-14).

This conclusion, or others like it, is a position widely taken by New Testament exegetes who have considered the question of Jesus’ relationship to the Sabbath. For example, in contrast to Willy Rordorf, and after examining the evidence of the four Gospels, Donald Carson says, “There is no hard evidence that Jesus Himself ever contravened any written precept of the Torah [the Law] concerning the Sabbath. . . . Some of the Sabbath controversies became springboards for messianic claims. . . . There is no hint anywhere in the ministry of Jesus that the first day of the week is to take on the character of the Sabbath and replace it.”¹³ James D. G. Dunn reaches a similar conclusion. As he says, “the question under debate” between Jesus and the Pharisees “is not *whether* the Sabbath should be observed, but about *how* it should be observed.”¹⁴

¹²For a more detailed analysis of these and other Matthean verses relating to Jesus’ attitude to the Sabbath, see Robert K. McIver, “The Sabbath in the Gospel of Matthew: A Paradigm for Understanding the Law in Matthew?” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 33, no. 2 (1995): 231-243.

¹³D. A. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” in D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 84-85.

¹⁴James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 568-569. Kurt Queller goes so far as to say that “Mark’s intertextuality articulates a reading of Sabbath law that is in crucial respects more rigorist than that attributed to Jesus’ Pharisaic adversaries. . . . Likewise, Mark’s echoes of Exodus reveal that the healing narrative, far from serving only to illustrate Jesus’ divine authority, provides a context for this same substantive argument about the nature and meaning of the Sabbath.” “‘Stretch Out Your Hand!’ Echo and Metalepsis in Mark’s Sabbath Healing Controversy,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 4 (2010): 756-757. Cf. also Robert K. McIver, *The Four Faces of Jesus* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 39-46; and Walter F. Specht, “The Sabbath in the New Testament,” in Kenneth A. Strand, ed., *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 92-113. For contrary understandings of the Sabbath miracles—each arguing their case from a different perspective—see Harald Riesenfeld, “The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity,” in *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 111-137; M. D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 17-18; Eduard Lohse, “Σάββατον” *TDNT* 7:22, 27-28. For example, Lohse states, “In this debate [recorded in Mark 2:1-3:5 & parallels] between Jesus and the Pharisees it is not just a single act on the part of the disciples which is being

The views of Bacchiocchi, Carson, and Dunn might be taken as representative of the position taken by most of those who have studied this question since the appearance of Bacchiocchi's book. Though there are exceptions, few today would argue against the view that Jesus was a pious Jew, who intended to bring reformation to Sabbath observance, but who did not intend to discard the practice, although some would argue that this did not prevent the earliest Christians moving from worshipping on Sabbath to worshipping on Sunday.

*Was Sunday Observed as a Special Day of Worship in the Period
During which the New Testament Writings Appeared?*¹⁵

Rordorf is not alone in suggesting that there are traces within the New Testament itself that reveal that Sunday was emerging as a day of worship in the period. Another who argues this position is the Australian scholar, Stephen Llewelyn.¹⁶ Llewelyn bases his argument on three texts in the New Testament: 1 Cor 16:2, Acts 20:7, and Rev 1:10, and his article provides an excellent basis on which to consider whether or not these versus support those who see them as evidence of the very early observance of Sunday as a day of worship.

In 1 Cor 16:1-2, Paul urges his readers to start setting aside some money for a "collection for the saints" that he is organizing, and that they should do it each week. He says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come" (NRSV). Llewelyn argues that the Greek phrase usually translated "each of you" (ἐκαστος ὑμῶν παρ' ἑαυτοῦ) need imply no more than an individual offering was to be contributed. At first he concludes, "As it is not a matter of making a collection at home, a collection in the context of Sunday worship in not ruled out."¹⁷ Llewelyn then notes a suggestion from Willy Rordorf, that whereas

defended. The practice of the Christian community, which has freed itself from the Jewish Sabbath, is being supported and vindicated from Scripture" (p. 22). Terrence D. O'Hare offers a slightly different approach to Jesus's relationship to the Sabbath. He states, "For Jesus to 'fulfill all righteousness' He must have kept the ceremonial law perfectly [including the Sabbath laws], even up to the point of His death." But he notes, "Christ's example of obedience to Jewish ceremonial laws was not necessarily to model proper behaviour for Christians." *The Sabbath Complete and the Ascendency of the First-day Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 182, 184.

¹⁵An earlier version of this section of the chapter, and some of the paragraphs in the later section dealing with the role of Constantine the Great, may be found in Robert K. McIver, *Beyond the da Vinci Code* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 90-93, 97-99.

¹⁶S. R. Llewelyn, "The Use of Sunday for Meetings of Believers in the New Testament," *Novum Testamentum* 43, no. 3 (2001): 205-223.

¹⁷Llewelyn, "Sunday," 209. Craig Blomberg states his case more strongly than

Sabbath might have marked the seven-day week cycle in Judaism, apparently for Christians, Sunday had taken over this role.¹⁸ Llewelyn then suggests that one might therefore conclude that 1 Cor 16:2 might be taken to “strongly indicate that a Sunday meeting may have been held at Corinth.”¹⁹

By establishing that a Sunday meeting at Corinth is a *possible* reading of 1 Cor 16:1-2, Llewelyn has hardly found evidence that “strongly indicates” a regular Sunday meeting. Indeed, it is more likely that 1 Cor 16:1-2 should be considered evidence against any particular religious significance being attached to Sunday. After all, in 1 Cor 16:1-12 Paul is urging his readers to consider their financial situation from the previous week. This makes sense if, in fact, the Christians at Corinth were observing Sabbath as a day free of work and financial considerations (i.e., were Sabbath-observant). In that case, the first day of the week would be the natural time for them to review their finances from the previous week, a type of business activity that was totally unsuited to a day of worship. Furthermore, there is nothing in the text that suggests that Paul has in mind a meeting of the community.

In his response to Llewelyn’s article, also published in *Novum Testamentum*, Norman H. Young not only points this out, but asks a further question that arises from the observation that there were Christians of both Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds at Corinth (e.g., 1 Cor 1:22), and that it appears likely that all the Christians were able to meet together in the one place (1 Cor 11:20). Given that, if they met weekly, on what day is it likely that that would meet? Young says,

Bauckham reminds us that all forms of early Christianity were Jewish. Given this continuity with Judaism and the way in which communities tenaciously adhere to their holy days, it seems inconceivable that Jewish Christians shifted their worship over to meet with their fellow Gentile Christians on Sunday without so much as a murmur of protest. On what theological or rational grounds would Paul have advocated a practice of worship that would have split the community . . . ?²⁰

Llewelyn. While he acknowledges that it is “theoretically possible that Paul is referring simply to weekly individual savings,” he thinks it “Far more probable . . . that this is the oldest existing reference to a regular offering as part of the weekly Christian worship service.” “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011), 308.

¹⁸Rordorf, *Sunday*, 195 states, “The use of this passage of the Jewish designation of Sunday (‘first day of the week’) presupposes the observance of the seven-day Jewish week in the Gentile Christian churches, but these Gentile Christian churches no longer observed the Sabbath with which the Jewish week stood or fell. We did, therefore, earlier ask the question whether Sunday, instead of the Sabbath, had not perhaps become the pivotal point of the seven-day chronology.”

¹⁹Llewelyn, “Sunday,” 210.

²⁰Norman H. Young, “The Use of Sunday for Meetings of Believers in the New Testament: A Response,” *Novum Testamentum* 45, no. 2 (2003): 116.

In other words, the strong supposition is that the Corinthian Christians were meeting together to worship on Sabbath, not Sunday. In sum, rather than providing evidence of early regular early Christian meetings held on a Sunday, it is more likely that 1 Cor 16:1-2 provides evidence of the continual observance of the seventh-day Sabbath at Corinth.

The next text which Llewelyn examines is Acts 20:7, which reads, “On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.” Llewelyn says, “It suffices for the purpose of this article to show that a meeting of believers occurred on the first day of the week.”²¹ The issue is a bit complicated, Llewelyn points out, because according to Jewish custom, a day was measured between sunset and sunset. So, the seventh day (or Sabbath by Jewish reckoning) would have been counted from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Thus if Luke was using Jewish reckoning, the meeting would have begun in the evening of the Saturday, and continued past midnight.

But, as Llewelyn goes on to say, sunset-to-sunset was not the only way to work out when a day began and ended. According to Roman reckoning, a day began at midnight. If Luke were reckoning time according to the Roman system, then the meeting described in Acts 20:7 would have extended into what moderns would describe as Sunday evening. Just to complicate things further, Llewelyn also mentions the possibility that the Babylonian and Egyptian practice of reckoning days from sunrise to sunrise might need to be considered to be a possibility. In the end Llewelyn says that which system of time was meant by Luke, or understood by his readers was not important.²² What was important “was the author’s clear intention that his reader believe that the meeting occurred on the first day of the week.”²³

But does this advance Llewelyn’s case? He has shown that a meeting took place on the first day of the week, but there is nothing in Acts 20 to imply that this was a regular occurrence. In fact, considering the short time that Paul had been with them (seven days; Acts 20:6), and that he was leaving them the next day, Acts 20 may well have been describing an exceptional one-off meeting that took place outside of their regular times of worship. Acts records the meetings because the young man Eutychus fell asleep and fell from the window, and Paul then miraculously restored him to life (Acts 20:9-10). The mention of “breaking bread” in Acts 20:7 & 11, is likely to have been a reference to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, but this hardly indicates a

²¹Llewelyn, “Sunday,” 210.

²²Given that right up to contemporary times, “In the Orthodox Church, the liturgical day is reckoned from one sunset to the next” [Alkiviadis C. Calivas, in “The Lord’s Day in Orthodox Liturgical Practice and Spirituality,” in Edward O’Flaherty and Rodney L. Petersen, eds., *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 67], a sunset-to-sunset reckoning is the more likely of the three possibilities mentioned by Llewelyn.

²³Llewelyn, “Sunday,” 219.

weekly meeting, as at the time, it was not unknown for the early believers to “break bread” together daily (e.g., Acts 2:46).

In his article, Young adds a further point. “Luke refers to the Sabbath twenty-six times in his writings . . . and not once does he provide a negative comment. . . . Luke’s references to Jesus’ custom of worshipping on the Sabbath and healing on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6), inform largely Gentile Christian communities some 40 or 60 years after Jesus death *how*, not *whether*, to keep the Sabbath.”²⁴ It must be concluded, then, that Acts 20:7 cannot really be used as evidence of a *regular* weekly meeting of early Christians that took place on the first day of the week.

Llewelyn admits that his third text, Rev 1:10, is ambiguous. Revelation 1:10 reads, “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day . . .,” and Llewelyn concedes that the first unambiguous use of the expression, “the Lord’s day,” to identify Sunday is to be dated about A.D. 150, but then says, “it would be overly pedantic to insist that it did not mean the same for this author also.”²⁵

That the term “Lord’s day” meant Sunday in later times, does not necessarily mean that it had this meaning in the first century. After all, Jesus had proclaimed himself “lord of the Sabbath,” (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5), so it is likely, or perhaps more likely, that John the revelator intended the Sabbath when he spoke of the “Lord’s day.”²⁶ Some other scholars have

²⁴Young, “Response,” 119.

²⁵Llewelyn, “Sunday,” 220. Richard J. Bauckham comes to a similar conclusion in his chapter, “The Lord’s Day.” He states that “Sunday worship appears, when the evidence becomes available in the second century, as the universal Christian practice outside Palestine. . . . The conclusion seems irresistible that all of the early missionaries simply exported the practice of the Palestinian churches” (p. 236). He thus argues that in Rev 1:10, John is stating that he “receives his visions on the day when the churches meet for corporate worship and on the same day his prophecy will be read aloud (1:3) in the church meeting” (pp. 240-41). Cf. also comments by Calivas, in “The Lord’s Day in Orthodox Liturgical Practice and Spirituality,” 72-73, which identifies Sunday as the Lord’s day in Rev 1:10, and cites Acts 20:7-12 and 1 Cor 16:2 as further examples of the primacy of the Lord’s Day.

²⁶In his article, “‘The Lord’s Day’ of Revelation 1:10 in the Current Debate,” *AUSS* 49, no. 2 (2011): 261-284, Ranko Stefanovic canvasses the various possibilities that have been advanced to interpret the phrase “The Lord’s Day” in Rev 1:10. He considers Sunday, Easter Sunday, Emperor’s Day, Sabbath, and the Eschatological Day of the Lord. Of these, he concludes that “The strongest biblical and historical evidence favors the seventh-day Sabbath. On the other hand, the eschatological character of the book as a whole also supports the eschatological ἡμέρα κυρίου (“The day of the Lord,” cf. 1:7), while the figurative meaning of the expression fits neatly into the symbolic context of the whole book.” That the Lord’s Day might be Sunday appears one of the less likely readings to Stefanovic. Larry L. Lichtenwalter, “The Seventh-day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation: Creation, Covenant, Sign,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 49, no. 2 (2011): 316-176, interprets the “Lord’s day” of Rev 1:10 as a reference to the seventh-day Sabbath.

advanced a different suggestion, that Easter Sunday—a once-a-year event—might have been intended.²⁷

Other early uses of the expression “the Lord’s day,” are also ambiguous. For example, there is a probable reference to the “Lord’s day” in Didache XIV, which is usually translated as “On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks. . . .”²⁸ The phrase, “the Lord’s own day” is translated from the words Κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ Κυρίου. Literally these words read, “Each Lord’s of the Lord,” which requires the translator into English to answer the question “Lord’s what?” That Lord’s day is intended is highly likely and usually adopted by translators. But it must be noted that even so, no information is given about which particular day is intended by the phrase; nor, let it be said, whether a weekly occurrence is meant, although that appears the likely meaning.²⁹ So while it is indeed possible that Rev 1:10

²⁷See, e.g. C. W. Dugmore, “Lord’s Day and Easter,” in *Neotestamentica et Patristica* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 273-281; Kenneth A. Strand, “Another Look at ‘Lord’s Day’ in the Early Church and in Rev. I. 10,” *New Testament Studies* 13, no. 2 (1966-67): 174-181.

²⁸Κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου συναχθέντες κλάσατε ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσατε. The translation is that of Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3d ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 365. Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers Vol 1* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 331, translates these words as “On the Lord’s Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist. . . .” In other words, he translates εὐχαριστήσατε as “hold Eucharist,” a possibility placed in square brackets by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 439, who translates εὐχαριστήσατε as “give thanks” in his main text.

²⁹Another ambiguous reference found in Ignatius’ letter to the Magnesians [9], is translated by Michael Holmes in the following manner: “If, then, those who had lived according to ancient practices came to the newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord’s day. . . .” By this reading, Ignatius may be indicating that the community to which he writes has made the move from worshipping on Sabbath to worshipping on Sunday. If so, this would be one of the very early evidences for such a shift. But a closer look at both the original Greek text, and some manuscript evidence, shows that while this is a possible reading, in fact it is not the most likely reading. Literally, the crucial phrase in the Greek text reads, “no longer sabbatizing, but living according to the Lord’s life” (μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες). The only existing Greek text had the phrase “Lord’s life,” but most translators, including Kirsopp Lake [and, it should be noted, Bart Ehrman and Michael Holmes], follow the Latin text, which omits “life,” and adds the word “day.” So R. J. Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” in D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 228; see also Fritz Guy, “‘The Lord’s Day’ in the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 2, no. 1 (1964): 1-17. Bauckham (p. 224) lists no fewer than 24 separate nouns that follow after “Lord’s” in one of the second century writers (Clement of Alexandria), who speaks of the Lord’s teachings, power, commandments, head, people, word, words, house, voice, etc. While “Lord’s day” might balance the reference to “sabbatizing,” it is not the only possibility. Indeed,

is a reference to Sunday, it might equally be a reference to Sabbath, or Easter. If one wishes to establish the earliest occurrence of a shift from the day of worship of early Christians from Sabbath to Sunday, then one would look for unambiguous evidence, and Rev 1:10 is anything but unambiguous. Nor are any of the other possible evidences that Llewelyn advances.

One has to conclude, then, that a crucial part of the second element of the thesis advanced by Willy Rorforf has proven unfounded. There is no hard, or even probable, evidence that the practice of regular Sunday observance was widespread in the early church during the time that the New Testament works were written. But what of texts such as Col 2:16, Gal 4:10 and Rom 14:5 cited by Rorforf and others to indicate that Paul's writings de-emphasize or even discard the Sabbath?

The reference to sabbaths in Col 2:16 is tied up intimately with the question of the nature of the heresy Paul was facing in Colossae. While some have attempted to make a case for linking this heresy with Judaizing elements within Christianity, the mixture of elements of philosophy, wisdom, and human tradition (Col 2:8, 23) with matters of food, drink, festivals, new moons, sabbaths (Col 2:15), self-abasement, the worship of angels and elemental spirits (Col 2:18, 20), self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body (Col 2:23), makes it quite clear that if any type of Judaism had influenced Paul's opponents, it was of a type not recognizable to us in either the Gospel accounts or later rabbinic literature.³⁰ Thus the issue of sabbaths in Colossians is so far entangled with other matters that it is quite difficult to discern how this evidence might be brought to bear on the issue of Sabbath observance amongst those who were the intended recipients of the original letter to the Colossians.³¹

as the Greek manuscript says "Lord's life," this has to be the preferable translation. If that is the case, "Sabbatizing" might be a reference to living too rigidly according to the Jewish laws, rather as Paul asks, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile, and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" [literally: how can you compel Gentiles to "Judaize"? (ἵ Ἰουδαῖζειν; Gal 2:14).

³⁰On the heresy at Colossae see Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *Conflict at Colossae* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975); Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), xxx-xxxviii; and James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 23-35. The wide variety of suggestions regarding the identity of this heresy can be noted in the long list of suggestions summarized in John J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and their Background*, NovTSup 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 3-4.

³¹See the discussion in Weisse, *Day of Gladness*, 132-146; Ron du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008), *passim*; and Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 257-277. Cf. also the contribution of Troy Martin, "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal 4.10 and Col 2.16," *New Testament Studies* 42, no. 1 (1996): 105-199, and the response of H. Ross Cole, "The Christian and Time-Keeping in Colossians 2:16

Similar arguments could be advanced for the obscure references to “days” in Gal 4:10 and Rom 14:5, which again are tied into a point of view advanced by Paul’s opponents. For example, Henry Sturcke pays considerable attention to Gal 4:8-11, where Paul asks his readers, “how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits [τὰ ἀσθεινῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα], whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons and years!” Sturcke links the terms “days, months, and years” with the “feasts, new moons and Sabbaths” of Col 2:16, and concludes that Paul agrees that while “Jews do not need to stop being Jews to be saved, but believe in Jesus as their promised Messiah,” at the same time, “Gentiles did not need to become Jews, specifically as expressed by the adoption of markers of Jewish identity such as circumcision, nor the observance of days such as the Sabbath.”³² He suggests that “There is no indication that Paul substituted Sunday for the Sabbath. Days were a matter of indifference since time itself had taken on a new quality with the coming of Christ.”³³ Sturcke further follows references to Sabbath and Sunday in such texts as *Barnabus* 15 and the *Gospel of Thomas* 27. His overall conclusion is that “Christians continued to gather on the Sabbath in addition to the Lord’s Day, especially in the East and in Africa, though we find no teaching that it was wrong to meet on the first day or that one should only meet on the Sabbath. Worship on the first day of the week seems to be widespread at the close of the era under investigation, but not universal.”³⁴ From what has already been said about the references to Sunday in the New Testament, it might be concluded that Sturcke’s statement that “Worship on the first day of the week seems widespread,” goes beyond the evidence for the period during which the New Testament writings were produced, although, as will emerge later in this chapter, it is probably correct for later times.

In sum, Sturcke is correct in drawing attention to Col 2:16 and Gal 4:8-11 as of potential relevance to early Christian conceptions of the role the

and Galatians 4:10,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 2 (2001): 273-282. Ian D. Campbell concludes, “It does not seem to me, however, that there is anything in Colossians 2 that requires the belief that the Sabbath principle is abolished. Indeed, Paul’s argument is not that there should not be a Sabbath-keeping, but that there should be no judging regarding Sabbath-keeping.” *On the First Day of the Week: God, the Christian and the Sabbath* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2005), 149. Because he considers that “Paul uses the term ‘Sabbath days’ to include the seventh-day Sabbath,” Joseph A. Pipa Jr. reaches a slightly different conclusion regarding Col 2:16-17 than that of Campbell: “Paul abrogates the observance of the *seventh* day, but not the moral principle involved in the Sabbath command.” *The Lord’s Day* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 1997), 98, 95.

³²Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God*, 136. Christopher D. Ringwald also reads Gal 4:10-11 as evidence that Paul was urging his readers to turn away from the observance of Sabbath. *A Day Apart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 82.

³³Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God*, 328.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 337-338.

Sabbath might play in the life of a Christian. Yet not everybody is as confident as he that these texts refer directly to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. Even if they did, in both Colossae and Galatia the Sabbath was apparently being incorporated into a wider complex of ideas developed by Paul's various opponents. It is not always clear exactly what was being proposed by these opponents, and whether or not there was any communality between those addressed in Galatians and those in Colossians. In both, though, their concern for the calendar appears to be tied into broader cosmic interests. In Colossians these appear to incorporate some concept of the cosmic Christ. All in all, it is difficult to see such references as providing much information on the issue of the practices of early Christianity, particularly for those areas outside of the specific cities addressed by the letters.

In fact, given the arguments advanced by Norman Young—that because of their backgrounds, early Christians naturally kept Sabbath as their day of worship—it appears highly unlikely that any real move of the day of worship had started to take place in the time period from which the New Testament documents derive. Indeed, what little evidence there is tends to support the conclusion that early Christians continued to observe Sabbath, just as Jesus and his disciples had. This supposition is supported by the incidental references to Paul's practice of attending a Sabbath-day meeting of the synagogue of the city which he was visiting as long as he was welcome to attend (Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4).

Given what has been discovered, it appears unlikely that the shift from the worship on Sabbath to worshipping on Sunday took place in the time of Jesus's ministry, nor during the period during which the New Testament documents were produced. The next logical period of time to examine is that of the second and third centuries. The writer who has been most influential in arguing that the change of the day of worship is to be traced to this time period is Samuele Bacchiocchi.

*Samuele Bacchiocchi's Thesis That Second-Century Christians at Rome
Adopted Sunday Worship to Distinguish Themselves from Jews*

Bacchiocchi argues that the shift of the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday is the end product of a prolonged process that took place after the New Testament period, and that Christians at Rome contributed to this process at several crucial points. His thesis depends on a number of interlocking observations.

First, Bacchiocchi is unmoved by Rordorf's assertion that the healing miracles of Jesus indicate any diminishing or even annulment of the Sabbath. Rather, he finds in both the Gospel accounts and Heb 4 indications "that the primitive Church understood Jesus' Messianic pronouncements (Mark 2:28; Matt 12:6; John 5:17) and His healing activities, not as the suppression of the Sabbath by a new day of worship, but as the true revelation of the meaning of its observance: a time to experience God's salvation accomplished through

Jesus Christ.”³⁵ Nor does he find evidence in the New Testament that Sunday had begun to be observed as a day of worship.³⁶

Second, Bacchiocchi notes a strong anti-Judaic political and social climate at Rome, which, combined with the fact that the Christian community at Rome was likely to be largely Gentile in its makeup, combined to create a climate in which Roman Christians differentiated themselves from Jews by de-emphasizing the Jewish day of worship (the Sabbath), and emphasizing instead Sunday as a day of worship. As evidence for the largely Gentile character of the Roman Church, Bacchiocchi cites the report of the historian Suetonius that the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome (Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4; cf. Acts 18:2). This was but one of several moves against the Jews that took place under different emperors, including the imposition of a rather onerous tax, the so-called temple tax. Thus, Gentile Christians at Rome would have every incentive to distinguish themselves as much as they could from Jews.³⁷ One way they could do so is to worship on a day other than the Sabbath.

Bacchiocchi finds evidence that they, in fact, choose to do this in the following two historical notes that come from the mid-fifth century (i.e., approximately a century after the time of Constantine the Great). In his *Ecclesiastical History* (VII 19), the historian Sozomen says, “The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assembled together on the sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.” One might compare the comment of another historian of the Church, Socrates Scholasticus, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (V 22), “Almost all churches throughout the world celebrate sacred mysteries of the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians at Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, do not do this.”³⁸

Third, Bacchiocchi notes that the earliest surviving evidence of Sunday worship is associated with either Rome or Alexandria, and dates to the second or third centuries. Prominent amongst these writings are the Epistle of Barnabas, and the writings of Justin Martyr. Barnabas, a pseudonymous work, is usually said to have its origin in Alexandria in the early second century. Chapter 15 of this work deals with the Sabbath. It is preceded by chapters dealing with fasting and the scapegoat (VII), the sacrifice of the heifer (VIII), circumcision (IX), the food laws of the Jews (X), baptism (XI), the cross (XII), and the covenant (XIII & XIV), each of them providing an allegorical treatment of features of the Old Testament deemed by the writer to be of significance to Christians. For example, the scapegoat is “a type of Jesus

³⁵Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day*, 73.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 74-131.

³⁷“Such circumstances invited Christians to develop a new identity, not only characterized by a negative attitude toward Jews, but also by the substitution of characteristic Jewish religious customs for new ones. . . .” Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 183.

³⁸These two quotations are most conveniently found in *ibid.*, 196–197.

destined to suffer” (VII.10), the ashes and wool of the sacrifice of the heifer are a “type of the cross” (VIII.1), the fact that Abraham first circumcised 18 men, and then 300 is a type of Jesus (18 = 10 + 8; or Iota + eta—the first two letters of the name Jesus), avoiding unclean food means that you should avoid men who are like swine (X.3), etc. Thus it should be no surprise that the Sabbath is treated allegorically. For the author of *Barnabas*, the Sabbath points not to itself, but to the eighth day, the day of resurrection: “The present sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is the beginning of another world. Wherefore we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into Heaven” (XV.8-9).³⁹ Almost all commentators would agree with Bacchiocchi that the combination of the disparagement of the Sabbath and the promotion of the day on which the Lord was resurrected in *Barnabas* XV is clear evidence that a move from the worship on Sabbath to the worship on Sunday is being advocated.⁴⁰ Many would also add that *Barnabas* 15 is the very first unambiguous reference to Sunday observance.

The Roman martyr Justin wrote his first apology in the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–160), and thus this work can be dated firmly in the middle of the second century. In Chapter 67 of the *First Apology of Justin*, he describes the weekly Christian worship in the following terms:

And on the day called Sunday [Καὶ τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρᾳ], all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen.⁴¹

Here, then, is a clear description of a weekly meeting that took place on Sunday that has all the trappings one might expect of a worship service: the reading of Scripture, a homily, and the giving of bread and wine. Thus, by the middle of the second century, Christians in Rome were clearly meeting each

³⁹The translation is that of Kirsopp Lake in the Loeb edition of the *Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), I:395, 397.

⁴⁰Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 218-223; cf. William H. Shea, “The Sabbath in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 4, no. 2 (1966): 149-175. On the other hand, Aecio E. Cairus, “Sabbath and Covenant in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 117-123, argues that the eighth day in *Barnabas* 15 could well refer to the high day of the paschal festival, and “It is, therefore, not clear whether *Barn.* 15 refers to Sunday observance at all.”

⁴¹The translation is that found in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 186. The Greek original may be found in Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag*, 136.

Sunday for a worship experience. No mention is made of any such meeting on Sabbath. Thus, by this time, at least in Rome, the change of the day of worship appears to have taken place. In the same passage, Justin gives the following reason for meeting on Sunday: “because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.”

From these and other strands of evidence Bacchiocchi concludes, “The traditional claim that the Church of Rome has been primarily responsible for the institution of Sunday observance, though widely challenged by recent Catholic (and Protestant) scholarship, has been amply substantiated by our present investigation.”⁴² Bacchiocchi thus traces the change of the day of worship to Rome in the second century, or perhaps even earlier. He hypothesizes that the principal reason for the change of the day of worship is that the predominantly Gentile Christian community at Rome was at pains to distinguish itself from Jews in its religious practices. Thus they eschewed worship on Sabbath, but instead emphasized worshipping on Sunday.

While Bacchiocchi’s study draws on a few sources that came from periods after the time of Constantine, he effectively confines his study to the pre-Nicene period. Yet the time of Constantine will soon be shown to be an important period in the establishment of the widespread adoption of Sunday observance.

*Was the Day of Worship Changed by Constantine, or the [Very Early]
Roman Catholic Church, or a Combination of the Two?*

Some argue that the day of worship is something that was changed by Emperor Constantine,⁴³ or that it was changed by the Church at Rome.⁴⁴ It

⁴²Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 311.

⁴³A number of significant historical figures carry the name Constantine, yet there is little confusion who is usually meant by Emperor Constantine in this context: Constantine I (Feb. 27, 272 – May 22, 337), sometimes called Constantine the Great.

⁴⁴For example, Skip MacCarty identifies the persecuting “little horn” of Dan 7 as “The Roman Catholic Church,” and suggests that “the change of the Sabbath commandment” should be attributed to the Catholic Church. “The Seventh-day Sabbath,” in Christopher John Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011), 44-46. The following claim that the Roman Catholic Church is responsible for the change of worship from Sabbath to Sunday might be cited as typical of a strand of pre-Vatican II Catholic-Protestant rhetoric: “The Jews’ Sabbath Day was Saturday; we Christians keep Sunday holy. The Church, by the power our Lord gave her, changed the observance of Saturday to Sunday. A word about Sunday. God said, ‘Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.’ The Sabbath was Saturday, not Sunday; why, then, do we keep Sunday holy instead of Saturday? The Church altered the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of Sunday in commemoration of our Lord having risen from the dead on Easter Sunday, and of the Holy Ghost having descended upon the apostles on Whit Sunday. Protestants who say that they go by the Bible and the Bible only, and that they do not believe

is even suggested that Constantine made the change of the day of worship because it fitted well with sun worship.⁴⁵

There is, in fact, evidence that can be put forward to support the claim that Constantine was a crucial player in the shift of the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. There is even evidence to support the claim that Constantine had a long association with sun worship.

Constantine's rise to power is a fascinating study of itself.⁴⁶ Perhaps a suitable place to start tracing this rise is an administrative innovation put in place by the Emperor Diocletian. To enable him to meet the multiple dangers to the Roman Empire that threatened in many different places, Diocletian created four positions of power, two called Augustus, two called Caesar. He appointed himself Augustus for the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and appointed an Augustus for the western part. He appointed a Caesar under each Augustus—essentially establishing four powerful rulers of the Empire,

anything that is not in the Bible, must be rather puzzled by the keeping of Sunday when God distinctly said, 'Keep holy the Sabbath Day.' The word Sunday does not come anywhere in the Bible, so, without knowing it, they are obeying the authority of the Catholic Church." Canon Cafferata, *The Catechism Simply Explained* (London: Burns & Oates, 1947), 89. Some idea of the significance of this catechism might be gained by observing that while it was first published in 1922, it was either reprinted or revised in 1924, 1927, 1930, 1932, 1933, 1937, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1943, 1946, and 1947. The later 1957 edition takes a more conciliatory approach to this matter, and Catechisms written since Vatican Council II omit this kind of rhetoric altogether.

⁴⁵One might cite another example of pre-Vatican II rhetoric, Protestant this time, as an illustration of this point: "There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week. . . . What a pity that it [Sunday] comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun-god, then adopted and sanctified by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism." Edward T. Hiscox, Sermon at Baptist Ministers' Convention, Saratoga, NY, August 20, 1893, as cited by Charlene R. Fortsch, *Daniel: Understanding the Dreams and Visions* (British Columbia: Prophecy Song, 2006), 363. In more recent times, most of the millions who avidly read Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Corgi, 2003) found the reconstruction of early Christianity in it plausible. Indeed, for many of them, it is the only full-scale reconstruction of early Christian history they have considered carefully. Thus, if only for the impact this book has had on the wider public, the following claims are worth noting: ". . . by fusing pagan symbols, dates and rituals into the growing Christian tradition, he [Constantine] created a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties" (p. 314); and ". . . Christianity honoured the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagan's veneration day of the sun" (pp. 314-315).

⁴⁶See McIver, *Beyond the da Vinci Code*, 18-24, for this history of Constantine's rise to power in overview, or the two books, Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), and T. G. Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1996), for a more detailed, and very helpful introduction to many of the historical and other issues surrounding Constantine the Great.

each able to vigorously wage war on its internal and external enemies. Constantine's father was first Caesar and then Augustus of the Western part of the Roman Empire. During the time period that his father held these important roles, Constantine spent time proving himself a leader in the army, and afterwards was assigned to the court of Diocletian. While at court, as well as being a hostage to ensure his father's good behavior, Constantine was able to learn how a court functions at first hand, and to become known to all the major players in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. What makes Constantine's time with Diocletian interesting for this investigation is that Diocletian made a serious effort to eliminate Christianity altogether. Given Constantine's later patronage of Christianity, how to position himself with regard to the significant persecution of Christians that was taking place around him must have presented some interesting challenges. Diocletian died, and soon after, Constantine escaped from the court (probably just ahead of assassins), and joined his father in the west. On his father's death, he was proclaimed Augustus by his troops.

On assuming power, Constantine immediately provided relief for Christians in the territories under his control. His father, Constantius, had already pursued a policy that mitigated the effects of Diocletian's persecuting edicts against Christians, but Constantine openly rejected the anti-Christian legal provisions still officially in force. He very quickly passed laws that enabled Christians and Christian church groups to reclaim property that had been confiscated from them during the persecution, and over time adopted an increasingly pro-Christian stance, proclaiming many laws that favored Christians. Skipping ahead in time slightly, one can observe that Christianity became closely linked with the politics of the empire when Constantine first chose to become a patron of Christians on achieving power in the west. His patronage of Christianity contrasted with the continuing persecution of Christians in the eastern part of the empire, and when it came, most Christians in the eastern empire welcomed Constantine's eventual control over that part of the empire as well.

On March 7, A.D. 321, while solidly established in power in the western Roman Empire, and three years before he added the eastern empire to his control, Constantine proclaimed the first of a series of laws which facilitated Christian worship. It reads:

Let all judges and townspeople and occupations of all trades rest on the venerable day of the Sun; nevertheless, let those who are situated in the rural districts freely and with full liberty attend to the cultivation of the fields, because it frequently happens that no other day may be so fitting for ploughing grain and trenching vineyards, lest at the time the advantage of the moment granted by the provision of heaven be lost. Given on the Nones of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls, each of them for the second time.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Constantine's laws allowing Christians to worship are most easily accessible in Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity*; the citation is found on p. 255. A second law, promulgated on July 3, 321, allowed the manumission (freeing) of slaves on a

Long periods of Constantine's later career were focused in the eastern empire, particularly his new capital which came to be known as Constantinople (and is today known as Istanbul), but he was based at Rome at the time he was making these laws allowing worship on Sundays. No doubt he took his lead from the Christians at Rome when he decreed Sunday as the day on which Christians were allowed to abstain from work so that they could attend worship services. Did Constantine actually change the day of worship? Not really. The Christian community at Rome had in all likelihood been worshipping only on Sunday for at least 150 years. But Constantine's laws did much to assist the spread of Sunday worship at the expense of worship on the Sabbath. Furthermore, the large numbers of converts who came into the Christian church at this time, came into a situation in which it was natural to meet on a Sunday, rather than on a Saturday.

Constantine's laws did not immediately end the practice of many Christians of meeting on both Sabbath and Sunday. Indeed, as late as the middle of the eleventh century, one of the issues of controversy between the Latin-speaking church based at Rome and the Greek-speaking eastern church that eventually resulted in the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church that exists to this day, was a dispute whether fasting should be encouraged on the Sabbath day. The eastern church vigorously protested the idea of fasting on Sabbath. In one reply, the easterners were asked, "However, you [Greeks], if you do not judaize, tell (us) why you have something in common with the Jews in a similar observance of the Sabbath?"⁴⁸ An accusation made in the heat of theological conflict, true, but one that must have had some basis in the practice of the Greek-speaking churches. Apparently they were still observing the Sabbath in some form.

But over time, the net result of the official support of Sunday observance has been that nearly all vestigial practices of Sabbath observance have died. Contemporary Christian denominations, such as the Seventh-day Adventists, and Seventh Day Baptists, who choose Saturday as their weekly day of meeting, tend to have developed the tradition on the basis of their reading of the Bible and understanding of early Christian history, rather than any continuous denominational link to earlier Sabbath-keeping practices.⁴⁹

Sunday.

⁴⁸Radiša Antic, "The Controversy over Fasting on Saturday between Constantinople and Rome," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 49, no. 2 (2011): 337-352; R. L. Odom, "The Sabbath in the Great Schism of A.D. 1054," *Andrews Seminary Studies* 1, no. 1 (1963): 74-80. The citation, part of Cardinal Hubert's treatise, *Adversus Calumnias Graecorum* [*Against the Calumnies of the Greeks*], is found on p. 78 of Odom, "The Great Schism."

⁴⁹Accounts of how Sabbath observance was adopted by the ex-Millerites who formed the nucleus of the later Seventh-day Adventist Church may be found in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 135-146; and Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 56-58, 65-66.

Thus, while Constantine did contribute significantly to this process, it is hardly fair to say that he actually deliberately changed the day of worship. But what of his connection with sun worship? In the early stages of his rise to power, Constantine had indeed been associated with the worship of the sun, and the cult of *Sol Invictus*. Several of his early coins even bear an inscription proclaiming this. Even after becoming a patron of Christianity, he remained the head priest of Rome's official religion of sun worship—the cult of *Sol Invictus*. Further evidence for Constantine's pagan status could be cited. For example, until he symbolically relinquished his imperial power on his deathbed, Constantine kept the then-pagan title of *pontifex maximus* that had fallen to him when he was promoted from Caesar to Augustus. Public subsidies of the ancient cults of Rome continued under Constantine, and in fact, long after his death. As *pontifex maximus* he even appointed new members to the Roman (pagan) priestly colleges. Under his rule, pagan temples in the western half of the empire retained their treasures and endowments, and openly celebrated traditional rites.⁵⁰ Yet it is more than likely that in fulfilling these roles, Constantine was doing no more than being a good ruler over the people he governed, who for all of his reign consisted of more pagans than Christians. That Christians at Rome were already worshipping on Sunday, the same day held important by the cult of sun worship, may have been a happy coincidence. The eventual incorporation of some of the elements of sun-worship into Christian worship is of a similar nature to many other practices and holy places taken over by Christians in what they saw as their victory over pagan forces. Christians took over many of the pagan places of worship as theirs, and many a yearly festival that had pagan roots was given a Christian meaning.

Given all this, what is to be made of the claim that Constantine changed the day of worship? While he was significant in the process, one cannot say that he changed it on his own authority. After all, the practice of Sunday worship had been established within the Christian church at Rome for a very long time. What Constantine did was to facilitate its wider adoption across the empire. Did he promote Sunday because of its link with sun worship? Probably not, although such a link would fit his political needs well in making his promotion of Sunday rest more acceptable to at least some of his pagan constituents.

What of the claim that the Christian church at Rome is responsible for the change of the day of worship?⁵¹ That the Christians at Rome were likely to have been amongst the first to adopt the practice of worshipping on Sunday in preference to worshipping on Sabbath appears likely. That they influenced Constantine in the choice of the day of worship to promote by his laws is also highly likely. Even so, the bold claim that “The [Roman] Church, by the power our Lord gave her, changed the observance of Saturday to Sunday,”⁵²

⁵⁰Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 245-246.

⁵¹Skip MacCarty, “The Seventh-day Sabbath,” 44-46; Cafferata, *Catechism*, 89.

⁵²Cafferata, *ibid.*

appears unlikely. The process was much more complex than envisaged by this statement.

*When, Where, and Why did the Day of Worship
Change from Sabbath to Sunday?*

Several of the explanations that have been put forward to explain the change in the day of worship have now been considered, each of which locates the change in a specific time period. Willy Rordorf had suggested that the actions and teaching of Jesus lie at the root of the change, and thus he dates the change very early. Others have suggested that the process was a longer one. Lawrence Geraty has floated the suggestion that the weekly Sunday service may have its origins in an early annual Sunday observance associated with Easter.⁵³ Bacchiocchi has suggested that the explanation is rather to be found at Rome, where in their endeavor to distinguish themselves from Jews, the Christians had abandoned the worship of Sabbath and emphasized the worship of Sunday. Others have suggested that Constantine made the change for his own political purposes.

Which of these reconstructions is likely to be correct? Our response can be divided into two sections, the first dealing with conclusions that are relatively firm, the second dealing with conclusions that are tentative at best.

First, then, much can be said with confidence about *when* and even *where* the change of the day of worship took place within early Christianity. From the foregoing, it is clear that the change did *not* take place during the ministry of Jesus, and that it is highly unlikely to have taken place during the period in which the New Testament documents emerged. Furthermore, in answer to the question of *where* the change is first visible, the evidence for the early adoption of Sunday observance is focused on Alexandria and Rome. In other centers, Sabbath observance was widespread until quite late amongst Christians, and frequently existed alongside of some type of Sunday meetings. These observations rule out any reconstruction that traces the change of the day of worship into the time of Jesus, or the time of the early apostles. They also rule out the suggestion that Constantine made the change for his own political purposes.

Thus, the evidence reveals that the change of the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday was a gradual process that began first in Alexandria and Rome, places for which documentary evidence exists from the second century. For most of the Christian world, the practice of Sabbath worship existed alongside of Sunday worship for many years.⁵⁴ In fact, in most of the

⁵³Lawrence T. Geraty, "The Pascha and the Origin of Sunday Observance," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 3, no. 2 (1965): 85-96; cf. Dugmore, "Lord's Day and Easter."

⁵⁴In addition to the conclusion of Sturcke cited above, one might also mention C. W. Dugmore, who writes "The importance of the two Sabbaths in the Christian week, and their festal nature, were marked by celebrations of the Eucharist every Saturday and Sunday at an early date. How early the custom of a Saturday Eucharist

ancient world, rather than a change of the day of worship, it is probably more appropriate to describe it as a process of the rise of Sunday observance and the decline of Sabbath observance. It was only with the active patronage of Constantine that trends began that eventually led to the triumph of Sunday worship over Sabbath worship in most of the Christian world.

These are secure conclusions. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the actual *reason* for the growth of Sunday worship in early Christianity cannot be clearly discerned from the available evidence.⁵⁵ The amount of influence the yearly celebrations of the resurrection Sunday at Easter might have had on the weekly celebration of Sunday is impossible to say. It is plausible that it had some or even much influence. But definitive evidence is lacking. It is likewise plausible that Christians in Rome would have been encouraged to abandon Sabbath for Sunday worship if by doing so they could distinguish themselves from the Jews in the eyes of the Roman authorities. But how strong an influence this factor played in the development of the practice of Sunday observance in Rome is impossible to say on the available evidence.

What can be said with confidence, though, is that the process that saw the rise of Sunday observance and the decline of Sabbath observance was a gradual one that began *after* the time period in which the New Testament writings were produced, that likely originated at Rome and Alexandria, and that was accelerated considerably under the patronage of Constantine the Great.

may be it is impossible to say from the documents we possess.” *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), 33. Dugmore traces the beginning of the decline of Sabbath observance to the middle of the fourth century, although he does note that “The two days were still regarded with almost equal veneration in the fourth century in Asia Minor” (p. 36). Cf. the comment by Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, that “the sabbath was kept side by side with the Lord’s day.” *This is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in Its Jewish and Early Church Settings* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978), 31. Beckwith and Stott argue for an early date for the addition of Sunday worship in the early Jewish Christian part of the early church.

⁵⁵Craig Harline has summarized the situation well: “The early Christian portion of the long-flowing Sunday river is perhaps murkier than any other. Scholars can quite happily agree on Sun Day’s origins in the ancient planetary week, on the changes to that week made by Romans, and on the ultimate preeminence of Sun Day amongst both Roman pagans and Christians. But they have never been able to agree on this: just exactly when, where, and why did the ‘Lord’s day’ *first* emerge among Roman Christians?” *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 6-7.

ALONGSIDE FOUNDATIONALISM: ADVENTISM'S ALTERNATIVE PROTESTANT PHILOSOPHICAL PATH

NICHOLAS MILLER¹
Andrews University

Postmodernism presents most American conservative evangelical churches with the following challenge and dilemma: If the modernism that was pervasive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served as the philosophical and epistemological basis for the formulation and expression of the doctrinal statements and frameworks of most modern American denominations, what happens to those doctrinal frameworks when postmodernism reveals the flaws and fallacies of that modernistic foundation? If those doctrinal frameworks can be salvaged, it can only be, postmoderns would argue, by a significant reworking of them in light of the postmodern critique. How are modern, biblically conservative evangelicals to respond to this challenge?

In good postmodern tradition, we will begin with a narrative. The current state of engagement of conservative evangelical thought with postmodernism can be illustrated by the story of a recent church conference on postmodernism and the mission of the church. The conference was held at Andrews University in October of 2012.² Andrews is operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose particular doctrinal formulations, like many American denominations, have their roots in the religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century.

Thus, the Andrews conference provides an insight into how broader conservative evangelicalism is grappling with these issues, especially as it was attended by evangelical participants and presenters from a variety of faith traditions. Three major points emerged from the conference that can help guide the church in its future engagements with postmodernism and secularism. The first two points received a general consensus of support, but the third point was contested. It is the disagreement on the third point that provides this article with its focus.

The first point of agreement was that postmodernism is at least two things; the first being an intellectual, ideological approach to reality, often associated most strongly with certain French post-structural intellectuals after World War II, who critiqued the universalist and absolutist claims of

¹Nicholas Miller is a professor of Church History at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He dedicates this paper to Dr. Michael Pearson, professor at Newbold College in England, from whom he took his first course in philosophy, which began to open up to him the world of God's other book.

²A description of the conference, the speakers, the papers, and links to audio files of the presentations can be found at <https://revisitingpostmodernism.wordpress.com/>.

modernity associated with the Enlightenment project of seeking for universal and objective truths.

The other thing that postmodernism consists of is a cultural mood, or attitude, that harbors skepticism to all forms of authority, privileges the individual's subjective experiences, and opposes any claim to universal truths or a "meta-narrative" that embraces humanity.

It was acknowledged that many people who have never heard of post-structuralism, Foucault, or Derrida, nevertheless live with a postmodern attitude or perspective. Indeed, this would seem to be the prevailing cultural sense in most centers of education and urbanism in the West, and increasingly in other countries around the world.

The second point of commonality at the conference was that whatever the merits or demerits of postmodernism are as an ideology—and most presenters were quite critical of it—the existence of the cultural form of postmodernism requires a response and recognition from Adventist missions.

As the keynote speaker, Dr. John Stackhouse, put it, like any culture we try to reach, postmodernism has its good points and bad points; but for the missionary, the most important point is that it *is*—and if we want to reach people impacted by it, we must learn to communicate with their concerns, sensitivities, and values in mind. The manner and style with which the biblical message is delivered needs to be revised to make it more relational, modest, and dialogical, at least when targeting postmodern populations.

The third, and more contested, point of the conference was the question of how the church in its mission should respond to the intellectual, substantive claims and critique of postmodernism. There was at least partial agreement on this point. Most participants seemed to accept that postmodernism was relatively accurate in its critique of the excesses of modernity, with its claims to objectivity, absolutism, and universality.

The main point of contention came in relation to how the church should connect its own theology and beliefs to the claims of the postmodern. There were a minority of voices that seemed to be calling for a recasting of Adventist theology and biblical study in light of the claims of postmodernity. These voices argued that Adventist theology was developed in the context of principles of modernism, and that it thus suffers from the same excesses and absolutism of the modern project. Thus, they reasoned, not only the style and approach of message delivery needs adjusting, but the message itself needs modification in light of postmodern insights.

The majority of speakers, though, appeared to reject this approach. As one speaker put it, we need to have churches that are sensitive to the postmodern seeker, but the churches themselves, and the content of their messages, should not become postmodern. Most of the plenary speakers were clear on the point that the Christian gospel does contain a meta-narrative, and that this should not and cannot be denied. The question is how best to communicate it to the postmodern skeptic.

Still, the majority of speakers did not seem to have a clear response to the question raised as to what paradigm alternate to either postmodernism

or modernism the church's message could be framed in. Indeed, one of the main speakers suggested that a number of scholars believe that the Adventist approach to Scripture has been rooted in the Enlightenment suppositions undergirding modernism, thus making it vulnerable to the postmodern critique.³

If all agreed that postmodernism did make an effective critique of modernism, yet most were unwilling to base Adventist theology on postmodernism, where did that leave the church? This question was raised, and there was no clear response. One was left with the sense that we should retreat to some kind of chastened, less aggressive modernism. But no principle was provided that would help distinguish this "humble" modernism from the modernism associated with colonial excesses and wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The message to do modernism better, with more restraint, does not provide enough detail on which to build a system of belief or theology.

This article proposes to help answer the question of what framework of knowledge can be used by Adventists, as well as other conservative evangelicals, to construct their message that avoids the modern/postmodern conundrum. It draws on the history of a philosophical movement that developed in parallel with the foundationalism typically associated with Western modernism.

It was a framework that reached a zenith in later colonial and early republican America; was part of the undergirding of the religious thought of the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century; provided the philosophical framework for the many revival and restorationist groups coming out of that Awakening, including the Adventist church; and then faded from American Protestant thought in the late nineteenth century, and from Adventism in the early part of the twentieth century.⁴

One could call this framework a version of modernism, as it did have Enlightenment influences. But it also had more conventionally religious roots and was really an amalgamation, or coproduction, of certain strands of Enlightenment and religious, typically dissenting Protestant, thought.⁵ It did

³D. J. B. Trim, "Watchmen over the flux of thought: Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, and the historical development of postmodernist philosophy" (paper, presented at the conference "Revisiting Postmodernism: An Old Debate on a New Era," Andrews University, October 18-20, 2012), 20.

⁴This framework has been discussed in overview and general detail in a number of works, such as Mark Noll, *American's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93-113; Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 307-362; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," *Church History* 24.3 (Sep., 1955): 257-272. These works sketch the general rise and influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, though they leave generally unexplored the varying strands of how that thought contributed to both foundationalist and nonfoundationalist epistemologies.

⁵Ahlstrom recognized the varied religious roots of the movement, including

not represent a complete break with the premodern era, but a modification and continuation, and it itself had multiple facets, not all of which were accepted by those groups influenced by it.⁶

But it was distinctly different from twentieth-century modernism so as to not, in my opinion, be susceptible to the main thrust of the postmodern critique. Now, the important practical point here is that if much of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century evangelical theology, including Adventism, was constructed on this *other, alternate* system of early modern thought, then it does not need to radically or even significantly reconstruct or restructure its belief system to take into account the postmodern critique.

Admittedly, there will still need to be some modifications. Certainly, evangelical and Adventist doctrine in the twentieth century has been influenced and even shaped to some degree by the foundationalisms of both the liberal and fundamentalist strands of Christianity. But while this streak of both liberal and fundamentalist modernism exists in Adventism, it is largely an accretion of the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Adventism's underpinnings rest, in my opinion, on a different set of philosophical assumptions.

I. Liberalism and Fundamentalism: Twin Products of Philosophical Foundationalism

Nancey Murphy, in her book *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How Modern and Post-Modern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda*, reveals the irony that the apparently warring twentieth-century religious ideologies of theological liberalism and fundamentalism are both based on the same, nonscriptural epistemological basis of Cartesian foundationalism.⁷

Murphy argues that, in essence, the Cartesian ideal is that all knowledge we commit to must be based on "indubitable foundation." It posits knowledge bases that are immune from challenge, absolutely certain, and from which we can build our system of beliefs. The fundamentalists found this absolute basis of certainty *externally* in an inerrant, verbally inspired Bible that they believed could meet this standard of certainty. The liberals found their certainty *internally*, in the individual's religious experiences and feelings. Murphy argues

Thomas Aquinas, Richard Hooker, and John Locke, in "whose shadow the entire movement flourished." Ahlstrom, 259.

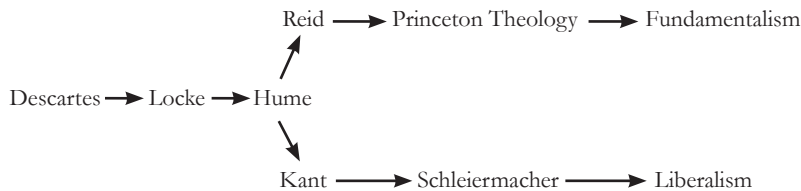
⁶Mark Noll distinguishes epistemological, ethical, and methodological strands within the Common Sense Tradition, with various strands being accepted, emphasized, or rejected by various groups at different times in American history. These distinctions become important below as we explore how different groups impacted by Common Sense moved either away or toward a philosophically foundationalist outlook. Mark A. Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," *American Quarterly* 37, 2 (Summer 1985): 220-223.

⁷Nancy Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 11-35.

that both the fundamentalist and liberal systems end up misusing the Bible because of their adherence to this problematic philosophical system.

Murphy's framework has helped guide my telling of the story in my church history courses of the rise of modern philosophy and its connection to conservative and liberal Christianity. But in telling this story of Christianity's twentieth-century bifurcation, I believe that Murphy's narrative would be helped by a small modification, an enrichment at least, in the telling of its historical roots. This nuancing of the story opens up space to understand a version of Protestant philosophy that was not quite the same, in my opinion, as the modern foundationalism effectively critiqued by postmodernism.

Murphy includes in her book a simple yet helpful chart that gives a quick historical overview of the development of foundationalism and its relation to modern Christianity. It looks like this:



This chart is very helpful in understanding the common foundationalist roots to the otherwise competing systems of theological fundamentalism and liberalism. But my study of these thinkers has led me to believe that this story can be helpfully complicated a bit, by recognizing a major difference between some of these thinkers over the role that “certainty” plays in reliable knowledge.

II. John Locke, Probabilism and Judgment

In my work on religious liberty, I spent quite a bit of time dealing with John Locke and his works on knowledge and epistemology.⁸ While elements of Locke seem somewhat modern and even foundationalist, he actually differs quite a bit from Descartes and Hume in not emphasizing “the universal, the timeless, the theoretical,” as Murphy describes the foundationalists. Rather, he is much more concerned with the “particular, the timely, the practical,” as Murphy characterizes nonfoundational, premodern thought.⁹

⁸Nicholas Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism*, 13.

There is one more word that characterized Locke's thought—"probability," which stands in contrast to certainty. As Locke himself put it, "Probability, rather than knowledge, must be our guide in most of the affairs of life. . . . 'Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct.' Therefore it is practical knowledge which is the truly valuable part of knowledge."¹⁰ In Locke's view, the objective is not to achieve absolute certainty, but to understand the side on which the balance of evidence lies, and to act accordingly.

This is a very different mode and mindset from that of Descartes. It is not just the rationalist/empiricist divide that separated Locke from Descartes. In addition, Locke also differed with Descartes over that central element of foundationalism, at least as Murphy and others describe it, the need for indubitable foundations, or absolute certainty.

These observations about Locke's non-Cartesian bent toward practicality and probability were underscored by Locke scholar Douglas Casson in his recent book *Liberating Judgment: Fanatics, Skeptics, and John Locke's Politics of Probability*.¹¹ Casson portrays Locke as blazing a middle pathway between the "skepticism of Montaigne and the foundationalism of Descartes."

Both these systems were the opposite sides of the same coin, somewhat like the fundamentalism and liberalism of our day; they were both based on a desire for certainty and led to a "political quietism." Both deferred to traditional authorities, one in the name of the authority of tradition, the other on a belief in a centralized moral certainty.¹²

While the young Locke was something of a traditionalist and absolutist, the more mature Locke avoided both of these extremes by his foray into notions of probability, judgment, and reasonableness.¹³ Locke believed that most belief was that of probability, rather than absolute knowledge. The areas of probability included scientific, moral, and religious beliefs, to which he gave a similar status of probability and reliability. (Ironically, the field of actual knowledge, while very small, included religious beliefs such as the existence of God and His right to receive worship.)

Locke's critical move was to recognize the role of internal judgment in coming to an understanding and acceptance of truth. This role of probability, giving importance to the internal reflections and judgments of each person, is what sets Locke's philosophy quite distinctly apart from Descartes and what I would call the absolute foundationalists.

It was this internal role and deliberation necessary to making judgments about knowledge, I believe, that caused Locke to value freedom of thought and religion as he did. But it also puts him in a different path and trajectory than that of foundationalism as set out by Murphy. Instead, Casson puts Locke in a different genealogy, one going back through a series of Protestant

¹⁰John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, I.I.6.

¹¹(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹²Ibid., 21-22.

¹³Miller, *Religious Roots*, 64-67.

thinkers who emphasized notions of the importance of personal, internal judgment, and even experience in matters of religion.

I have previously written about Locke's encounter with the thought of dissenting Protestant thinkers who emphasized the internal role of the Holy Spirit in prompting people to come to religious judgments and decisions. These included Baptists, Quakers, and other Protestant dissenters. While direct cause cannot be proven, it is very interesting that it was during and after being exposed to these ideas of religious judgment that he developed a philosophical version that was very similar to these religious approaches.¹⁴

Casson also sees religious precursors to Locke's thought on probability and judgment. These included the thinkers of the Great Circle of Tew, of which William Chillingworth was a member. Chillingworth was the author of *The Religion of the Protestants*, a work that emphasized the role of private judgment and practical reason in arriving at scriptural truths. Another precursor was Hugo Grotius, the Arminian remonstrant who authored the first modern Christian apologetic, *The Truth of the Christian Religion*. In it, he appealed to the "nondemonstrable facts of history" whereby persons might show the "moral certainty" or "probability" of religious truth.¹⁵

After Locke we have the continuation of the school of probability or practical certainty in the work of Scottish clergyman and philosopher Thomas Reid. Reid was the most notable force behind the school of Scottish Common Sense philosophy; a system that made claims about epistemology, reason, and ethics grounded in common human experience.¹⁶

Reid's view of the practicality of knowledge is captured in the title of "common sense" that is attached to his philosophy. The phrase did not mean that all things widely or commonly believed are true. Rather, it is the view that certain truths about humans and reality must be true for rational discourse to take place at all. Thus these truths must be "common" to all.

These essential truths would include the idea that our perceptions of material things are reasonably reliable, that words convey some kind of meaning, that other rational minds do exist. Without assuming these things, no attempt at rational discourse is possible. Since even those that deny these things, or say that they cannot be proved, use words and discourse to do so, even they assume them to be true. Thus, our senses of these foundational truths are common and shared.¹⁷

¹⁴Miller, *Religious Roots*, 67-72.

¹⁵Ibid., 113.

¹⁶Some important recent works about Reid and his contributions to Scottish Common Sense philosophy include, Terence Cuneo, René van Woudenberg, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); John Haldane, Stephen L. Read, eds., *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid: A Collection of Essays* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁷Ronald E. Beanblossom, ed., *Thomas Reid: Inquiry and Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), xlv-xlvi.

The practical concerns of his system caused him to accept as valuable knowledge that which was less than absolutely certain and fully demonstrable. As one Reid scholar put it, “Reid rejects the claim that we can only be said to know for certain in those cases where it is logically impossible to be mistaken; it is not the case that the only demonstrative knowledge constitutes knowledge.”¹⁸ Another framed it thus: “Epistemologically, it would appear that we know things only on a common sense level with a type of practical certainty, rather than any ‘absolute’ certainty.”¹⁹

Reid himself wrote that “philosophers consider probable evidence, not as a degree, but as a species of evidence, which is opposed, not to certainty, but to another species of evidence, called demonstration.” Reid is particularly concerned to reject Hume’s argument that all knowledge is merely probability, and therefore not true knowledge.²⁰ For these reasons, one Reid scholar has described Reid as “Locke purged and Locke re-created. It is only a mild exaggeration to say that Reid’s system is a critical reconstruction of Locke.”²¹

*III. Modern Probabilism and Scottish Common Sense:
An Alternative to Hard Foundationalism*

Based on these observations about Locke and the stream of probabilism he inherits and transmits, I would propose an alternate or parallel genealogy to that sketched by Murphy. It is one of a modern probabilism that runs parallel with modern foundationalism. This probabilism²² differs from foundationalism in both holding to a different standard of reliability, probability rather than certainty; and also in its willingness to base truths on multiple sources, such as reason, experience, and nature as well as Scripture.

¹⁸Ibid., xlv.

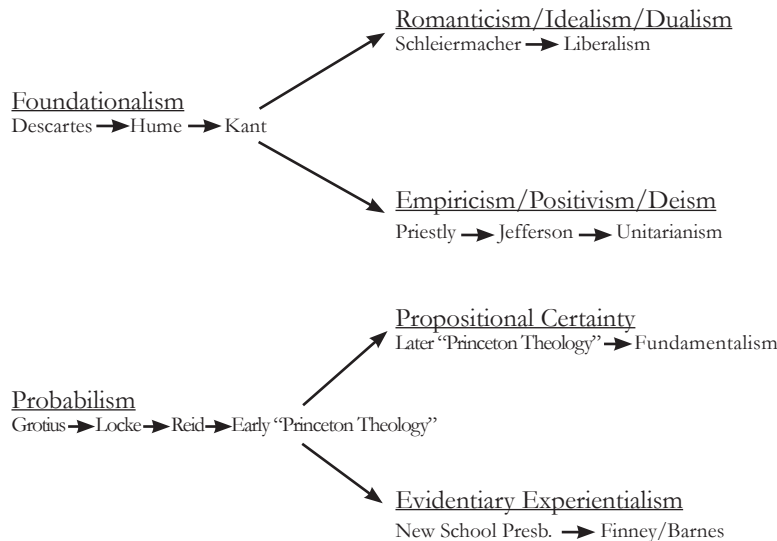
¹⁹Elmer H. Duncan, ed., *Thomas Reid’s Lectures on Natural Theology (1780)* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), xxxv.

²⁰Ibid., xiv.

²¹G. A. Johnson, “Introduction,” *Selections from the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Chicago: Open Court, 1915), 15.

²²Some may call it a “soft foundationalism,” but that would be to mischaracterize it. Not only does it differ from traditional foundationalism in its acceptance of probability rather than certainty, but it also allows for multiple sources and resources for truth, versus the one source allowed for by foundationalism, whether it be empiricism, rationalism, or Scripture and revelation.

I would re-draw this historical genealogy to look something like this:



This new chart more accurately reflects that John Locke and Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid were really in significant opposition to many of the central ideas of Hume and Kant, most especially the latter's need for certainty and corresponding denial that moral or value truths could come from examining the natural world. This chart would work better in three dimensions, with the ends curved in a circle to show the empiricism of Priestly and Jefferson approaching near the propositional certainty of the later Princeton school; and the evidentiary experientialists of the New Schoolers abutting the Romantic idealism of Schleiermacher and the liberals.

As Thomas Reid's Common Sense philosophy developed in America, its epistemological strand stayed vital among many and varied religious groups, but its ethical, natural moral philosophy side was in good part rejected by those that developed the nineteenth-century Princeton theology. This rejection of natural sources of truth led to a kind of foundationalism, as the Princeton school embraced a single-source of absolute truth—the verbally-inspired, inerrant Scriptures. This move pushed them towards the foundationalism of the Deists and Unitarians, but with a different foundation, that of Scripture, rather than reason applied to the natural world.

The continued use of ethical Common Sense by the New Haven theologians and New School Presbyterians caused them to continue to value both natural morality and sense experience as a bridge to and supplement for Scripture. This combination, which I term evidentiary experientialism, caused this group to have greater communality with the romantics and idealists. This similarity caused some to see the New School as the forerunners of modern liberal theology. While there may be some overlap between the two groups,

for the most part the New School thinkers continued to embrace natural morality and the truth of Scriptural propositions in a manner very different from that found in idealism, the main source of theological liberalism.

Thus, the top of the chart and the bottom are actually closer to each other than those in the middle, which a three-dimensional chart could show. Further, in putting Locke and Reid in the same row, one must acknowledge that they had some significant differences with each other, especially on the question of ideas in the role of knowledge. But on the point of probability as sufficient for knowledge and beliefs, and on the belief in multiple sources of truth, they were in agreement.

IV. Ethical Scottish Common Sense, Natural Law, and Intuition

An important point that characterizes Scottish common-sense philosophy for Christian theology and thinkers is the validity of knowledge attainable from God's second book of nature. Apart from his works on the philosophy of knowledge and epistemology, Thomas Reid also lectured on the importance of natural theology, or truths about God, morality, and humanity discoverable from observations of the natural world.²³

This view of multiple sources of truth, with one source often confirming or supporting another (intuition, supporting reason, overlapping in places with Scripture) also distinguishes this common sense, probabilistic philosophical approach from Cartesian foundationalism.²⁴

That "absolute certainty" could not be achieved through these probabilistic methods, either for law or ethics, did not prevent their use for both. Unlike either Humean skepticism, or Kantian dualism, the Scottish thinkers continued to posit a connection between the natural world and moral or ethical beliefs and ideas. It is not a coincidence that the eighteenth-century Scottish enlightenment produced some of the primary Protestant works on natural law and natural morality, including those of Thomas Reid, Francis Hutcheson, Lord Kames, and Adam Smith.²⁵

²³Elmer H. Duncan, Ed., *Thomas Reid's Lectures on Natural Theology (1780)* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).

²⁴An analogy to Scottish common sense ideas in the world of theology would be the Wesleyan quadrilateral, where four sources of authority, scripture, reason, experience, and tradition, mutually support and verify each other in a series of overlapping encounters. The fact that Scripture is the senior partner in the enterprise (*prima scriptura*) and the sole basis of Christian doctrine (*sola scriptura*), cannot obscure the underlying truth that this system is based on an epistemology that shows a belief in multiple sources of truth, in which each source needs the support and affirmation of other sources to be viewed as reliable or verified. Whidden, Woodrow W., "Sola Scriptura, Inerrantist Fundamentalism, and The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Is 'No Creed but The Bible: A Workable Solution?'" *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35, no. 2 (Autumn 1997), 211-226.

²⁵Thomas Ahnert, *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment 1690-1805* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 1-3, 87.

The natural law and rights ideas of Jefferson and Madison in colonial America reflect both Lockean and Scottish Enlightenment views of the meaningfulness of the natural law, of natural rights, which is a kind of morality, that can be derived from that law. But the ideas of Reid and Hutchinson found probably their most influential advocate in America in the form of John Witherspoon, Scottish Presbyterian pastor turned president of the College of New Jersey, the forerunner of Princeton.²⁶

Witherspoon served at early Princeton from 1768-1794, firmly establishing the school in the Scottish enlightenment views of epistemology and natural philosophy. He accomplished this in good part by personally teaching the capstone course, entitled simply “Moral Philosophy,” that all students took in their senior year. In this course, Witherspoon set out a view of morality and ethics that could be understood and supported from reason. As he put it, the class was called moral “*philosophy*, because it is an enquiry into the nature and grounds of moral obligation by reason, as distinct from revelation.”²⁷

Witherspoon’s commitment to a reasoned morality did not “arise from a rejection or disfavor of special revelation.” To the contrary, Witherspoon taught that “the discoveries of reason cannot be contrary to the Bible and that there is nothing certain or valuable in moral philosophy, but what is perfectly coincident with the scripture.”²⁸ But moral philosophy was a vital addition to Scripture, because it provided the framework, the web, which could connect all the disciplines outside divinity, whether it be political science, or history, or the natural sciences, to the larger world of moral concepts.

This common-sense-based moral philosophy became the working undercarriage of the Protestant educational enterprise in late-eighteenth, and early- to mid-nineteenth-century America. It was characterized by three things, two of which we have already discussed. The first was what we might call the probabilistic, wholistic nature of reliable knowledge. This view denied that an objective, absolute certainty on most matters relating to life and faith was practical or even possible. Rather, it argued for a reliability, a practical assurance, supported by certain evidences, but which also was supported by our reason, experience, as well as moral and common sense.

The second characteristic flowed from the first, and was what we might call the wholistic nature of reality. This was shown in the reliabilist’s willingness to accept and consider truth claims from a variety of sources, including

²⁶A discussion of Witherspoon’s impressive career in outline and his influence on Princeton and America can be found in Jeffrey H. Morrison, *John Witherspoon and the Founding of the American Republic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); George Eugene Rich, *John Witherspoon: His Scottish Intellectual Background* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1964); L. H. Butterfield, *John Witherspoon Comes to America: A Documentary Account Based Largely on New Materials* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953).

²⁷Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic: 1768-1822* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 45.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 45.

Scripture, reason, experience, moral sense, etc. This made the possibility of both moral philosophy and natural law possible for a people who otherwise had a very high regard for Scripture, and might be willing to make Scripture the only source for spiritual and moral truths. They understood that God had a second book, nature, which included the world, as well as human nature and experience, through which moral principles could also be discerned.

These first two points led to a third point, which eventually split the early Protestant Common Sense consensus in the United States, and led in part, in my view, to the development of fundamentalism. This third point was a doctrinal point that flowed from the first two points. If God could communicate reliable truths through multiple sources, then one could use these sources to understand claims made by the Bible about God. If the Bible said that God was just, and moral, then He could be understood to be just and moral by standards of morality and justice accessible by human reason generally.

This conception that human reason in reflecting on nature could discern basic moral truths, if only in crude outline, allowed for the development of a theological view or system called the moral government of God. This system was rooted in the free-will theology of Jacob Arminius, and was developed by one of his disciples, the legal great and Christian apologist, Hugo Grotius. It built on Arminius' desire to invoke human freedom, not in order to build up human prestige or autonomy, but to defend God's honor and character in not being the author of evil. Free will became the firewall, as it were, that prevented God from being tagged, or vilified, as the cause and originator of evil.²⁹

Grotius built on this insight to talk about a moral government of God, which needed to preserve God's reputation for justice, which was the basis of the long-term stability of his government, while also allowing him to be merciful in forgiving sinners. He developed a theory of the atonement, whereby God is not concerned about his personal honor or prestige, but rather about the integrity of the government that He oversees. It is God in His role as ruler of the universe that must provide a consistent oversight to His system of laws upon which the universe depends.³⁰

The Moral Government of God was an attractive model for those influenced by Arminius, and early supporters of it included John Milton, John Wesley, and Thomas Reid himself. Milton, as a young man, had met and stayed with Grotius briefly in Paris, and admired his works. His *Paradise Lost*, of course, was written with the specific purpose to "Justify the ways

²⁹Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 467.

³⁰Hugo Grotius, *A Defence of the Catholic Faith Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus*, trans. and introduction, Frank Hugh Foster (Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1889).

of God to men,” a theme that assumes that God operates a just, fair, moral government.³¹

Samuel Wesley, John Wesley’s father, viewed Hugo Grotius as his favorite biblical commentator, and he recommended him to John. The writings of Grotius came to be a great theological resource for Wesley and his “Methodist” friends at Oxford University.³² Methodism, which had a free will bent, and which was influenced by the thought of Arminius and Grotius, continued to develop its theology of God’s justice, atonement, and restoration around the Moral Government of God model.³³

Despite coming from a Calvinist, reformed background, Thomas Reid’s Moral Government framework assumed that humans were moral, accountable beings who possessed capacity for voluntary behavior and free will. It was these voluntary, human wills that, for Reid, shielded God from accusations of being the originator of evil.³⁴

Reid specifically developed arguments about the Moral Government of God in his lectures on natural theology.³⁵ For Reid, a moral nature was central to God’s being, and this expressed itself in “the Moral Government of God.”³⁶ “In His Moral Government,” Reid wrote, “he acts like a Legislator, who proposes rules of conduct to his subjects and as they obey or disobey them so may they expect his favor or displeasure.”³⁷

The reformed tradition, Reid notwithstanding, tended to be resistant to Moral Government claims, as they believed that it inappropriately elevated human will and reason. But under the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy and Reid, the Moral Government of God idea began to be adopted by some prominent Calvinist thinkers in late eighteenth-century America. The logic of the movement caused these reformed thinkers to begin to modify notions of human choice and free will in regards to salvation.

The movement within American Calvinism began to coalesce in certain reformed thinkers through the efforts of successors to Jonathan Edwards, such as Joseph Bellamy and Jonathan Edwards, Jr. It was given its most

³¹Anniina Jokinen, “Life of John Milton,” *Luminarium*, June 21, 2006, Accessed on February 27, 2015, <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/milton/miltonbio.htm>.

³²Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed., *Diary of an Oxford Methodist: Benjamin Ingham, 1733-34* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985).

³³Wesley was a strong supporter of the natural theology or religion espoused by Bishop Butler in his famed *Analogy of Religion: Natural and Revealed*, a work that Thomas Reid also endorsed. Elton M. Hendricks, “John Wesley and Natural Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 18, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 12-13; American Methodist theologian Richard Watson continued to develop the Moral Government of God theme in his *Theological Institutes; or a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 254 (emphasis added).

³⁴*Ibid.*, 101-102.

³⁵Duncan, *Thomas Reid’s Lectures on Natural Theology*, 72-73, 94-95, 117-120.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 72, 82-84, 117.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 117.

formal and extended expression, however, through the theological teachings and writings of Nathaniel Taylor, a Yale Professor of Divinity in the early nineteenth century.³⁸

Taylor, a member of the Congregationalist church, modified Calvinist views of human will and the atonement to allow for Christ's sacrifice to make provision for all, and for all humans to have the possibility to choose it. His great theme, and the title of his collected lectures, was *The Moral Government of God*.³⁹

While Taylor is not a common name today, he had influence beyond Congregationalism, and impacted a sufficient number of Presbyterians to give rise to what has been termed New School Presbyterianism. Another leading figure associated with this movement was Charles Finney, the lawyer turned evangelist. Finney spearheaded much of the revivalism of the later part of the Second Great Awakening, and helped found Oberlin College.⁴⁰ Another expositor of views like Taylor's was the widely popular Biblical commentator Albert Barnes, whose Biblical commentaries sold a million copies by the 1870s.⁴¹

The revivalism of the Second Great Awakening, and the modification of Calvinism away from strict determinism and a limited atonement, caused a pushback from various Calvinist theologians against a philosophy that they felt gave too much room for the role of human reason and moral sentiment. A number of these scholars were based at Princeton.

Historian Mark Noll documents the shifting emphasis in philosophy over time at Princeton, from Archibald Alexander, who stays with Witherspoon's emphasis on Scottish common sense ideas, to Charles Hodge, who opposes Finney's revivalism and free will, and criticizes Finney's use of reason and appeal to common sense notions of freedom and responsibility. Hodge does not overtly reject Scottish common-sense principles, and continues to use what Mark Noll calls epistemological Common Sense.⁴²

Epistemological Common Sense is the view that "our perceptions reveal the world pretty much as it is and are not merely 'ideas' impressed upon our mind." Hodge begins to reject, however, what Noll calls ethical common sense, "the assertion that just as humans know intuitively some basic realities

³⁸George Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003; originally published by Yale University Press, 1970), 38-39.

³⁹Ibid., 48-51.

⁴⁰Ibid., 76-80.

⁴¹Ibid., 27, 52-55.

⁴²Mark A. Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought" *American Quarterly* 37, no. 2. (Summer 1985): 220-221; the continued use of epistemological Common Sense at Princeton into the early twentieth century is documented by Darryl G. Hart, "The Princeton Mind in the Modern World and the Common Sense of J. Gresham Machen," *WTJ*, 46 (1984), 1-25.

of the physical world, so they know by the nature of their own being certain foundational principles of morality.”⁴³

Moving away from this view that morality can be known at all from the natural world, Hodge retreats to a use of reason tied almost exclusively to Scripture to understand and know morality. He began to view with great skepticism the deliverances of moral instinct and common sense that had been part of ethical Common Sense teaching.

This tendency towards a more limited, confining, and absolute source of truth was enhanced by Hodge’s successors, his son, Archibald Hodge, and theologian Benjamin Warfield. It was Hodge and Warfield together who, in seeking for a firmer and more foundational source of truth, developed the theory of the verbal inerrancy view of Scriptural inspiration that came to dominate fundamentalism in the early twentieth century.⁴⁴

This reaction against the New Haven theology and New School Presbyterians pushed the “Old School” Princetonians away from the experiential evidentialism of the Scottish common sense school, which appreciated multiple sources of truth, and relied on a practical probability rather than an absolute certainty. It moved them toward a foundationalism more akin to the empiricists and positivists of the rising scientism. The difference was, of course, that the object of study would not be the natural world, but Scripture, which would be susceptible to the methods and rigor of science.

This story is well told by George Marsden in his classic work on *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. What is less well known is the story of the successors of the New Haven and New School Presbyterian theologies, those that did not buy into the foundationalist, verbal inerrancy of Scripture as the increasingly exclusive source of moral teaching.

This middle group became increasingly overshadowed by the fundamentalist/liberal split of the early twentieth century. Groups felt forced to choose up sides between the growing extremes, and many of them were pushed onto the foundationalist extremes of either empiricist/experiential liberalism or propositional/verbalist fundamentalism. My study of Adventist history and theology convinces me that Adventists were one of the groups that inherited and worked, at least initially, from this alternate, middle path.⁴⁵

The Adventist heritage on this matter can be seen in the three areas discussed above: reliability, multiple truth sources, and God’s Moral Government. Importantly, each of these three topics were somewhat

⁴³Noll, “Common Sense Traditions,” 220-221.

⁴⁴Mark Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1983, 2001), 30-33, 165-166, 218-220; the split between the New School’s continuing embrace of the ethical elements of the Scottish philosophy and Old Princeton’s growing concern over its experiential, subjective elements have also been noted by Tim McConnel, “The Old Princeton Apologetics: Common Sense or Reformed?” *JETS* 46.4 (December 2003): 647-72, 649-650.

⁴⁵George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, 2006).

obscured for much of the twentieth century as Adventism fell into an orbit very close to Old-Princeton-influenced fundamentalism. It then reacted against that in the 1970s, with portions of the church heading for liberal, or at least neo-orthodox, positions.

Let's consider these areas in turn by looking at some examples from one of Adventism's primary founders, Ellen White. If we take them in reverse order, we start with the Moral Government of God theology. It is not surprising that Ellen White should be sympathetic to the Moral Government of God view, given her Methodist, Arminian roots. What is unusual and quite interesting, though, is her strong connection with the New School Presbyterian advocates of it.

Arthur White, Ellen White's son, wrote this of Ellen White: "as the year 1900 opened, Ellen White was dividing her time and strength between the evangelistic interest at Maitland [in Australia] and her literary work. With this in mind on January 1, 1900, she wrote to Edson calling for her library to be sent to Australia."⁴⁶ This is what she wrote:

I have sent for four or five large volumes of Barnes' notes on the Bible. I think they are in Battle Creek in my house now sold, somewhere with my books. I hope you will see that my property, if I have any, is cared for and not scattered as common property everywhere. I may never visit America again, and my best books should come to me when it is convenient.⁴⁷

Given that she viewed Barnes' commentaries as among her "best books," it is not surprising that they had some shared views. The views that Barnes expresses in his commentary on Romans with the concept of the atonement being explained in terms of God's Moral Government is very similar to that found in Ellen White. It is not to say that Ellen White got it from Barnes. Indeed, it may have been that he was one of her favorite commentators because his conceptions in this regard were very similar to hers. Here is one quote as an example:

In the gift of his Son as a substitute and surety for fallen man, is an everlasting testimony to the world, to the heavenly universe, and to worlds unfallen, of the sacred regard which God has for the *honor of his law* and the eternal stability of his own *moral government*. It was also an expression of his love and mercy for the fallen human race. In the plan of redemption, this Saviour was to bring glory to God by making manifest his love for the world.⁴⁸

Ellen White's comprehensive Great Controversy theme is an expansion and re-focusing of the Moral Government of God construct developed by Grotius, Taylor, Barnes and others. White re-focuses it to the point where it has two centers, the main one being God's love, though she never loses sight of his justice and morality. After Ellen White, one might call it God's Moral Government of Love.

⁴⁶Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, Vol. 4: *The Australian Years, 1891-1900* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1983), 448.

⁴⁷Ellen G. White, Letter 189, 1900.

⁴⁸Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, August 5, 1897, Paragraph 4.

Modern oversight of the governmental aspects of God's moral nature causes confusion in the Adventist church over issues like the nature of the atonement and the centrality of theodicy to questions about creation, evolution, and suffering. A restoration of the full picture of God's Moral Government would help us more effectively deal with these issues as a church.

Ellen White was also very conscious and clear on the second point of wholistic probabilism, and that is the wholistic nature of reality. She was no dualist, and was constantly commenting on the connection between the natural and spiritual worlds, whether it was the laws of nature in regards to physical and mental health, or the laws of nature and morality. Far from being a Bible-only moralist, she advocated for the study of the Protestant system of moral philosophy.

In this regard she wrote:

The plans devised and carried out for the education of the youth are none too broad. They should not have a one-sided education, but all their powers should receive equal attention. Moral philosophy, the study of Scriptures, and physical training should be combined with the studies usually pursued in schools.⁴⁹

Many Adventists reading this statement quickly and carelessly will assume that White is referring to the moral philosophy found in the Bible. But the list of items is obviously in the disjunctive, as physical training is certainly different from scriptural or moral study. Further, in the nineteenth century, the course on moral philosophy, as it had been in John Witherspoon's time, was taught in most Protestant colleges "as the capstone course of the senior year of collegiate instruction," often by the president. It was widely understood as being the study of morals from sources of knowledge outside the scriptures.⁵⁰

Despite this inspired injunction that "moral philosophy" should be one of the three main things studied in Adventist schools, twentieth-century Adventism generally joined fundamentalism in rejecting any meaningful study of moral philosophy in the twentieth century. This means that our biblical moral insights became marooned on an island that could only be reached by people that shared our commitment to Scripture. It also in good part disconnected the study of the sciences and humanities from the moral philosophical web that previously connected them with the study of divinities.

This is in part the reason for the wrestling match that takes place in Adventist colleges and universities between the theology departments and those of the sciences, sociology, psychology, history, and other humanities. The common vocabulary of moral reasoning and discourse has been

⁴⁹Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894), 210.

⁵⁰Allen C. Guelzo, "'The Science of Duty': Moral Philosophy and the Epistemology of Science in Nineteenth Century America," in David Livingstone, D. G. Hart, Mark Noll, eds., *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 267-269, 271.

largely lost, and the disciplines have settled onto their general philosophical underpinnings created by their secular professional and scholarly counterparts.

The third and final point, that of not requiring an objective, rigid certainty, was seen in Adventism's refusal to accept, at least ostensibly, the theory of biblical verbal inerrancy. Despite being a conservative denomination, with literal views of creation, Adventism did not accept, in good part due to Ellen White's warnings, the theory of verbal dictation. I say ostensibly, because in their twentieth-century brush with fundamentalism, many Adventists accepted the practice of operating and defending a kind of verbal inerrancy, even while denying the theory.

This failure to continue with a wholistic, practical view of certainty was the primary reason that views of inspiration of the Bible as well as that of Ellen White were rigid and unrealistic in mid-twentieth-century Adventism. It was this artificial view of inspiration that in turn led into the disillusionment of many in the 1970s when confronted with the truths of the operation of inspiration. It was this that pushed a portion of educated Adventists into liberal or at least neo-orthodox camps.

In many ways, we still live with the fallout of that conflict in the seventies between these two extremes. This is compounded with the challenge of postmodernism, which seems to critique both extremes as being based on a non-biblical, philosophically untenable, foundationalism. And indeed, the extremes are so based. But this critique generally overlooks the other philosophical pathway to which Adventism is truly heir, the evidentiary, wholistic probabilism of Reid, Witherspoon, Taylor, Barnes, and Ellen White.

This is not a call to return to Scottish common-sense realism. One cannot truly return to philosophies of the past that were constructed to deal with the assumptions, problems, and cultures of their own time. But there are aspects of that past that can be imported into a neo-holistic realism. The points of practical certainty, wholistic moral reasoning based on multiple sources subject to Scripture, and a concern for the moral government of God, can help guide both our philosophical and theological thinking as we continue to deal with the challenges of modernity and postmodernity. The pathway ahead is not the same as the one behind, but we can continue to be guided by its way markers—as a surveyor keeps one eye on his prior positioning stakes as he continues to move forward to his ultimate goal.

ELLEN G. WHITE AND THE INFLUENCE OF COLONIAL AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

LEANNE M. SIGVARTSEN
Berrien Springs, Michigan

JAN A. SIGVARTSEN
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Many, but certainly not all, of the women who worked for the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the latter half of the nineteenth century were the wives of ministers. Ellen G. White writes that these women undertook “labor just as devotedly as their husbands,” and “are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands.”¹ These words were written in 1898 while living in Australia within the context of advocating that female church workers, particularly those who were minister’s wives and undertook duties that were “necessary to the work of ministry,” should receive the wages of “two distinct workers”² rather than just the single wage of the husband.

This article will explore some of White’s statements from her Australian years regarding women in ministry. Her remarks will be considered within the larger Australian context of her time, in colonial Australia just prior to federation, a society which was greatly affected by the transportation of over 162,000 convicts, the peaking suffrage movement, and a national and global financial crisis. It will also consider the addition of another ordained profession besides that of a minister, physician, and educator, and discuss its endorsement by White as a result of her Australian experience.

Equal Pay for Equal Work

Ellen White had previously expressed the need to pay women workers appropriate wages; however, while living in Australia her feelings on the matter seemed to intensify greatly, even to the point where in April 1898 she wrote in a letter to Brothers Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones,³ “I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money, to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for

¹Ellen G. White, “Women as Workers in the Cause of God,” Ms. 43a (1898): 1.

²Ibid.

³Brother George A. Irwin was the president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from February 19, 1897 to April 2, 1901; Brother I. H. Evans was the Michigan Conference president from 1891 to 1897; Brother Uriah Smith was the on-and-off-again editor of the *Review and Herald*, the primary Seventh-day Adventist Church magazine, in the periods 1855-1861, 1864-1869, 1870-1871, 1872-1873, 1877-1880, 1881-1897, and 1901-1903; and lastly, brother A. T. Jones was the editor of the *Review and Herald* (1897-1901) when White wrote her letter.

souls, fishing for souls.”⁴ In the same year she also wrote, “When self-denial is required because of a dearth of means, do not let a few hard-working women do all the sacrificing. Let all share in making the sacrifice. God declared, ‘I hate robbery for burnt offering.’”⁵ From this we can assume that the work of these women was considered “just as essential work as the ministers are doing” and achieved the same result as a minister’s role “hunting for souls, fishing for souls,” and thus a case was made for them to be remunerated by the church organization, equally to men who were paid for the work they were doing. Ellen White felt so strongly about this that she was prepared to use her own tithes to see it done, and stated that if the church organization did not have enough money to go around, then the male workers needed to “sacrifice” their wages, suggesting equality in remuneration and sacrifice as evidenced by “robbery for burnt offering.” Strong words indeed; however, when we investigate the social and economic climate in Australia in the late nineteenth century (when Ellen White wrote these words), we find some significant insight into why equal pay for equal work was so important at this juncture in not only Australian history, but also world history, and why she felt it should be the policy of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Australian Context

April 1898, when Ellen White wrote these remarks, was just four years shy of when all Australian women would be granted the right to vote, in 1902. Women in South Australia had already received the right to vote in state elections in 1895, three years earlier; and one woman, Catherine Helen Spence, ran for office in 1897⁶—the first woman in the modern era to do so. Women in Western Australia received the same right a year later, in 1899. New Zealand was the first modern industrialized country to grant women the right to vote, five years earlier in 1893.⁷ Thus, Ellen White’s statements were made right in the middle of a revolution that was rethinking equality and the potential of women. (Due to her death in 1915, Ellen White never lived to see the right to vote extended to women in her home country. The United States did not give all women the right to vote until 1920.)

Only 30 years earlier, the final shipment of convicts had been transported to Australia, bringing the total number of transported persons to over

⁴Ellen G. White to Brothers Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones, Letter 137, Apr. 21, 1898. Some church leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church may find this statement regarding tithes rather disturbing and would wish to explain it away. Be that as it may, her letter does demonstrate how strongly White felt about this issue of equal pay. It could even be argued that she viewed it as a moral and ethical issue that women should be paid for the valuable work they do.

⁵Ellen G. White, Ms. 47, 1898.

⁶Government of South Australia, “Catherine Helen Spence: A Bibliography,” accessed Apr. 15, 2013, <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/spence/>.

⁷Australian Government, “Australian Suffragettes,” accessed Apr. 15, 2013, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-suffragettes>

162,000.⁸ Because of the transportation of female convicts for 80 years, and because many people were descendants of these women, colonial Australians were very accustomed to seeing a woman work hard. Even wealthy free women were not exempt from hard labor, as:

The reality of life in colonial Australia often meant that upper class women had to perform physical labor and hard work for which they were little prepared. Women of social standing found themselves in the harsh, often brutal surrounds of outback Australia where they frequently struggled to build lives for themselves and their families.⁹

From 1871 to 1891, the burgeoning manufacturing industry catering to an isolated Australian population of over three million people¹⁰ saw demand for female workers in Melbourne rise so significantly that wages increased by half in real terms.¹¹ From 1879 through to 1881, universities in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Sydney began to allow women to undertake degrees and pursue professions as doctors and university professors, with many others entering professions such as nursing, teaching, administration, and farming.¹² At this time, too, 84.2 percent of the Australian population could read and write, and a further 2.2 percent claimed they could read but not write.¹³

In the early 1890's, however, Australia experienced a catastrophic change in economic climate. In 1891, many small banks in Melbourne (the main financial center) collapsed, and in 1892 hundreds of companies went out of business as economic depression loomed. Unemployment soared. In 1893 there was an international economic depression which resulted in the financial collapse of the Australian Federal Bank and many other major banks.¹⁴ Ellen White described the situation all around her in Australia saying,

The poor are everywhere. The banks have ruined the country. They invested the people's deposits in various speculations, exceeded their funds, and as the result some have failed, and others have closed, so that the people are poor and helpless. Thousands are destitute of money; they are thrown out of work, and distress is everywhere. The country is in financial ruin. We

⁸Australian Government, "Convicts and the British Colonies in Australia," accessed Apr. 15, 2013, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/convicts-and-the-british-colonies>.

⁹Australian Government, "Women in Colonial Times," accessed Apr. 15, 2013, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/women-in-colonial-times>.

¹⁰Australian Bureau of Statistics, "1901 Census," accessed Apr. 15, 2013, <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3110124.nsf/24e5997b9bf2ef35ca2567fb00299c59/c4abd1fac53e3df5ca256bd8001883ec!OpenDocument>.

¹¹W. A. Sinclair, "Women and Economic Change in Melbourne 1871-1921," *Historical Studies* 20, no.79 (1982): *passim*.

¹²Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), 127.

¹³Australian Bureau of Statistics, "1901 Census."

¹⁴C. R. Hickson and J. D. Turner, "Free Banking Gone Awry: The Australian Banking Crisis of 1893," *Financial History Review* 9 (2002): 147-167.

need not have felt the pressure we are now under if the books could be sold, but not much can now be done in this line. People are so poor that canvassing is not a success.¹⁵

By 1895 the crisis started to ease, and the Australian economy endeavored to rebuild itself and its financially depleted society, but this took years to accomplish.

The Necessity of Paying Women

Considering the factors mentioned above, combined with the prevailing stigma of unpaid labor being associated with being a convict¹⁶—particularly female convicts, who were also regarded as morally degenerate, unskilled, illiterate prostitutes from a crime class¹⁷—it becomes understandable why women working for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia needed to be paid. Also, according to the 1901 Australian census, 41,235 females worked as professionals (not far behind the 69,899 males), 150,701 females worked as domestic servants, 34,514 females worked in commercial industry, 3,429 females worked in transport and communication, 75,570 females worked in industry, and 38,944 females worked as primary producers. The median age for women was 21 years, suggesting a very large child population, which indicates that a significant portion of the adult female population of Australia at the turn of the twentieth century was employed outside of the home.¹⁸ Add to this that these women lived in a society that was about to give them a political vote (or had already), women were mostly literate, and that for over 100 years a woman working hard, for wages, was not out of the ordinary. The larger financial climate also required that one wage was insufficient for many families hit by the financial crisis to rebuild their lives. All this considered, it becomes clear why Ellen White became a strong advocate for the equal remuneration

¹⁵Ellen G. White to Walter Harper, Letter 30a, July 8, 1894.

¹⁶This attitude is very different today, when Australians can wear convict heritage as a humorous badge of honor that has given rise to organizations such as the “Fellowship of First Fleeters” for descendants of convicts and soldiers transported on the First Fleet in 1788. “Claim a Convict” is a Web-based networking site where descendants can claim their convict ancestors and link up with other descendants.

¹⁷Gay Hendrickson reported that, contrary to this stereotype, 65.3% of female convicts had no prior convictions and 28% had one prior conviction. Only 7.9% had multiple convictions, suggesting that the majority were not from a crime class. Regarding transportation crimes, 91.2% were theft-related, often of small inexpensive items that could be sold easily, suggesting immediate need was their motivation for crime, not criminality or violent crime. These female convicts identified with over 180 trades, and 75% could read and write. Prostitution in England was also not a transportable offense. Thus, the stereotype held of convict women was not entirely accurate. See Gay Hendrickson, “Women Transported: Myth and Reality,” accessed Apr. 15, 2015, <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/publications/papers-and-podcasts/social-history/women-transported.aspx>.

¹⁸Australian Bureau of Statistics, “1901 Census.”

of women who worked for the church and achieved the same results as their male counterparts, most particularly during her time in Australia.

In order to avoid paying equal wages, it is often tempting to belittle the work that women do or give it a title that bears little resemblance to the duties performed or the results and outcomes they are expected to produce. It is also tempting to pay wives of church employees a lower wage because their husbands are also receiving a wage. However, Ellen White writes,

As the devoted minister and his wife engage in the work, they should be paid wages proportionate to the wages of two distinct workers, that they may have means to use as they shall see fit in the cause of God. If the husband should die, and leave his wife, she is fitted to continue her work in the cause of God and receive wages for the labor she performs. Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle women's work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the conference should have the wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages.¹⁹

The first part of this quote is very important, since it shows that Ellen White's principle of equal pay does not just apply to a married couple, but also to a single wage earner like a single woman.

Another Church-endorsed Profession

The previous section emphasized the importance of equal pay for a particular type of work undertaken by Seventh-day Adventist women in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century. But this leads us to the question, what "work" did these women actually do, and why was it so vital?

Given the financial and social climate of Australia in that period, the early Seventh-day Adventist Church was surrounded and challenged by the serious consequential social problems such catastrophic national issues present. Ellen White writes of one family's struggle,

Brother A has a consumptive wife and seven children. They have a comfortable house, nicely located on a beautiful spot of ground, but the house is [only] partially furnished, and everything bespeaks pressure and want. The purchase was made before they accepted the truth. Brother A is an intelligent man, and his children are well behaved. They will soon be left motherless. In building their house Brother A incurred a debt, and now he cannot obtain work. He is a stone mason by trade. His brother, who has money in the bank, promised to loan him money if necessary, but in the financial pressure the bank closed, and the brother cannot obtain a pound. He must wait until better times for his money. Brother A is in debt to the same bank, and he is in daily expectation of receiving a summons either to repay the money loaned him or to lose all that he has. He said, "For many months we have not lived, only existed."

This depression of finances has brought several families who believe the truth into destitution because of foreclosures. Brother A was in great discouragement as he looked upon his dependent family. He was in danger of giving up everything. We had a most precious season in praying and

¹⁹White, "Women as Workers in the Cause of God," 2.

conversing with them. They had not attended meetings for months. The Lord blessed us, and comforted the hearts of this dear family, and although they live twelve miles from Parramatta church, and ten miles from Kellyville church, of which they are members, they have been out every Sabbath since, and now instead of talking unbelief and discouragement, they are talking faith and hope and courage.²⁰

Debt, threat of foreclosure of the family home, serious illness of a loved one, and prolonged unemployment and poverty can result in a whole range of issues, such as suicide, abuse, domestic violence, anger, extreme financial stress, starvation, anxiety, abandonment, and divorce, but most of all, a feeling of helplessness and depression.²¹ And, from the statement above, these issues were not automatically alleviated by accepting salvation. In fact, the continuing stress of unemployment, the ongoing threat of losing the family home, and the approaching death of one of the parents had led the family above to abandon their church. However, it is claimed that visitation, prayer, and conversation had renewed these individuals with faith, hope, and courage. The Australian financial crisis quickly revealed that traditional ministerial methodologies for gaining and retaining converts, such as public evangelism and canvassing, had limitations.

Working with individuals who are suffering from issues for which there is no immediate solution is often challenging, and it takes an enormous emotional toll on individuals who work with distressed people. Thus, the emotional toll and a prevailing sense of helplessness can make many avoid this type of work altogether. Ellen White writes,

If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and if their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as being as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborers? Would not such workers be defrauded if they were not paid? This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, whose work testifies that they are essential to carry the truth into families. Their work is just the work that must be done. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor.²²

What we would now call chaplaincy, social work, or counseling, is a vital part of church work with church personnel visiting people, listening and talking with them, and addressing the immediate material and mental health needs of the people in the community. Today, this type of work has come a very long way, much like the training and practice of ministers, physicians, and educators. Chaplains, social workers, and counselors are now highly trained

²⁰Ellen G. White to Harmon Lindsay, Letter 50, June 14, 1894, 1-4.

²¹Peter Saunders, *Down and Out: Poverty and Exclusion in Australia*, Studies in Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion Series (Bristol, UK: The Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2011), passim.

²²White, "Women as Workers in the Cause of God," 2-3.

professionals often requiring professional licensure and ongoing professional development. They are not mere Bible workers who possess little training in mental health practice or rehabilitative counseling. In Ellen White's time, however, this type of work fell mostly to women, as male ministers were not often stationed at a single church but, rather, moved around undertaking evangelism and canvassing. Ellen White also writes,

They can enter families to which ministers could find no access. They can listen to the sorrows of their depressed and oppressed. They can shed rays of light into discouraged souls. They can pray with them. They can open the scriptures and enlighten them from a "Thus saith the Lord."²³

According to Ellen White, this new method of reaching people had efficacy, leading her to propose a whole new model for church work. She writes in 1895:

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor.²⁴

Some would suggest this passage is evidence of women being called to mainstream ministry, such as that of a church pastor, or ordination of women to the same. The context, however, does not seem to support this hypothesis. It clearly states, "We need to branch out more in our methods of labor." This passage appears to focus on a church profession, entirely separate to that of the minister, but still as vitally important, which Ellen White suggests will be a "power for good in the church." So much "good" that it required that they be set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands as a symbol of full endorsement from the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the work they were about to undertake.

While the Seventh-day Adventist Church may decide to confer ordination for mainstream ministry on women,²⁵ and in the modern age this may be necessary in certain cultures to arrest denominational decline, this passage however, would seem to indicate that Ellen White's concern was much bigger than that. More completely, it emerges as a calling to a whole new role of ministry and healing separate to that of the minister, educator, and medical professional: someone who could work exclusively with the community and church members to ensure their emotional well-being, and someone who could work collaboratively with church officials and the minister and seek

²³Ibid., 5.

²⁴Ellen G. White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People," *Review and Herald* 72, no. 28 (July 9, 1895): 433-434.

²⁵The authors would like to take this opportunity to disclose that they would fully endorse such a decision, allowing women and men to have a choice between the two separate ordained professions as presented in this article.

their counsel as partners in ministry. The phrase “in some cases they will need to counsel with the church officer or the minister” could equally suggest that “this counsel” is a two-way street. This church professional then becomes someone who can provide counsel to church officers and even the minister, making it a role of confidant, to whom ministers and church officers can provide what is currently referred to in the counseling and human-service professions as supervision. Supervision is a process in which one professional meets with another on a regular basis to debrief, and in doing so, address countertransference, the heavy emotional issues that clients/patients possess, and the toll it takes on the professional personally. It is an essential tool for human-service professionals in minimizing burnout and seeking second opinions from learned colleagues.²⁶

Even when Ellen White returned to the United States, she was still a strong advocate of women being paid and of this new particular role that they could fulfill in meeting the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s goals:

Select women who will act an earnest part. The Lord will use intelligent women in the work of teaching. And let none feel that these women, who understand the Word, and who have ability to teach, should not receive remuneration for their labors. They should be paid as verily as are their husbands. There is a great work for women to do in the cause of present truth. Through the exercise of womanly tact and a wise use of their knowledge of Bible truth, they can remove difficulties that our brethren cannot meet. We need women workers to labor in connection with their husbands, and should encourage those who wish to engage in this line of missionary effort.²⁷

Concluding Remarks

For over 130 years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been debating whether to ordain female clergy, an issue which was placed on the General Conference agenda for the first time in 1881.²⁸ Although the reports regarding the final outcome of this agenda item by the General Conference Committee is unknown, Ellen White seems to take a neutral position regarding this

²⁶Mary McMahon, “Some Supervision Practicalities,” in *Supervision for the Helping Professions: A Practical Approach*, ed. M. McMahon and W. Patton (French’s Forrest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia, 2002), 17-26.

²⁷Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniels, Letter 142, October 27, 1909.

²⁸The wording of the proposed resolution was: “Resolved, that females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry. This was discussed by J. O. Corliss, A. C. Bourdeau, E. R. Jones, D. H. Larson, W. H. Littlejohn, A. S. Hutchins, D. M. Canright, and J. N. Loughborough, and referred to the General Conference Committee.” The final ruling of the General Conference Committee is unknown. S. N. Haskell, “General Conference: Business Proceedings,” *Review and Herald* 58, no. 25 (Dec. 20, 1881): 392.

issue.²⁹ Instead, while she was in Australia, she both promoted equal pay for equal work and advocated the introduction of another church-endorsed profession, other than the pastoral one and similar to what we would now consider chaplaincy, social work, or counseling. This branching out in their methods of ministry specifically addressed the physical and emotional needs of the people and, by doing so, also paved the way for their spiritual needs to be met.

²⁹Ellen White does not address this resolution at all; thus, some people would take her silence as an indication that she did not believe that women should be ordained. However, others would argue that since she did not speak against it, this is evidence that she supported it; otherwise she would have spoken up. Both these positions are based on an argument of silence.

EARTH'S FIRST SANCTUARY: GENESIS 1–3 AND PARALLEL CREATION ACCOUNTS

RICHARD DAVIDSON
Andrews University

There is an emerging consensus among biblical scholars that the pre-Fall Garden of Eden (and its surroundings) is to be regarded as the original sanctuary on earth, a copy of the sanctuary/temple in heaven. The biblical evidence for this conclusion has been documented by scores of biblical scholars,¹ but the full range of evidence has not yet been succinctly

¹For a representative list of other scholars who have provided evidence for this conclusion, see the following: T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 20-31; Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 68-103; G. K. Beale, "The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple," in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and S. Gathercole (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 197-199; idem, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 66-80; idem, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *JETS* 48 (2005): 7-10; Eric Bolger, "The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993); Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *JATS* 11, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring–Autumn 2000): 108-111; and idem, *Song for the Sanctuary: SDA Graduate Textbook* (sponsored by the Biblical Research Institute, forthcoming), chap. 6; William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush, New South Wales: Lancer, 1985), 35-76; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12-13, 111-120; Meridith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hampton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989), 31-32, 54-56; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 142-145; idem, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 78-99; S. Dean McBride Jr., "Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch," in *God Who Creates*, ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000), 11-15; Roberto Ouro, *Old Testament Theology: The Canonical Key*, vol. 1, *Pentateuch/Torah* (Zaragoza, Spain: Lusa, 2008), 38-61; Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1994), 126-151; Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), 77-108; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, CBET 25 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 111-138; John H. Walton, "Eden, Garden of," in T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 202-207; idem, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 178-192; Moshe Weinfield, "Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1.1–2.3,"

summarized and synthesized in a single publication. This article will attempt such a comprehensive summary of biblical evidence, with some concluding suggestions for synthesizing the biblical data.²

In this study we examine how key terminology, literary structures, and themes of Genesis 1–3 (and parallel creation accounts, such as Psalm 104, Proverbs 8, and Job 38–41), viewed within the context of a canonical biblical theology, support the conclusion that the Garden of Eden (and its surroundings) constitutes Earth’s first sanctuary/temple. By tracing the descriptive “echoes” between the biblical creation accounts (esp. Genesis 1–3) and the depiction of other biblical sanctuaries/temples, utilizing the insights developed in the study of narrative theology, biblical theology, and intertextuality,³ we find evidence not only that the later sanctuaries are to be recognized as a new creation, but conversely, that the Garden of Eden and its surroundings are to be considered as Earth’s first sanctuary. I begin with the evidence related to Genesis 2–3, where Eden is explicitly mentioned, and then move to wider intertextual connections between Genesis 1 and the sanctuary, before and after the Fall. I also include connections between creation and sanctuary in other creation passages. In the interest of completeness, I will include all the lines of biblical evidence that I have encountered thus far in my research, some more weighty than others. Since it is crucial to recognize the cumulative force of the various terminological and structural linkages in establishing the intertextuality between the creation passages and sanctuary passages, all of these linkages will be included in the main text, while some of the more general thematic linkages will be relegated to footnotes.

in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor; AOAT 212 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 501-512; Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 19-25; repr. in *“I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood”: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, eds., Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumara (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404; and Ross E. Winkle, “Creation and Tabernacle, Sabbath and Glory” (paper presented at the Sabbath in Text, Tradition, and Theology Consultation, Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, Boston, MA, Nov 24, 2008), 1-16.

²Inasmuch as many of these lines of evidence have been recognized by several scholars, I do not attempt to isolate which scholar first pointed to each piece of datum, except in the cases where scholars have made unique contributions that may be specifically attributed to them. In this article I do not focus upon the large amount of extra-biblical data that has been brought to bear upon this subject; such summary is called for in another study.

³For an introduction to the discipline of narrative theology, see, e.g., Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); and Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987). For intertextuality, see, e.g., George Wesley Buchanan, *Introduction to Intertextuality* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994); Richard Hays et al, eds., *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009).

A. The Eden Garden and the Sanctuary: Genesis 2 (Before the Fall)

1. The Eden Garden: earthly and heavenly

The most explicit indicator that the Garden of Eden is considered a sanctuary/temple, is the occurrence of the term “Eden” (*eden*, which probably means “land of bliss, happy land”⁴) and its identification as a garden (*gan*; Gen 2:8), viewed in comparison with identical terminology in Ezekiel 28. In Ezek 28:13 the same two crucial words found in Gen 2:8 are used together again: the Covering Cherub is described being “in Eden [*eden*], the Garden [*gan*] of God” while he was yet perfect.

In separate studies, building upon the landmark dissertation of José Bertoluci,⁵ I have set forth numerous lines of evidence supporting the conclusion that Ezekiel 28 moves from an earthly setting in vv. 1-10 to a heavenly setting of the heavenly sanctuary/temple in vv. 11-19, and that the latter verses describe (1) the work of the Covering Cherub in the heavenly courts of Yahweh before the rise of evil, (2) the Fall of this Cherub, and (3) the rise of the cosmic conflict. This evidence, too voluminous to be summarized here, comes from ANE considerations, terminological shifts, thematic contrasts, parallels with Isaiah 14 and other biblical passages, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical parallels, typological connections, and literary micro- and macro-structures.⁶

⁴HALOT, 792.

⁵José M. Bertoluci, “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between Good and Evil” (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1985).

⁶See Richard M. Davidson, “The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel,” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 71-93 (esp. 87-89); idem, “Satan’s Celestial Slander,” *Perspective Digest* 1, no. 1 (1996): 31-34; idem, “Ezekiel 28:11-19 and the Rise of the Cosmic Conflict,” in *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Ángel Manuel Rodríguez in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), 57-69.; and Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 160-162. For special attention to the evidence that Eze 28:11-19 depicts the heavenly sanctuary, see Elias Brasil de Souza, *The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif in the Hebrew Bible*, ATSDS 7 (Berrien Springs, MI: ATS Publications, 2005), 278-292. De Sousa (ibid., 287-289) points to strong terminological links with the sanctuary motif: the stones worn by the Covering Cherub (v. 13), recall the stones worn on the breast-plate by the high priest of the Mosaic sanctuary (Exod 28:17-20); the clause “you were an anointed covering cherub” (v. 14) echoes the cherubim which “covered” the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle (Exod 25:20); the verb “walking around” (Hith. of *halak*, v. 14), which, as will be noted below, has sanctuary connotations; the reference to “holy mountain” and “mountain of God (vv. 14 and 16), also link with the sanctuary motif (see below); and the verb *khalal*

In those same studies I have also shown that the Eden Garden described in Ezek 28:13 must be the heavenly, not the earthly Eden, because the Covering Cherub was present there *before* he sinned, before he was expelled from heaven to this earth (Ezek 28:16-17; cf. Rev 12:7-9). Ezekiel 28 thus takes us back to the existence of the heavenly Eden sanctuary before the planting of the Garden of Eden sanctuary on earth.

Since according to the canonical biblical text, the heavenly sanctuary-temple (heavenly Eden) pre-dates its earthly counterpart (earthly Garden of Eden), it would be entirely appropriate for the narrator of Genesis 2 to utilize sanctuary/temple language and describe the earthly Eden as a sanctuary. Affirming sanctuary language in Genesis 1–2 is not a matter of reading illegitimately back into the first chapters of Scripture later descriptions of the sanctuary/temple (as sometimes claimed), but rather acknowledging that according to the canonical biblical trajectory the first earthly sanctuary (Eden and its surroundings) was created as the counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary.⁷

Just as the later earthly tabernacle in the wilderness was built as a copy (Heb. *tabnit*; Gk. *typos*) of the heavenly original (Exod 25:9, 40; Heb 8:5),⁸ so earth's first sanctuary, the earthly Garden of Eden, was created by God as a copy of the original heavenly sanctuary, and this is confirmed by the narrator of Genesis 2–3 by using the exact same phraseology "Garden of Eden" as employed by Ezekiel in describing the original heavenly sanctuary.

It is of vital importance to emphasize that according to the canonical biblical record, before the entrance of sin in the universe the heavenly sanctuary did not function to solve the sin problem, but served primarily as a place of worship. Ezekiel 28 indicates the location of the heavenly

"profane" (vv. 16, 18) refers to the profanation of the sanctuary (e.g., Lev 21:12, 23) and in v. 18 explicitly has the "sanctuary" as its object.

⁷Two recent studies which have rejected the conclusion that the Garden of Eden is earth's first sanctuary have reached that conclusion largely, in my view, because they have failed to recognize the link between the heavenly sanctuary in Ezekiel 28 and Genesis 2–3. See, Daniel I. Block, "Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence," in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis*, Essays in Honor of G. K. Beale; ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 3-29; and Elias Brasil de Souza, "Sanctuary: Cosmos, Covenant, and Creation," *JATS* 24, no. 1 (2013): 25-41. The Achilles Heel of Block's argument, from my perspective, is his identification of the location of events describe in Ezekiel 28 as on earth and not in the heavenly sanctuary/temple (9-10). De Souza, while elsewhere in his published dissertation acknowledging that Ezek 18:11-19 is speaking of the heavenly sanctuary/temple (see de Souza, *The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif*, 278-292), does not bring this information to bear in his critique of Eden as a sanctuary (and actually appears to go against his own published conclusion that supports earthly Eden as a sanctuary, *ibid.*, 285-287, 292-293).

⁸See my dissertation, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures*, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Dissertation Series, vol. 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 367-388.

sanctuary/temple as “on the holy mountain of God” (vv. 14, 16), and the parallel passage in Isaiah 14 calls this mountain “the mountain of the assembly [*mo'ed*]” (v. 13). Before the rise of the sin problem in the universe, the heavenly sanctuary served as a place of assembly where unfallen beings gathered to worship and serve their Maker. This was the original function of the Heavenly Eden, the Garden of God.⁹

If the earthly Eden is a copy of the heavenly original Eden sanctuary, we may reasonably conclude that the earthly Eden also functioned as a sanctuary where Adam and Eve worshiped and communed with their Creator.

In light of this foundational insight from biblical theology, identifying the earthly Eden sanctuary with its heavenly Eden sanctuary-temple counterpart, we are able to recognize numerous other details of the earthly Eden sanctuary that correlate with the later biblical sanctuaries/temples (which were also made as copies of the heavenly sanctuary).¹⁰ Details (especially distinctive sanctuary terms and clusters of terms) in the creation accounts that may not at first glance seem to be relevant, when viewed in light of the overarching sanctuary context, take on new significance as closely linking creation with sanctuary, and fill out our understanding of earth's first sanctuary.

2. Eastward orientation

Notice how the Garden of Eden was situated with an eastward orientation (Gen 2:8), as the later sanctuaries (Exod 27:13-16; 36:20-30; 38:13-18; implied in 1 Kgs 7:39 and 2 Chr 4:10;¹¹ Ezek 47:1).¹²

⁹The term for “sanctuary” (Heb. *miqdash*) is used in the OT to describe the heavenly sanctuary even before the entrance of sin (Jer 17:12; Ezek 28:18), and also is used to describe the worship function of the heavenly sanctuary after the rise of sin (Ps 96:6; 150:1), while the NT word *skēnē* (“tabernacle, tent sanctuary”) describes the “tabernacle of God” after the solution of the sin problem (Rev 21:3). Likewise, the Hebrew term for “temple” (*beikal*) is employed to describe the worship function of the heavenly sanctuary (Ps 29:9) and the Greek equivalent (*naos*) describes the temple of God after the end of the sin problem (Rev 7:15).

¹⁰Exod 25:9, 40; 1 Chr 28:10; for discussion, see Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 367-388.

¹¹Five laver stands were placed on the “right” (NKJV) or “south” (ESV) side of the Temple, and five carts were placed on the “left” (NKJV) or “north” (ESV) side, and the Sea was placed on the right [south] side of the house, (lit.) “toward the east in front of the south,” i.e., “toward the southeast,” implying that the Temple front faced east. This is also implied in the placement of the two pillars in front of the vestibule of the Temple (1 Kgs 7:21); viewed from the rear of the building looking outward to its orientation, one is on the “left” (NKJV), i.e., “south” (ESV), and one on the “right” (NKJV), i.e. “north” (ESV), and thus the opening of the Temple faces to the east. Ezek 47:1 verifies that the perspective is looking from the rear of the temple outward: the “right” side of the Temple is explicitly stated to be to the south.

¹²For further discussion, see, e.g., Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 131-133.

3. Divine “planting”

God “plants” (*nata'*) the garden in Eden (Gen 2:8), just as he will “plant” (*nata'*) Israel on his holy mountain, the place of his sanctuary (Exod 15:17; cf. 1 Chr 17:9).¹³

4. A “garden/park/paradise” with plants and animals from the natural world

Thirteen times in Genesis 2–3 the space in Eden is called a “garden” (*gan*), which in context describes not a vegetable garden but a park, or even a [tropical] paradise (cf. the reference to this garden as “Paradise” in Rev 2:7), filled with lush vegetation and teeming with animal life (Gen 2:8-9, 19-20). The references to the portrayals of the natural world in the later sanctuaries seem to hark back to this Eden paradise. There is in the Mosaic tabernacle the seven-branched lampstand in the shape of an almond tree with flowers (Exod 25:33-34; 37:19-20; 1 Kgs 7:49; 2 Chron 4:7). Lily work appeared on the tops of the two free-standing pillars of Solomon’s temple, and representations of oxen, lions, and more lilies and palm trees in the laver (1 Kgs 7:26, 29, 36). Carved in the Solomonic architecture—on the walls round about, and on the doors—were palm trees and open flowers (1 Kgs 6:29, 32, 35). These artistic portrayals seem to be representative of the return to the lost Garden, the earth’s original sanctuary.¹⁴

5. The “tree of life” and the menorah

The tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9) recalls the seven-branched menorah in the sanctuary, fashioned in the shape of a tree (Exod 25:31-36). Scholarly studies provide evidence that the temple menorah was a stylized tree of life.¹⁵

6. “In the midst”

The tree of life was “in the midst” (*betok*) of the garden (Gen 2:9), and this is the precise term for the living presence of God “in the midst” (*betok*) of his people in the sanctuary (Exod 25:8; Lev 26:12). In the Mosaic sanctuary and Solomonic Temple, the ark (symbolizing the presence of God on his throne,

¹³See, e.g., Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, 49.

¹⁴See, e.g., Beale, *The Temple*, 71-72; Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, 54-55; Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 111-120. Cf. L. E. Stager, “Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden,” *Erlsr* 26 (1999): 183-194.

¹⁵Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, ASORDS 2 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 169-172; cf. John D. Garr, *God’s Lamp, Man’s Light: Mysteries of the Menorah* (Atlanta: Restoration Foundation, 2001), 93-102; and Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 127-129.

Ps 80:1), was located at the exact center of the quadrangle of holy space containing the sanctuary building proper.¹⁶

7. Flowing river

There was a four-headed river (Heb. *nabar*) flowing from the Eden Garden (Gen 2:10), parallel to the river (*nabar*) of life which was to flow from the sanctuary shown to Ezekiel (Ezek 47:1-12) and other prophets (Zech 14:8-11; Joel 4:18, 20-21 [Eng. 3:18, 20-21]) and from the throne of God as shown to John (Rev 22:1).¹⁷

8. The mountain of God

The Genesis 2 creation account implies that the Garden of Eden was placed on an elevated position, i.e., a mountain: the four rivers flow from a common source in four different directions (Gen 2:10-14), and this seems possible only if the rivers are flowing down from an elevated (mountain) location. This comports with the location of the heavenly sanctuary on “the mountain of God” (Ezek 28:14, 16; Isa 14:13), and the location of Solomon’s temple as “the Mountain of the Lord” (e.g., Isa 2:3; Joel 2:1; Mic 4:2; cf. Exod 15:17) on “Mt. Zion” (e.g., Ps 48:2; Isa 4:5; Mic 3:12).¹⁸

9. Precious metals of the sanctuary

The precious metals mentioned in the Eden narrative (“good” gold, bdellium, and onyx, 2:11-12) are mentioned again in connection with the wilderness sanctuary: bdellium, Heb. *bedolakeb*, only elsewhere in the Old Testament in connection with the manna (Num 11:7), some of which was stored in or beside the ark (Exod 16:33, 34; Heb 9:4); onyx, Heb. *shoham*, upon the shoulder pieces and breastplate of the high priest [Exod 25:7, 28:9, 20; 35:9, 27; 39:6, 13]; and “pure” gold for the articles of furniture and the utensils in the sanctuary (Exod 25:11, 17, 24, 29, 31, 36, 38, 39, etc.; cf. 1 Kgs 6:20, 21; 7:49-50).¹⁹

10. “Building” from a “side”

According to Gen 2:21-22, the Lord took one of the man’s “ribs” (Heb. *tsela’*, lit. “side”) and “built” (Heb. *banah*) the woman. It is noteworthy that the word *tsela’* appears most often in Scripture in connection with the construction

¹⁶See, e.g., Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, 49.

¹⁷See, e.g., Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 402; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 129-131.

¹⁸For further discussion, see, e.g., Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 133-137. For extensive bibliography of sources discussing the link between mountain and sanctuary, see Alexander, *Eden to New Jerusalem*, 23, n. 23.

¹⁹See, e.g., Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 402.

of the Mosaic tabernacle and Solomon's temple.²⁰ This sanctuary allusion is strengthened by its association in Genesis 2 with the verb *banah* "build, architecturally design," also a key term in references to the construction of the sanctuary (Ps 78:69) and the temple (at least 30 occurrences of the verb in 1 Kgs 6–10 where the building of the Temple is mentioned). Thus the "rib/side" used by the Lord as the basis for the "building" of Eve is another of the numerous hints or echoes of the tabernacle/Temple.

11. Priestly ministry

When viewed in light of their sanctuary context, the paired use of the two Hebrew terms *'abad* and *shamar* in Gen 2:15 to describe the work of Adam and Eve in the Eden garden becomes highly significant.²¹ According to this verse, the first couple were put in the Garden to "tend" [*'abad*] and "keep" [*shamar*] it. These Hebrew terms literally mean to "serve" and "guard" respectively, but imply more than the fact that Adam and Eve were entrusted with a responsible stewardship of serving and protecting their environment. These two Hebrew words, when used together elsewhere in the Pentateuch, and elsewhere in the whole OT in the setting of the sanctuary, consistently function as a technical expression for the service of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary (see Num 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:3-7). Thus, the use of this paired terminology in the setting of the Eden Garden sanctuary clearly implies a priestly function for the first couple in the Garden of Eden.

That a worship setting is implied in Gen 2:15 is also emphasized by the choice of words for "put" in this verse. When Moses first states that God "put" the man in the Garden (v. 8), he uses the common Hebrew word for "put," *sim* (used over 800 times in the OT). But in v. 15, where he delineates the specific task of humans to "serve" and "guard" the Garden, Moses uses the less common verb *nuakh*, which (in the causative *hiphil* form) literally means "to cause to rest." This is the term used in connection with God's resting on the Sabbath and human worship of God on that day (Exod 20:11; 23:12; Deut 5:14), and in particular this verb (or its noun form *menukhab*) refers to God's "resting place" in His sanctuary in the setting of worship (Num 10:36; Ps 132:8, 14; Isa 66:1; 1 Chr 28:2). By shifting from *sim* to *nuakh* in Gen 2:15, Moses is setting the tone for the worship-oriented interpretation of this verse, with Adam and Eve as priests serving in the Eden sanctuary.²²

²⁰Of the thirty-nine occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the word appears nineteen times in connection with the tabernacle (Exod 25:12; 26:20, 26-27; 27:7; 30:4; 36:31-32; 37:3, 5, 27; 38:7), and seven more times in connection with Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6:5, 8, 15 [bis], 16, 34; 7:3).

²¹Even though Gen 2:15 only mentions the man (*ba'adam*, "the human"), because the woman was not yet created, it is clear from the context that as soon as the woman was created, this assignment applied to her as well as the man, just as the command not to eat of the forbidden tree applied to both (see the woman's clear recognition of this in Gen 3:2, 3, using the plural for "you" to refer to both her husband and herself).

²²For further discussion of Gen 2:15 and its implications for Adam and Eve as

Adam and Eve are portrayed as creative co-participants, spiritual intimates, yes, priests, in the sacred worship service of the Eden sanctuary. This is in harmony with the original (pre-sin) worship function of the heavenly sanctuary (“Eden, the Garden of God,” Ezek 28:13), where Lucifer, adorned with the same stones as the high priest in the later earthly sanctuary, apparently served a similar function as worship leader (Ezek 28:13-14). And it is also in harmony with the heavenly sanctuary’s return to its primary worship function after the windup of the cosmic conflict, with the redeemed serving as priests in that temple (Rev 5:10; 7:15; 20:6; 21:3).

From the very beginning, woman, as well as man, is welcomed into the priestly function in the Eden sanctuary, to be a leader in worship and to serve in other priestly functions alongside her male counterpart.

12. The tripartite (or four-part) structure (with spheres of ascending holiness)

On earth after creation there were several spheres of holy space, in ascending degrees of holiness (“set apartness for special use”): (1) the larger area of Eden, (2) the garden planted eastward in Eden, and (3) the “midst of the garden” (Gen 2:8-9). These three spheres are seen again at Sinai: (1) the camp of the Israelites, (2) the place where the seventy elders went on the mountain, and (3) the immediate presence of God where only Moses went at the very top of the mountain.²³ They are repeated in the court, the holy place, and the most holy place in the later sanctuaries (Mosaic tabernacle, Exodus 26–27; Solomonic Temple, 1 Kings 6–7; Ezekiel’s temple, Ezekiel 40–43).²⁴ One may even add a fourth, initial sphere, which in creation was the space beyond Eden. In the Mosaic tabernacle layout this fourth “holy space” constituted the encampment of Israel (the “holy” camp, Deut 23:14), in the Israelite temple it was the “holy city” of Jerusalem (Ps 2:6; Joel 3:17 [Heb. 4:17]).

13. Wafting mist and incense

In the pre-Fall creation the mist rose up (Heb. *‘alab*) and wafted over the “face of the ground” in the Garden and beyond (Gen 2:6), just as the smoke of the incense altar rose up (*‘alab*) and wafted over the sanctuary and beyond (Exod 30:1-10). In Psalm 104, the one psalm which poetically moves day-by-day

priests in the Eden sanctuary, see esp. Beale, *The Temple*, 66-70; Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 104-108; Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 22-27; Walton, “Eden,” 202-206; and Richard M. Davidson *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 47-48.

²³See Ángel Rodríguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus,” *AUSS* 24, no. 2 (1986): 131-137.

²⁴See Beale, *The Temple*, 74-75; cf. Menachem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon/Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1978, 1985), 158-165.

through the seven days of creation week,²⁵ the description of the second day of creation (v. 3) refers to “clouds” (Heb. *‘anan*, which may have formed as a result of the rising mist²⁶). This same word is used for the “cloud” (*‘anan*) of incense that filled the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:13), and also is employed to refer to the pillar of “cloud” that covered the Mosaic sanctuary and camp in the wilderness (Exod 40:34-38).

B. *The Eden Garden and the Sanctuary: Genesis 3 (Post-Fall)*

When we move to Genesis 3, and the post-Fall depiction of the Garden of Eden, there is further evidence of its sanctuary identity.

1. God “walking around” and Adam and Eve “in the presence of the Lord”

The expression used to describe God “walking around” (*Hithpael* of *halak*) in the Garden (Gen 3:8) is a technical term for God’s presence in the sanctuary (Lev 26:12; 2 Sam 7:6-7).²⁷ Also in Gen 3:8, the phrase *lipne Yahweh* “before the Lord” is a technical term indicating a temple setting.²⁸

2. Divine trial judgment

When God comes to the Garden after Adam and Eve sinned, he initiates an encounter that constitutes nothing less than “legal process,” a “trial punishment by God.”²⁹ God begins the legal proceedings with an interrogation of the

²⁵See Richard M. Davidson, “Creation (Issues of Origins) in Psalm 104,” unpublished paper for the Faith and Science Council, October 2010, forthcoming as a chapter in the volume on Creation in the Old Testament, published by Andrews University Press for BRICOM.

²⁶The presence of clouds does not necessarily imply that there was rain before the Flood. To the contrary, Gen 2:5 states that “God had not caused it to rain upon the earth,” and the next verse states that “a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.” See Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 96: “The world before the Flood reasoned that for centuries the laws of nature had been fixed. The recurring seasons had come in their order. Heretofore rain had never fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist or dew.”

²⁷See, e.g., Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 400-401; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 144.

²⁸See, e.g., *ibid.*, 144-145, citing Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 26: “in general, any cultic activity, to which the biblical text applies the formula ‘before the Lord’ can be considered an indication of the existence of a temple at the site, since this expression stems from the basic conception of the temple as a divine dwelling-place and actually belongs to the temple’s technical terminology.”

²⁹Claus Westermann, *Creation*, translated by John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1974), 96. So also, Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 49: “The scene [Gen 3:8-24]

“defendants,” and the defensive and accusatory responses by Adam and Eve (vv. 9-14) indicate the rupture in interhuman (husband-wife) and divine-human relationships that has occurred as a result of sin. Following the legal interrogation and establishment of guilt, God pronounces the sentence in the form of curses (over the serpent and the ground, vv. 14, 17) and judgments (for the man and the woman, vv. 16-19). Judgment—investigative and executive—is clearly present in the narrative, echoing the legal proceedings at the earthly sanctuary (e.g. Deut 19:15-21), and end-time trial judgment from the heavenly sanctuary (Daniel 7:9-10; 8:14; Rev 14:6-7).

3. Substitutionary atonement

The chiasmic center of Genesis 3 is found v. 15, and contains what theologians have called the Protoevangelium—the first gospel promise. The middle part of Gen 3:15 goes to the heart of this promise and shows that it is centered in a person. God tells the serpent: “*He* shall crush your head, and you shall crush *His* heel.” In a penetrating doctoral dissertation, Afolarin Ojewole shows how in this central verse of the chapter the conflict narrows from many descendants (a collective “seed”, Heb. *zera*) in the first part of the verse to a masculine singular pronoun in the last part of the verse—“He”—fighting against the serpent. Elsewhere in Scripture whenever the term “seed” is modified by a singular pronoun, it is a single individual that is in view. Thus here God promises victory centered in a person. “He”—the ultimate representative Seed of the woman, later to be revealed as the Messiah, shall bruise your head, Satan, and you shall bruise his heel.³⁰

Visualizing this verse leads us to recognize the prediction that the Messianic Seed would take off his sandal, as it were, bare his heel, and step voluntarily on the venomous viper. Christians have long viewed this as a picture of the Seed voluntarily giving up his life to slay the serpent, which Rev 12:9 identifies as Satan. The Messiah would volunteer to consciously step on the head of the most deadly viper in the universe, the serpent Satan himself, knowing full well that it would cost him his life. For many Christians, this is a powerful portrait of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on our behalf.³¹

That this passage of Gen 3:15 was understood by Adam and Eve as referring to the coming Messiah, is suggested by Eve’s statement when she gave birth to her first-born son (Gen 4:1): “Now Adam had relations with

becomes a trial.” Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 117, likewise comments on this scene: “God becomes the prosecutor in a court of law.” Cf. Rick R. Marrs, “In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen 1-3),” in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 2 vols., ed. Carroll D. Osburn (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 2: 27-28, who describes Gen 3:8-13 as a “trial” and “verdict” followed by a “judgment” in Gen 3:14-19.

³⁰Afolarin Ojewole, “The Seed in Genesis 3:15: An Exegetical and Theological Study” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2002), 190-207.

³¹For support of these conclusions, see Ojewole, “The Seed in Genesis 3:15,” 207-213.

his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a man, the Lord' (NASB, margin). The Hebrew original, after the word for "man", has the Hebrew particle *'eth*, which can mean either "with" or be the sign that the next word is the direct object of the sentence. The translation "with the Lord" does not seem to make sense in the context, and in the original Hebrew there is no "the help of" as supplied by most translations. Therefore, the preferred translation is to take "the Lord" as the direct object, as in the margin of the NASB. The verse then indicates that when Eve gave birth to her first-born son, she thought that he was the promised Messianic Seed—the Lord. And Eve understood that this Messiah was to be not only human ("man"), but divine ("the Lord [Yahweh]").³² Imagine her surprise when her hoped-for Messiah became a murderer. When she gave birth to Seth (meaning "appointed, substitute") Eve exclaimed, "God has appointed me another seed [alluding back to Gen 3:15] in place of Abel" (v. 25). She now waited patiently for the Promised One to come in due time, in the line of Seth. The first gospel promise takes us to the heart of the sanctuary service, with the substitutionary death of the Messiah, foreshadowed by the sacrificial system (which we note next).

4. The sacrificial system initiated

The prediction in Gen 3:15 must be seen in connection with the sanctuary ritual implied a few verses later. In v. 21, the record states that God clothed Adam and Eve with skins—implying the sacrifice of animals. Many evangelical Christians see here a typological reference to spiritual covering (the robe of righteousness) provided by the death of the coming Substitute, the Messianic Lamb of God.³³ Instead of the fig leaves of their own works with which they unsuccessfully tried to cover their nakedness (Gen 3:7-10), God covered them with the robes of a substitute. The blood of an innocent victim is shed instead of theirs (in parallel with the sin offering of Lev 4:29, the human sinners probably slaughtered the sacrificial animal themselves). Here is intimated the Messiah's substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of man. God instructs Adam and Eve in the rudiments of the sacrificial system of the sanctuary.

5. Post-Fall priesthood

Before Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, God "clothed" (*labash*, *hiphil* causative) them with "tunics/coats" (*kotnot*, pl. of *ketonet*), Gen 3:21, and these are the very terms used to describe the clothing (*labash*, *hiphil*) of the

³²For support of this interpretation, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 43.

³³See, e.g., Parry, "Garden of Eden," 141-143; Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, 53; cf. Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 105-106.

priests—Aaron and his sons—by Moses acting on behalf of God (Lev 8:7, 13; Num 20:28; cf. Exod 28:4; 29:5; 40:14). The combination of God's "clothing" (*labash*, *hiphil* [causative]) with "tunics/coats" (*ketnot*, pl. of *ketonet*)³⁴ describes a divine conferral of status.³⁵ "The rare occasions where God clothes humans in the OT always concerned the dressing of priests. . . . Adam and Eve were, indeed, dressed as priests."³⁶ The unmistakable and consistent linkage within the Hebrew Bible of this pair of terms—"to clothe" (*labash*, *hiphil*) and "tunics/coats" (*ketnot*)—with the clothing of Israel's priests, viewed in the larger setting of the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary, clearly points to Adam and Eve's inauguration as priests in the post-fall world. By highlighting God's clothing of Adam and Eve with the skins of sacrificial animals (instead of the fine linen of the later priests), the final canonical form of the text further emphasizes the divine confirmation that Adam and Eve are to be identified as priests, for the skin of the sacrificial animals belonged exclusively to the priests in the Mosaic cultus (Lev 7:8). "By bestowing on Adam and Eve the skin of the sin offering, a gift strictly reserved to priests, the Genesis story implicitly recognizes Eve as priest alongside Adam."³⁷

6. Cherubim outside Eden's eastern gate

After Adam and Eve are expelled, in their sinful state they are no longer able to continue to meet with God face to face in the Garden. But according to Gen 3:24, at the *eastern* entrance to the Garden (as with the eastern entrance to the later sanctuaries), God placed cherubim (Heb. *kethubim*)—the beings associated with God's throne in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 4:5; Ezek 1:10; cf. 28:14), and represented by cherub statuary in the earthly sanctuary with

³⁴Note that the significant intertextual linkage is made with the convergence of *both* of these terms in a single context, not just their isolated occurrence separately. It is also the convergence of the *hiphil* causative of *labash* "to clothe [someone else]" with the *ketnot* that is crucial, and not the word *labash* occurring in settings when the person is putting on his own clothes.

³⁵Robert A. Oden, Jr., *The Bible Without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 92-105 (this is his ch. 3, entitled "Grace or Status? Yahweh's Clothing of the First Humans"). Oden examines the use of the two key Hebrew words "to clothe" (~) (*labash*, *hiphil*) and "tunic/coat" (*ketnot*), both in Scripture and in the ancient ANE literature, and shows how these terms are regularly employed in contexts of status marking. See, e.g., Isa 22:21, where God marks the status of Eliakim by clothing him.

³⁶Jacques B. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for their Absence," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36. A full awareness of the nature of canonical intertextuality is needed to be sensitive to this identification.

³⁷Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel," 37.

their wings covering the ark/throne of God (Exod 25:18-22; 26:31; 37:7-9; cf. 1 Kgs 6:23-28).³⁸

7. Post-Fall sanctuary

The cherubim are “placed” (Hebrew *shakan*), the same specific Hebrew verb for God’s plan to “dwell” (*shakan*) among His people in the sanctuary (Exod 25:8), and from the same root as *mishkan*, the Hebrew word for the Mosaic “tabernacle” (Exod 25:9 plus more than ninety other times in the Pentateuch). The reference to the “flaming” sword recalls the later biblical references to fiery flames that proceed from the heavenly throne of God in his sanctuary (Dan 7:9), and to the visible presence of God’s glory in His sanctuary which in later Judaism is called the *Shekinah* (from the same verb *shakan* as mentioned above).³⁹ The eastern entrance of the Garden, guarded by the cherubim with flaming swords, thus becomes the post-Fall sanctuary, where the Shekinah glory is revealed.

8. Post-Fall place of worship and sacrifice

In Genesis 4, just a few verses after the first sacrifice recorded in Gen 3:21, we have evidence that Cain and Abel were thoroughly instructed regarding the sacrificial system. Both Cain and Abel “brought” offerings to the Lord, but the narrative contrasts the two kinds of “gifts/offerings” (Heb. *minchah*) that were brought. Cain brought a bloodless offering from the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought an animal sacrifice (Gen 4:3-4). Although in the later Levitical system both first-fruit offerings and animal sacrifices were included (the *minchah* is actually the term used for the “grain offering”; Lev 2), the foundational offering was the bloody sacrifice. As Heb 9:22 summarizes, “without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sin.”⁴⁰ The first fruits thank offerings were to be brought *in addition to* the foundational animal sacrifices.

Genesis 4:3-4 appears to highlight the fact that Cain only brought the first fruit offering, but did not see the need to offer in addition an animal sacrifice showing his dependence upon the blood of the substitute, as God had made clear in Eden to Adam and Eve. Abel, on the other hand, brought both. This nuance of the Hebrew original is captured in the NASB translation: “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD

³⁸For elaboration, see, e.g., Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 401; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 139-140. Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, 53, insightfully observes: “When Adam failed to guard the Eden-sanctuary by sinning and letting in a serpent to defile the sanctuary, he lost his priestly role [in Eden], and the cherubim took over the responsibility of guarding the Garden-sanctuary.”

³⁹The name *Shekinah* does not appear in Scripture, but is a common term in the later Jewish literature.

⁴⁰The only exception was for people too poor to bring even the least expensive animal sacrifice (two turtledoves or two young pigeons), who were allowed to offer a handful of fine flour instead (Lev 5:11-13).

of the fruit of the ground. Abel, *on his part also brought* of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering” (emphasis supplied).⁴¹

Genesis 4:3-4 does not indicate the location to which Cain and Abel brought their offerings, but this is probably implied in v. 7. Recent studies of this verse⁴² provide evidence from the original Hebrew that the word *kbatta't* (which can either mean “sin” or “sin-offering”) should better be translated as “sin-offering” and not “sin” in this verse, and the word *petakh* (“door/opening”) here refers to the cherubim-guarded door/gate of Paradise, where sinful humans were to bring their sacrifices, paralleling the numerous uses of *petakh* in the Torah describing the door of the tabernacle (Exod 29:4, 11, 32, 42; 33:9-10; etc.). In this verse, God is encouraging Cain to offer up an animal sacrifice for his sin at the eastern “door” of the Garden where the post-Fall sanctuary was located.

⁴¹I suggest that modern commentators have not paid sufficient attention to the phrase *gam-bu'* (lit. “also-he”) in Gen 4:4: “Abel *also* [Heb. *gam-bu'*] brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat.” The word *gam*, or in its intensified form joined with a personal pronoun, as here, *gam-bu'*, means “also” in one of two senses: (1) “likewise, in the same way” or (2) “moreover, in addition [to].” The context, along with the syntactical placement of the phrase in the sentence, helps determine which sense is intended. The use of the preposition *gam* with a personal pronoun to mean “moreover, in addition [to]” is found a number of times elsewhere in the Pentateuch (e.g., Gen 20:6; Exod 1:10) and other parts of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1 Kgs 4:15; 2 Chr 21:11; Jer 48:26). For evidence that this is the best reading here, see Richard M. Davidson, “Shame and Honor in the Beginning: A Study of Genesis 4,” in *Shame and Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame & Honor Contexts*, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Department of World Missions, 2014), 50. This interpretation allows for a consistent understanding of the *minkhab* offering in Gen 4:4-5. In v. 4 it clearly applies to the non-animal sacrifice of Cain, but in v. 5 it is applied to both the offering of Cain and Abel, and thus scholars have generally claimed that in v. 5 *minkhab* refers to both non-animal sacrifice (in the case of Cain) and bloody sacrifice (in the case of Abel). However, while the term *minkhab* is used occasionally outside the Pentateuch to encompass both grain offerings and animal sacrifices (e.g., 1 Sam 2:17, 29), in the Pentateuch the word *minkhab* (when referring to an offering to God and not in the more general meaning of “tribute, gift”) consistently (beyond this passage) denotes a non-bloody (vegetable/meal) offering and not an animal sacrifice. The term *minkhab* is the regular term used in Leviticus for the “grain/meal offering” (Lev 2). But even before the divine formalization of the various types of offering in Leviticus, God specified that when the altar of burnt offering was set up, Moses was to offer upon it the burnt offering (*'olab* = animal sacrifice) accompanied by the *minkhab* (= “fruit of the ground” offering) (Exod 29:39-41; 30:9; 40:29). With the interpretation proposed above, Gen 4:4-5 is consistent with elsewhere in the Pentateuch. For further discussion of Genesis 4, see *ibid.*, 43-76.

⁴²Joachim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7,” *Biblische Notizen* 100 (1999): 45-59; cf. Davidson, “Genesis 4,” *passim*.

Adam and Eve and their children came to the eastern gate of Eden to worship God, build their altars, and bring their sacrifices; here the Shekinah glory was manifested as God came down to hold communion with them. This arrangement no doubt lasted until the time of the global Flood. The reference to “the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God,” in the promise to overcomers in Rev 2:7, may be seen to imply that the Garden of Eden was removed from the earth at the time of the Flood, and will be accessed by the redeemed in the New Earth.⁴³

Based upon the numerous linkages between the Garden of Eden and the descriptions of the sanctuary elsewhere in Scripture, grounded in the fundamental link with the heavenly Garden of Eden sanctuary/temple before sin, I unhesitatingly conclude that the Garden of Eden (and its surroundings) was the earth’s original sanctuary.

C. Genesis 1, Creation Week, and the Sanctuary

We now move to Genesis 1 (and parallel creation passages in Scripture), where we find additional intertextual linkages between creation and sanctuary, this time depicting the entire creation as a cosmic sanctuary.

1. “The Heavens and the Earth”

A key passage for understanding “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1) as Yahweh’s cosmic temple is Isa 66:1-2: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven *is* My throne, And earth *is* My footstool. Where *is* the house that you will build Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? ² For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist,’ Says the LORD.” According to this verse, heaven and the earth together constitutes Yahweh’s throne and footstool. A divine throne-room is, by definition, a temple. The heaven and earth are thus Yahweh’s cosmic temple. This conclusion is also supported in Ps 78:69, where the earthly sanctuary is compared with the cosmic temple: “He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever” (ESV). When viewed in light of these passages outside the creation narrative, the reference to “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1) takes on cosmic sanctuary significance.

⁴³See the comment by White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 62: “At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the divine glory was revealed. Hither came Adam and his sons to worship God. Here they renewed their vows of obedience to that law the transgression of which had banished them from Eden. When the tide of iniquity overspread the world, and the wickedness of men determined their destruction by a flood of waters, the hand that had planted Eden withdrew it from the earth. But in the final restitution, when there shall be ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’ (Revelation 21:1), it is to be restored more gloriously adorned than at the beginning.” Cf. *ibid.*, 83: “At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the glory of God was revealed, and hither came the first worshipers. Here their altars were reared, and their offerings presented. It was here that Cain and Abel had brought their sacrifices, and God had condescended to communicate with them.”

2. Back to the beginning

The reference in Gen 1:1 to creation “in the beginning” (Heb. *rešbit*, related to the nouns *rošb* “head, first” and *rišbon* “first”), may be echoed in the sanctuary festival calendar commencing in the “beginning [*rošb*] of months” (Exod 12:2). Likewise, the “first day” of creation week may be echoed in the erection of the Mosaic tabernacle on “the first day of the first month” (Exod 40:2, 17). Just as creation took place at the “beginning,” so the sanctuary festivals started at the “beginning” of months and the sanctuary was constructed in the “beginning” of the year. Jews still today celebrate the creation of the world at the time of *Rosh Hashanah* (“Head of the Year,” i.e., New Year, first day of the seventh Jewish month).⁴⁴

3. Literary structure: “Raw materials” + Six + Sabbath

The creation account in Gen 1:1–2:3 unfolds in three major literary and thematic steps: (a) vv. 1-2 mention the “unformed” and “unfilled” (*tobu* and *bohu*) condition of the earth (i.e., the “raw materials” created by God) present at the beginning of creation week (Gen 1:1-3); (b) vv. 3-31 describe the creation (“forming and filling”) of the world, which is said to occupy six days (each introduced by the clause “And God said”); and (c) Gen 2:1-3 depicts the seventh day Sabbath. In striking parallel, the instructions concerning the building of the sanctuary develop according to the same “raw materials” + six + Sabbath pattern: (a) Exodus 25 first mentions the gathering of the materials for the construction of the sanctuary (vv. 2-7); (b) God’s detailed instruction to Moses regarding the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31 is divided into six sections (introduced by the phrase “The Lord said to Moses”); followed by (c) a concluding seventh section dealing with the Sabbath.⁴⁵ The striking parallel not only invites us to see the building of the sanctuary as a new creation, but to see the creation account as connected with the sanctuary.⁴⁶ This becomes more apparent as specific sanctuary terminology is utilized for describing creation, as set forth below.

4. Heptadic patterns

The heptadic pattern (reference to “seven” or multiples of seven) not only structures the creation account (Gen 1:3–2:4a) and the instructions given to Moses about building the sanctuary (Exodus 25–31), as noted above, but

⁴⁴See Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, 38-39.

⁴⁵The seven divine speeches are: Exod 25:1-30; 30:11-16; 30:17-21; 30:22-33; 30:34-37; 31:1-11; and 31:12-17.

⁴⁶For the 6 + Sabbath parallels, see esp. P. J. Kearney, “Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25-40,” *ZAW* 89 (1977): 375-387. I suggest the further aspect of “raw materials” which precedes the two series of six. For discussion of the pre-creation week “raw materials” of the earth, see Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *JATS* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 19-25.

saturates the biblical material related to both creation and the sanctuary. The Genesis 1 creation account has numerous heptadic features beyond the obvious seven days of creation week, of which only a few examples can be mentioned here: (a) the initial verse of the creation narrative (Gen 1:1) is composed of seven words, and the two sections of the verse are divided into two sections of fourteen (7x2) Hebrew letters each; (b) Gen 1:2 contains fourteen (7x2) words; (c) the key word for create (*bara'*) appears 7 times in Gen 1; (d) the key phrase "And God saw . . . that it was good" appears seven times; (e) the phrase "and it was so" appears seven times; (f) the word *'Elohim* "God" occurs 35 (7x5) times; and (g) the word *ha'arets* "the earth" occurs 21 (7x3) times.⁴⁷ This heptadic pattern is taken up again in the sanctuary details. A few examples, beyond the seven sections of Exod 25-31 mentioned above, will suffice: (a) 7 lamps of the lampstand (Exod 25:37; 37:23), (b) 7 days for the inauguration of the priests and altar (Exod 29:35, 37; Lev 8:33-35), (c) sprinkling of the blood 7 times (Lev 4:6, 17; 8:11; Num 19:4), (d) 7 days of unleavened bread (Exod 12:15, 19; Lev 23:6; Num 28:17; Deut 16:3), (e) 7 days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:24, 26, 39, 40, 42; Num 29:12; Deut 16:13), (f) sabbatical years every 7 years and jubilee after "seven Sabbaths of years" (7x7) (Lev 25:4, 8; Deut 15:1), and (g) 7 lambs (Num 28:19, 27; 29:36; etc.).

Just as the creation week consisted of seven days, so, as we have seen above, Solomon took seven years to build the temple (1 Kgs 6:38). Solomon dedicated the temple on the seventh month, during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kgs 8:2, 56-66), and his dedication speech was structured around seven petitions (1 Kgs 8:31-55).⁴⁸

5. The Spirit of God

Just as the "Spirit of God" (*ruakh 'elohim*) hovered over the face of the earth at creation (Gen 1:2), prepared to do the work of creation, likewise, in the next clear reference to "Spirit of God" in the Pentateuch, the Spirit was active in equipping the artisans who designed and constructed the Mosaic sanctuary (Exod 31:2-3). Scholars have recognized the intertextual echoes between these two passages.⁴⁹

⁴⁷For these and further examples of the "sevens" of the creation narratives, see Jacques Doukhan's forthcoming SDAIBC commentary on Genesis.

⁴⁸For further discussion and bibliography, see Ouro, 39-40.

⁴⁹For the parallel between creation and tabernacle using "Spirit," see Terence Fretheim, *Exodus, Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), 269. See discussion of these passages in Richard M. Davidson, "The Holy Spirit in the Pentateuch," paper presented at the IX Biblical-Theological Symposium, South America (Foz do Iguaçu, PR, Brazil, 20 May 2011). There is one intervening mention of the *ruakh 'elohim* between these two references, but it is pronounced by pharaoh concerning Joseph, and probably (at least in the mind of pharaoh "spirit of God") did not have reference to the Holy Spirit.

6. Separation: firmament and veil/curtains

The key Hebrew word *badal* “to divide/separate” is used to describe the way God created by separation (Gen 1:4, 6-7, 18), and after the creation account the next usage of the term *badal* in Scripture describes the veil in the Mosaic sanctuary which divides between the holy place and the most holy place (Exod 26:33). In the creation account *badal* is particularly utilized in connection with reference to the expanse (Heb. *raqia'*) of the atmospheric heavens, (Gen 1:6-7), and in the poetic re-telling of creation week in Psalm 104 (v. 3) this is compared to “stretching out heaven like a [tent] curtain.” The word for “curtain” (Heb. *yeri'ab*) in this verse about creation is the same which is used of the curtains of the Mosaic sanctuary (Exod 26:1-13; 26:8-17).

7. Sea/laver

On the second day of creation, God created the “Seas” (Heb. *yam* in the plural, Gen 1:10; described in the singular “Sea” [*yam*] in Exod 20:11), located on earth outside of the garden. Likewise, in the courtyard area outside the Solomonic temple was placed a stationary laver called the molten “Sea” (Heb. *yam*, 1 Kgs 7:23; 2 Chron 4:2). Solomon also constructed ten more portable lavers (1 Kings 7:27-30, 38-39). The reference to the heavenly “sea [Gk. *thalassa*] of glass” in Rev 15:2 may be an allusion to the “Sea” of the Solomonic temple (the LXX in these passages uses the same Greek term).

8. Trees (for food), the lampstand (as a nut tree), and the Table of the Bread of the Presence (for food)

Trees created by God during the third day of creation week were described as “good for food” (Gen 1:29; cf. 2:9), and this may be compared with the “food” in the sanctuary, represented by the bread of the presence in the holy place (Exod 25:30; 39:36; 40:23; Lev 24:5-9). The term “bread” in Scripture often refers to “food” in general (e.g., Deut 8:4). The trees of creation good for food also hint at the sanctuary lampstand, which as noted above, was a stylized almond tree (Exod 25:31-40; cf. 1 Kgs 7:49), as well as Aaron’s rod that budded and produced ripe almonds and was placed in the tabernacle of witness (Num 17:7-8; Heb 9:4).

9. “Light” of the menorah

It is hardly accidental that the term for “light” (Heb *ma'or*, “lamp, luminary”) used to describe the appearance of the “greater light” (sun) and “lesser light” (moon) on the fourth day of creation week in Gen 1:14-16, is employed elsewhere in the Pentateuch *only* for the light of the menorah in the holy place of the sanctuary (Exod 25:6; 27:20; 35:8, 14, 28; 39:27; Lev 24:2; Num 4:9, 16). Moses not only engages in a polemic against the solar and lunar deities of the ANE by not using the common names for sun and moon in Hebrew are also the personal names for the ANE sun and moon gods; he also uses the

technical term for “sanctuary lamp” which he reserves later for the menorah in the Holy Place, to link creation with sanctuary.⁵⁰

10. The *mo'edim* (“fixed/sacred times”)

Gen 1:14 gives as one of the functions of the greater and lesser lights in creation that they would be for “seasons” (*mo'edim*, pl. of *mo'ed*). Although “seasons” is an accurate translation of this term in context, several modern versions have rightly recognized the sanctuary connotations of the term as well, and have thus translated the term in Gen 1:14 as “festivals” (HSB, NJB), in harmony with the other sanctuary-related terminology in Gen 1. While the term *mo'edim* sometimes carries the more general meaning of “seasons” (e.g., Jer 8:7), the dominant use of this term elsewhere in Scripture is in the context of the sanctuary, to refer to the cultic festivals (see esp. Lev 23:2, 4, 37, 44).⁵¹

11. Series of precise verbal parallels in the conclusion formulae

A complex of precise terminological parallels in the same basic order may be noted between the two major “conclusion formulae” in the Torah—at the beginning of Genesis concluding the account of Creation in Gen 1:1–2:4 as a whole, and at the end of Exodus concluding the construction of the Mosaic sanctuary (Exodus 39–40). Note the series of key verbal parallels: Just as “God saw [*ra'ab*] everything that he had made/done [*'asab*], and behold [*hineb*] it was very good,” and he “finished [*kalab*] his work [*mela'kab*],” “blessed [*berek*] the seventh day and sanctified [*qdash*] it (Gen 1:31; 2:1; 2:2; 2:3), so “Moses saw [*ra'ab*] all the work” which the people “made/did [*'asab*]” in constructing the sanctuary” “and behold [*hineb*]” it was done, “and Moses finished [*kalab*] the work [*mela'kab*],” “blessed” [*qdash*] the people for their labors, and “consecrated/sanctified” [*qdash*] the tabernacle and its furnishings (Exod 39:32, 43; 40:9, 33). “The verbal parallels . . . are too striking, for coincidence.”⁵² The repetition of the same basic terms in the same basic order in these two conclusion formulae—(1) see, (2) make/do, (3) behold, (4) finish, (5) work, (6) bless, and (7) sanctify/consecrate—clearly signifies the linkage between the creation week and the sanctuary in the Torah.

12. God’s “rest” and temple inauguration

In the creation account of Gen 1:1–2:4a, the Sabbath is presented as the climax of the week, in which God sanctifies the seventh day as a “palace in

⁵⁰See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 22.

⁵¹See also Exod 13:10; 23: 15; Num 10:10; 15:3; 29:39; 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:13; Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:34; Isa 1:14; Ezek 36:38; 45:17; 46:9, 11; Zech 8:9. The word *mo'ed* in the singular is regularly used in the phrase “tent of meeting [*mo'ed*]” throughout the Pentateuch (Exod 27:21; 28:43; etc.).

⁵²Levinson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 85.

time” (Gen 2:1-3).⁵³ After his six days of creative activity, God “rested” on the seventh day (Heb. *shabat* in Gen 2:2; and *nuakh* in Exod 20:11). Elsewhere in the Old Testament God’s “rest” (or “resting-place”) [Heb. *menukhab*; related to the verb *nuakh*] is equated with Mt. Zion (the city of Jerusalem), and in particular, with the place of the sanctuary or temple (e.g., Isa 66:1-2). Note especially Ps 132:8, 13, 14: “Arise, O LORD, to your resting place [or ‘rest’; Heb. *menukhab*]; you, and the ark of your strength. . . . For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. This is my resting place [or ‘rest’; Heb. *menukhab*] for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” Solomon quotes these words of Ps 132 almost verbatim in his prayer at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron 6:41-42). The intertextual link between God’s “rest” on the seventh day of creation and his “rest” in later the sanctuary/Temple, suggests that God not only rested from his work on that first Sabbath, but entered into his “rest” (or “resting place”), i.e., was enthroned and dedicated the “cosmic sanctuary” which he had created.⁵⁴

13. Sabbath/sanctuary sanctification by God’s presence/glory

According to Gen 2:2, God sanctified [*qadasb*] the Sabbath. Exod 29:43 indicates that God will sanctify His tabernacle. How does God sanctify his sanctuary? This passage provides the divine answer to this question: “the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.” This was fulfilled after the sanctuary was constructed and “the work was finished”: God’s glory filled the sanctuary (Exod 40:34-35). Just as God sanctified time after his creation work was finished, by filling the seventh day with his presence, so he sanctified space (the tabernacle) after its work of construction was finished, by filling it with his glory.⁵⁵

14. “laying of foundations” (*yasad*) + celebration

There was celebration when the Creator laid the foundations of the earth: “When I laid the foundations [*yasad*] of the earth . . . the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:4, 7). Likewise, after the Exile under the direction of Zerubbabel, “When the builders laid the foundation [*yasad*] of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according

⁵³For development of the concept of the Sabbath as a “palace in time,” see esp. Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Harper, 1966), 11-24.

⁵⁴For development of these ideas, see especially Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord,” 501-512; and Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, 178-192. While I appreciate Walton’s insights regarding the link between creation and sanctuary, I do not accept his supposition that creation week only involved “functional” and not “material” creation. I see both functional and material creation occurring during creation week, according to Genesis 1.

⁵⁵For further development of this parallel, see Winkle, “Creation and Tabernacle, Sabbath and Glory,” 1-16.

to the ordinance of David king of Israel. . . . Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid [*yasad*]" (Ezra 3:10, 11).

15. Wisdom, Creation, and Temple

While Prov 8:22-31 does not follow the detailed order of the six days of creation as in Genesis 1, Psalm 104, and Job 38–41, nonetheless there is a general movement from the “beginning” (v. 22, using the same word as found in Gen 1:1), emphasizing creating of the foundations of the earth, to the end of creation week, when Wisdom rejoices with Yahweh and with human beings (v. 31).

Proverbs 9:1 continues the depiction of Wisdom: “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars.” The reference to Wisdom’s building “denotes bringing something into existence through a particular type of craftsmanship.”⁵⁶ “Fundamentally, ‘building’ always has to do with ‘creating’ and ‘bringing into existence,’ and is connected with the idea of a functioning creative power.”⁵⁷ The “house of Wisdom,” in light of the preceding context of Wisdom’s creation of the world, probably is a reference to the creation mentioned in Proverbs 8. R.B.Y. Scott seems on the mark: “The house of Wisdom is the ‘habitable world’ (viii 31).”⁵⁸

Although numerous suggestions have been given for the “seven pillars” of Wisdom’s house,⁵⁹ given the preceding immediate context of creation it seems best to interpret the seven pillars as the seven days of creation week. Duane Garrett concurs: “The nature of Wisdom’s house of seven pillars is uncertain. . . . The significance of ‘seven’ here is also not elucidated. Some have connected it to the seven planets, but a more reasonable explanation is that it refers to the seven days of creation (note Wisdom’s role in creation in 8:22-31).” If the “seven pillars” refer to the seven days of creation, then it is possible that feast described in vv. 2-6 may imply the celebration of rejoicing connected with the Sabbath after the completion of creation.

If the seven-pillared house of Wisdom refers to the seven days of creation week narrated in Gen 1:3–2:4, then it only remains to point out that inasmuch as Wisdom is a divine figure—the hypostasis of the pre-incarnate

⁵⁶Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 431.

⁵⁷S. Wagner, *TDOT*, 2:168, s.v. *bānāh*.

⁵⁸R.B.Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, Anchor Bible, vol. 18 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 76. See also Allen P. Ross, “Proverbs,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 947-948: “She [wisdom] has prepared a house and established it on seven pillars. This is probably a reference to the inhabitable world (8:31), which is spacious and enduring. For the equation of a house with the world, see 8:29; Job 38:6; and Psalm 104:5.”

⁵⁹For the range of suggestions, see, e.g., R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, New Century Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 142-144.

Christ,⁶⁰ it follows that her house, by definition, is a temple (“the house of a deity”). Thus in this passage creation and temple are integrally connected: the inhabited world of creation is Wisdom’s temple.⁶¹

⁶⁰In a separate study I have provided evidence that the figure of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:21-31 moves beyond personification to a hypostasis of the pre-incarnate Son of God, “Master-craftsman” or Co-Creator with Yahweh, who at the beginning of creation, is installed into the office of “Mediator” between Yahweh and “His inhabited world . . . the sons of men” (v. 30-31). See Richard M. Davidson, “Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17 (2006): 33-54.

⁶¹Several other thematic links between the OT creation passages and the sanctuary/temple motif may be mentioned:

1. *Creation-Fall-Creation motif.* Gen 1-11 depicts a flow of history, from (1) creation (Genesis 1–2), to (2) the Fall and its ensuing un-creation in the judgment by Flood (Genesis 3–7), and (3) the new creation marked initially by the drying up of the flood waters on the first day of the first month of the year (Gen 8:13). So with regard to the sanctuary, (1) Exodus 25–31 contains instructions for the creation/construction of the sanctuary, (2) Exodus 32–34 describes the “Fall” in the worship of the golden calf, and its ensuing consequences in the breaking of the tables of the Decalogue and judgment upon the people, and (3) Exodus 35–50 describes the creation/construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings. See Fretheim, *Exodus*, 271-272.

2. *“Firmament” paralleling “sanctuary.”* The Heb. term *raqia* “firmament/expanse/sky” in Genesis 1 (vv. 6, 7 [3x] 8, 14, 15, 17, 20) is found in synonymous parallelism with the term *qodesh* “sanctuary” in Ps 150:1, describing the heavenly sanctuary: “Hallelujah. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the sky, His stronghold” (NJPS).

3. *Animals of the sixth day.* The creation of the cattle and the “beasts of the earth” on the sixth day (Gen 1:24-25) are echoed by representations of oxen and lions in the laver of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kgs 7:26, 29, 36).

4. *Imago Dei.* On the sixth day of creation God created humans “in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:27). As the “image” of the god was placed in ANE temples. Adam and Eve were God’s “image” representing the deity in his cosmic temple, but whereas the “image” of the god in other ANE temples was a lifeless statue, God’s image was comprised of living human beings, made in his likeness. So Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 104: “All ancient temples and sanctuaries had images of the deities that had dominion over them. Likewise the garden sanctuary of the Lord had images, but they were very different from what the pagan world later developed. . . . These images were made by God, not by people, for humans themselves were the image of God—living, breathing, thinking human beings.”

5. *Genesis 1–3 and Worship.* John Rankin summarizes the growing conviction among biblical scholars: “whether one is evangelical or liberal, it is clear that Gen 1–3 is the interpretive foundation of all Scripture” (“Power and Gender at the Divinity School,” in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, ed. Kelly Monroe [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 203). Or, as Wenham (“Sanctuary Symbolism,” 404) puts it, “the opening chapters of Genesis describe what human

D. Summary: Creation and Sanctuary

From the above parallels, we find counterparts (or at least echoes) of all the basic furnishings and functionaries of later earthly sanctuaries/temples:

Sanctuary	Creation
1. Lavers (<i>yam</i>)	1. Seas (<i>yam</i>)
2. Veils, curtains (<i>badal</i>)	2. Separating Firmament (and other separations, <i>badal</i>)
3. Menorah Lamps (<i>ma'or</i>)	3. Heavenly Luminaries (<i>ma'or</i>)
4. Table(s) with Bread (for food)	4. Trees of the Garden (for food)
5. Golden altar's incense cloud (<i>'anan</i>)	5. Mist wafting on face of ground/ clouds (<i>'anan</i>)
6. God's Presence (the Ark, containing the almond tree branch that budded) in the midst of the sanctuary precincts quadrangle	6. Tree of Life and God "walking around" in the midst of the Garden
7. The altar of burnt offering	7. The place of sacrifice at the door/ gate of the Garden (after the Fall)
8. Cherubim covering the Ark in the Most Holy Place	8. Cherubim at the Gate of the Garden (after the Fall)
9. Priests "serve" and "guard" (<i>'abad, shamar</i>) the sanctuary and are inaugurated by being clothed (<i>labash</i>) with tunics (<i>kutnot</i>)	9. Adam and Eve as priests "serve and guard" (<i>'abad, shamar</i>) the Garden before sin and are "clothed" (<i>labash</i>) by God with tunics (<i>kutnot</i>) after the Fall
10. The "sin offering" (<i>khattat</i>) of the sanctuary services	10. The "sin offering" (<i>khatt'at</i>) available at the door of the Garden (after the Fall)

In Genesis 2–3 (paralleling Ezek 28 and other biblical passages), the focus is upon the Garden of Eden as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly temple, while in Gen 1:1–2:4a (and other parallel creation passages) the entire creation (at least this earth and its immediate surrounding heavenly

life should be like." Wenham then suggests the implication that follows from this recognition: "According to the rest of the Pentateuch worship is of the greatest importance (consider the great bulk of cultic legislation), so it is not surprising to find such interests reflected in Genesis 2–3" (*ibid.*).

spheres) seems to be depicted as a cosmic temple. This may be confusing at first glance, but it accords with many other passages in the OT where such a dual picture of God's temple occurs. For example, in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, he exclaims: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!" (1 Kgs 8:27). Similarly, as we have already seen above, Isaiah records Yahweh's words in Isa 66:1: "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven *is* My throne, And earth *is* My footstool. Where *is* the house that you will build Me? And where *is* the place of My rest?'" Yet a few verses later, Isaiah refers to "A voice from the temple! The voice of the Lord" (Isa 66:6). Again, in Ps 78:69, the Psalmist Asaph declares, "He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever" (ESV). Yet in the first verse of the very next psalm, Asaph mentions "Your holy temple," referring to the temple in Jerusalem (Ps 79:1). I conclude that in the wider sense, the whole creation is God's temple, for He is the omnipotent and omnipresent and transcendent God, *'Elohim*, as depicted in Genesis 1. Yet, he also has a localized temple on this earth, a replica of the heavenly original, where he intimately relates with his creatures, in his character of Yahweh, as described in Genesis 2–3. We need both of these pictures of God, revealed in the sanctuary/temple imagery of Scripture, to see his full character as both transcendent and immanent.

In conclusion, there are more than forty lines of biblical evidence that point toward the conclusion that the Garden of Eden (and its surroundings) constituted earth's original sanctuary/temple. The foundational connection between the earthly Garden of Eden (Genesis 2–3) and the heavenly Garden of Eden sanctuary/temple (Ezek 28) makes evident that the earthly Garden, like its heavenly counterpart, was created to function as a sanctuary/temple where created beings could worship and commune with their Maker. Viewed from within this overarching sanctuary/temple context, numerous terminological, structural and thematic links between Genesis 1–3 and later sanctuaries/temples in Scripture provide further evidence that Eden (and its surroundings) functioned as a sanctuary/temple, both before sin and (at its eastern gate) after sin. Some connections are stronger than others, but even seemingly-insignificant links—especially terminological and structural—are significant in establishing this intertextual identity. The intertextual links are too many to be only coincidental. I conclude from the cumulative weight of evidence that not only do the later sanctuaries/temples of Israel recall the original creation, but also, and even more fundamentally, the original creation, especially centered in the Garden of Eden, is to be regarded as earth's first sanctuary, the counterpart of the heavenly Eden sanctuary/temple.

THE CURRENT THEOLOGICAL DEBATE REGARDING ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IN HELL AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Jiří MOSKALA
Andrews University

Heaven and hell preoccupy thoughts of humanity from antiquity. These themes are extremely attractive, because they deal with issues of eternal life or death. Lisa Miller strikingly entitles her book, *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination with the Afterlife*.¹ Carol Zaleski ironically points out that “our ancestors were afraid of Hell; we are afraid of Heaven. We think it will be boring.”² On the other hand, it is also true that the majority of people would like to avoid thinking about hell. Martin Marty fittingly entitled his article on hell: “Hell Disappeared. No One Noticed. A Civic Argument.”³ Gordon Kaufman speaks of “irreversible changes” and adds: “I don’t think there can be any future for heaven and hell.”⁴ Richard Niebuhr expressed similar feelings when he criticized theological liberalism of being a social gospel by pointing out that they believe in “a God without wrath [who] brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministration of a Christ without a cross.”⁵ However, the topic of hell has had a dramatic comeback, and there is probably no more heated debate in biblical and theological studies than the one over the eternal punishment in hell. R. C. Sproul claims that “there is no topic in Christian theology more difficult to deal with, particularly on an emotional level, than the doctrine of hell.”⁶ The recent literature on this subject and closely related issues is abundant and reveals the intense debate.⁷

¹Published in New York: Harper, 2010.

²Carol Zaleski, “In Defense of Immortality,” *First Things* 105 (September 2000): 42.

³Martin Marty, “Hell Disappeared. No One Noticed. A Civic Argument,” *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985): 381-398.

⁴Cited by Kenneth L. Woodward, “Heaven,” in *Newsweek*, Mar. 27, 1989, 54.

⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 193.

⁶R. C. Sproul, *Unseen Realities: Heaven, Hell, Angels and Demons* (Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2011), 51.

⁷See, for example, the following representative literature: Sharon L. Baker, *Razing Hell: Rethinking Everything You’ve Been Taught about God’s Wrath and Judgment* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 37; Joel Bunting, *The Problem of Hell* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Nigel M. de S. Cameron, ed., *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell: Papers Presented at the Fourth Edinburgh Conference on Christian Dogmatics, 1991* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992); David Clotfelter, *Sinners in the Hands of a Good God: Reconciling Divine Judgment and Mercy* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2004); Edward W. Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*, 3d ed., fully

Primary Issue

What we believe about hell has a direct impact on our understanding of God, His person, values, image, reputation, and character. “When we say something about heaven or hell we are also saying something specifically about God.”⁸ The reverse statement is also true: Our picture of God dramatically influences our view of hell. Jeremy LaBorde rightly states: “What you believe to be true will control you, whether it’s true or not.”⁹ What we believe about God profoundly influences our life and defines our conduct. What we say about ourselves has a direct impact on our understanding of the image of God, because He is our Creator. Richard Rice aptly observes: “Our understanding of God has enormous practical significance. . . . What we think of God and how we respond to Him are closely related. An inaccurate view of God can

updated, rev., and exp. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011); Edward W. Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); Norman L. Geisler, *If God, Why Evil?: A New Way to Think About the Question* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011); David Hilborn, et al., *The Nature of Hell: A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth Among Evangelicals* (London: Evangelical Alliance, 2000); Randy Klassen, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Hell: Wrestling with the Traditional View* (Telford, PA: Pandora, 2001); Daniel Knauft, *Search for the Immortal Soul* (Nampa, ID: Torchlight Intel, 2006); David George Moore, *The Battle for Hell: A Survey and Evaluation of Evangelicals’ Growing Attraction to the Doctrine of Annihilationism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995); Chris Morgan, *Jonathan Edwards and Hell* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2004); Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Hell Under Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007); idem, *Is Hell for Real or Does Everyone Go to Heaven?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004); Robert A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995); Richard D. Phillips, *What Happens After Death?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013); Clark H. Pinnock, “The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (Spring 1990): 243-260; idem, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992); David Powys, *‘Hell’: A Hard Look at a Hard Question* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997); Sproul, *Unseen Realities*; Stephen H. Travis, *The Jesus Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976); idem, *Christian Hope and the Future*, vol. 3, *Issues in Contemporary Theology*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980); John Walvoord, et al., *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996); Jerry L. Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); idem, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1974); Michael E. Wittmer, *Christ Alone: An Evangelical Response to Rob Bell’s Love Wins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Edenridge, 2011).

⁸Klassen, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Hell?*, 28.

⁹See citation of Jeremy LaBorde’s quotation by Richard Oakes, cited August 9, 2009, accessed September 5, 2014, http://bigthink.com/ideas/what-you-believe-to-be-true-will-control-you-whether-it-is-true-or-not-jeremy-laborde_

have a disastrous effect on personal religious experience. We could never love a hostile, tyrannical being. . . . And we could not respect a mild, indulgent figure who never took us seriously. Our personal religious experience can be healthy only if we hold an adequate conception of God.”¹⁰ Sharon Baker concurs: “The image of God we hold in our heads and hearts matters because that image dictates our behavior.”¹¹ The goal of this article is to present contemporary principal views on hell and put them into a reciprocal dialogue, and demonstrate that the understanding of the mortality or immortality of the soul plays an integral part in interpreting the nature of hell or life in heaven.

Fertile Ground for Atheism

The traditional teaching of the Christian Church regarding eternal punishment in hell, where immortal souls are tortured forever, produces atheists and religious schizophrenia. For many this teaching presents God as being unjust, immoral, bloodthirsty, unfair, and behaving as a monster and sadist.¹² It stands directly against the view of the biblical God—the God of love, justice, truth, holiness, and freedom.

Russian theologian Nicholas Berdyaev declared: “I can conceive of no more powerful and irrefutable argument in favor of atheism than the eternal torment in hell.”¹³ In his autobiography, Charles Darwin eloquently wrote: “I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.”¹⁴ He plainly rejected the doctrine of divine eternal punishment for unbelievers.

Bertrand Russell rejected Christianity because of the doctrine of hell: “There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ’s moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment.”¹⁵

¹⁰Richard Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge and Man’s Free Will* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985), 10.

¹¹Baker, 37.

¹²Popular pictures of hell are often drawn from Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, The Purgatorio, and The Paradiso* (New York: New American Library, 2003).

¹³Quoted from Robert Short, *Short Meditations on the Bible and Peanuts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 127.

¹⁴Nora Barlow, ed., *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1882*, 2d ed., with original omissions restored; app. and notes by his granddaughter Nora Barlow (London: Collins, 1958), 87.

¹⁵Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, ed. Paul Edward (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 12.

Russell continues: "I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that."¹⁶

Neo-atheists have also attacked God and His character, and one reason among others is the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell. Daniel Dennett states: "Christians fabricate terror, psychological abuse, create phobia."¹⁷ Richard Dawkins writes with a deep sense of abhorrence, and rightly so, about the "Hell Houses" of Pastor Keenan Roberts,¹⁸ who preaches to his congregation eternal conscious torment in hell and creates massive phobia in children by walking them through the very imaginative Hell House which, describes Dawkins, "is a place where children are brought, by their parents or their Christian schools, to be scared witless over what might happen to them after they die."¹⁹ According to Roberts, the optimum age to visit such a "theater" is twelve. This description of the "horribleness of hell" is inexcusable. The Hell House might be fitted for Hollywood zombie movies (not recommended), but certainly not for the representation of biblically-oriented religion. This is a drastic distortion of truth and the character of God. Because of these and many other misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the gospel, Richard Dawkins sharply criticized biblical religion by claiming that "the God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."²⁰ Long before Dawkins, classical atheist Karl Marx wrote: "Religion is opium for the masses!"²¹

Many Christian thinkers are guilty for this unfortunate attitude toward Christianity due to their distorted theology. The colorful preaching about eternal punishment of some preachers helped to develop such animosity.

¹⁶Ibid., 3.

¹⁷Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 279-283.

¹⁸Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: A Mariner Book, 2006), 359-362.

¹⁹Ibid., 359.

²⁰Ibid., 31, also in an edition with a new introduction (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 51.

²¹Karl Marx, *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: 1976), 1 (originally published in 1844).

For example, on July 8, 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached a very famous and starkly graphic sermon entitled: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”²² Edwards’ eloquent work for defending the eternal conscious torment in hell is used even today by many evangelicals.²³ Other preachers and authors expressed similar horrific thoughts about the nature of hell.²⁴

Some theologians even expounded the atrocious idea that the eternal torment of the lost will add to the blessed state of the redeemed. Thomas Aquinas wrote that the redeemed “will, in fact, rejoice at the pains of those who are condemned. Their own bliss will be all the more enjoyable in contrast with the misfortune of the lost.”²⁵ This sounds like a description of a sadistic joy in heaven by the saved over seeing the suffering of the wicked. Edwards similarly claims: “The saints in heaven will behold the torments of the damned. . . . Every time they looked upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ... The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardor of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven. The sight of hell’s torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. When they see others who are of the same nature and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, it will make them sensible of how happy they are.”²⁶ This creates an awful picture of heaven and also of the Lord, the Creator of heaven.

²²Reprinted in Jonathan Edwards, *On Knowing Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990). See also statements of some advocates of eternal punishment in hell quoted by Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1950), 535. The statement about an angry God goes directly against the overall picture and teaching of the Bible about who God is, describing Him as love (1 John 4:16), never as anger or wrath, and abounding in love (Exod 34:6). The loving God can be angry, but He is not anger or wrath. God’s anger is His passionate reaction to evil, a clear no to iniquity; it is His uncompromised condemning reaction toward sin. His burning attitude toward evil does not change, because He is the *summum bonum*.

²³Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1979 reprint). For evangelicals who heavily quote Edwards, see for example, John Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Ministries, 1999); Chris Morgan, *Jonathan Edwards and Hell* (Scotland: Mentor, 2004); and Geisler, *If God, Why Evil?*, 102-112. See also Peterson, *Hell on Trial*, 122-124, 136-137.

²⁴For other examples, see the collection of sermons compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe, *Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994).

²⁵See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Suppl. Q. 94), quoted in Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God: An Answer to the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 26.

²⁶Excerpt from the sermon of Jonathan Edwards published in Wiersbe, *Classic Sermons*, 154-155.

Ellen G. White mentions the offensive rhetoric of another preacher: “While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of these miserable objects, will say, Amen, Alleluia! praise ye the Lord!”²⁷ She condemns the unbiblical teaching about eternal torment in hell as a “dreadful blasphemy.”²⁸ One can add that it is a terrible plague, an open wound, and a cancerous ulcer in Christian theology. She solemnly declares: “It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment,”²⁹ adding: “How repugnant to every emotion of love and mercy, and even to our sense of justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell; that for the sins of a brief earthly life they are to suffer torture as long as God shall live.”³⁰

Randy Klassen correctly states, according to the foreword by Robert K. Johnston, that “the goal of God’s justice is closure, not torture.”³¹ Hans Küng poses a pertinent question: “What would we think of a human being who satisfied his thirst for revenge so implacably and insatiably?”³² Clark Pinnock well articulates another relevant question: “Torturing people without end is not the sort of thing the ‘Abba’ Father of Jesus would do. Would God who tells us to love our enemies be intending to wreak vengeance on his enemies for all eternity?”³³

²⁷White, *The Great Controversy*, 535, describing such sentiments on pp. 534-535 as part of the devil’s strategy of deception: “Satan is seeking to overcome men today, as he overcame our first parents, by shaking their confidence in their Creator and leading them to doubt the wisdom of His government and the justice of His laws. Satan and his emissaries represent God as even worse than themselves, in order to justify their own malignity and rebellion. The great deceiver endeavors to shift his own horrible cruelty of character upon our heavenly Father, that he may cause himself to appear as one greatly wronged by his expulsion from heaven because he would not submit to so unjust a governor. He presents before the world the liberty which they may enjoy under his mild sway, in contrast with the bondage imposed by the stern decrees of Jehovah. Thus he succeeds in luring souls away from their allegiance to God.”

²⁸Ibid., 536.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 535.

³¹In the foreword by Robert K. Johnston to Randy Klassen, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Hell?* (Telford, PA: Pandora, 2001), 12 (see also p. 91).

³²Hans Küng, *Eternal Life? Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 136.

³³Clark H. Pinnock, “The Conditional View,” *Four Views on Hell*, ed. William Crockett (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 140.

Ongoing Debate: Three Basic Views of Hell

Many biblical scholars and theologians recognize that the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell is problematic and unethical. Why would a loving God send anyone to hell forever? Again, Pinnock makes the point: “Everlasting torture is intolerable from a moral point of view because it pictures God acting like a bloodthirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for his enemies whom he does not even allow to die. How can one love a God like that?”³⁴ This leads us to search for a more relevant and biblically sound interpretation. Nevertheless, heated debate on this topic continues, with three major views being advanced: the traditional view of a never-ending hell fire, the conditional view that the lake of fire irreversibly and totally consumes the damned, and the restorationist position that hell fire purifies and ultimately enables everyone to be saved.

A. Traditionalists: Hell Fire That Torments
Forever Without Ceasing

Traditionally, hell exists as a real place somewhere in the underworld where real fire torments immortal souls forever (this opinion was for the first time expressed among Christians by Tertullian) and asserts that the conscious suffering of the wicked comes right after death and lasts throughout all eternity. A good number of contemporary Bible scholars and theologians adhere to this view of hell as eternal conscious torture or punishment (with some nuances and modifications), claiming that their interpretation can be supported by the biblical data. These include Gregory K. Beale, John Blanchard, Daniel I. Block, D. A. Carson, Eryl Davies, Larry Dixon, Sinclair B. Ferguson, John Gerstner, Kendall S. Harmon, Paul Helm, Bruce Milne, Albert Mohler, Jr., Douglas J. Moo, Christopher W. Morgan, James I. Packer, Robert A. Peterson, John F. Walvoord, Robert W. Yarbrough, et al.³⁵ Norman

³⁴Ibid., 149.

³⁵Gregory K. Beale, “The Revelation on Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 111-134; John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (Durham, UK: Evangelical, 1993); Daniel I. Block, “The Old Testament on Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, 43-65; D. A. Carson, *The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 515-536; Eryl Davies, *An Angry God? The Biblical Doctrine of Wrath, Final Judgment and Hell* (Bridgend, Wales: Evangelical, 1991); Larry Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News: Confronting the Contemporary Challenges to Jesus’s Teaching on Hell* (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint, 1992); Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Pastoral Theology: The Preacher and Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, 219-237; John Gerstner, *Repent or Perish* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990); Kendall S. Harmon, “The Case Against Conditionalism: A Response to Edward William Fudge,” in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. Nigel M. De S. Cameron (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 193-224; Paul Helm, *The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1989); Bruce Milne, *The Message of Heaven and Hell: Grace and Destiny* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “Modern Theology: The Disappearance of Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, ed.

Geisler in his book *If God, Why Evil?* summarizes crucial arguments for this position, arguing that “the evidence for hell is biblical, rational, and moral.”³⁶ Robert A. Peterson and Christopher W. Morgan are probably the most outspoken defenders of this position.³⁷ The best recent multi-author book in support of this interpretation is *Hell Under Fire*.³⁸ In spite of the absurdity and horribleness of hell that this view describes, the authors defend the eternal conscious torture of the wicked in hell in contrast to and parallel in time with the eternal life of the righteous in heaven.

B. Conditionalists (or Annihilationists):
The Lake of Fire that Irreversibly
and Totally Consumes

The conditionalist view is built on the biblical conviction that human beings are not inherently immortal, that they do not possess immortal souls. On the contrary, they are mortal because they are created beings (immortality comes as a pure gift from God by staying in relationship with him) and because they are sinners. As sinners they are thus doomed to eternal death unless and until they accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Immortality is conditioned on receiving God’s grace and exercising faith in Jesus (John 3:16; 5:24; Rom 3:21-31; Eph 2:1-10). In this explanation, death is understood as a *sleep* (Ps 7:5; 13:3; Dan 12:2; John 11:11-15; Acts 13:36) or *resting* in the grave (Job 3:13; Isa 57:1-2; Rev 14:13) until the resurrection, whether to eternal life or eternal destruction (Matt 10:28; John 5:28-29). Hell is not a place where wicked souls or spirits go immediately after death but is understood as a “lake of fire” in which, at the end of human history, the wicked will be totally consumed (Mal 4:1; Matt 25:41; 2 Thess 1:7-10; Rev 20:9-10, 14-15). This fire prepared for the devil and the fallen angels will annihilate them together with the wicked at the last or executive judgment. It is final. No one can quench it. It has eternal results, and it will accomplish its purpose—the destruction of evil, sin, death,

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 15-41; Douglas J. Moo, “Paul on Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 91-109; Christopher W. Morgan, “Biblical Theology: Three Pictures of Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, 135-151; idem, “Annihilationism: Will the Unsaved Be Punished Forever?” in *Hell Under Fire*, 195-218; James I. Packer, “Universalism: Will Everyone Ultimately Be Saved?” in *Hell Under Fire*, 169-194; idem, “Evangelical Annihilationism in Review,” *Reformation Review* 6 (1996): 37-51; Peterson, *Hell on Trial*; idem, “Systematic Theology: Three Vantage Points of Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, 153-168; John F. Walvoord, “The Literal View,” in *Four Views on Hell*, ed. William Crockett (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 11-42; and Robert W. Yarbrough, “Jesus on Hell,” in *Hell Under Fire*, 67-90.

³⁶Norman L. Geisler, *If God, Why Evil?*, 96. See esp. pp. 95-114.

³⁷See esp. Peterson, *Hell on Trial*, and “Systematic Theology.”

³⁸Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvests Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

the wicked, rebellious angels, and Satan himself. This first-phase judgment is partially executed at the second coming of Jesus Christ upon the “beast and the false prophet” (Rev 19:20-21) and then ultimately at the end of the millennium upon all the wicked (Rev 20:9-10, 14-15). It is described as “the second death” from which there is no redemption or escape; it is the total eradication of evil.

Even before describing that everything will be made new after evil is eradicated (Rev 21–22), God pronounces his final word on his enemies thus: “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:14-15; repeated in 21:8).

In other words, annihilationism teaches that whoever refuses to be saved by God’s ultimate love and sacrifice will, after God’s final judgment, cease to exist. In this view, life is perceived as a special gift from God. The worst sin of all is the refusal to accept Jesus Christ as the solution to our sin problem and not living according to Christ’s Spirit (John 16:8-11; see also John 1:9; Rom 1:16-20; 2:14-16; 8:1-4, 14). The final destruction of unrepentant, wicked people is not God’s arbitrary decision, but his verdict against their wrong choices and destructive activities, as experienced in type by the antediluvians before the flood (see Gen 6:3, 5-6, 11-13; Matt 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27; Rev 11:18).

This understanding of the final destinies of the righteous and the wicked described positively as the *conditionalist* view (and those who stand for this position are known as *conditionalists*), which emphasizes that immortality can be received only as a gift of God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus. When described negatively, in terms of the final destiny of the wicked, it is called *annihilationism* (and its defenders are known as *annihilationists*), because they teach that sinners who stubbornly refuse to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior will, after the final judgment, be annihilated—completely destroyed—and they will be no more. This divine judgment is irreversible. Both positive and negative aspects are crucial to this position.

The first known advocate of annihilationism was Arnobius of Sicca (d. ca. 330 A.D.), who was followed by others throughout Christian history.³⁹ LeRoy Froom labored hard to demonstrate this in his massive work, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*.⁴⁰ Recently, a plethora of writers has emerged

³⁹Prior defenders of conditionalism/annihilationism include John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, John Biddle, William Whiston, Richard Whately, Edward White, Henry Dobney, Henry Constable, Harold Guillebaud, Basil F. C. Atkinson, and LeRoy Edwin Froom. See Morgan, “Annihilationism,” 197-198; Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes*, 3^d ed., 85-115, 253-359; Hilborn, et al., *The Nature of Hell*, 60-67; Kim Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell in the Teaching of Jesus: Gehena, Hades, the Abyss, the Outer Darkness Where There Is Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), xiii-xv.

⁴⁰LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1965). For a response to Froom’s careful reading of the early fathers, see Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1984), 58-60, 273-279, who questions Froom’s treatment of the church fathers.

who hold this view. A growing number of contemporary and influential evangelical scholars have voiced disagreement with the traditional view of hell. Those especially deserving mention include (with the year of their publications) Harold Guillebaud (1941), Basil F. C. Atkinson (1962), F. F. Bruce (1971), John W. Wenham (1974, 1991), Edward W. Fudge (1976, 1982, 2011), Stephen H. Travis (1976, 1980, 1982, 1986), Michael Green (1982), Clark Pinnock (1987, 1990, 1992, 2008), David L. Edwards (1988), John R. W. Stott (1988, 1994), Phillip E. Hughes (1989), Joel B. Green (1990, 2004, 2005, 2008), Robert Brow (1994), Nigel Wright (1996), E. Earle Ellis (1997), Richard Bauckham (1998; 2004), David Powys (2000), Hilborn, et al., *The Nature of Hell* (2000, combining the traditionalist and conditionalist views in order to present a united front against universalism), I. Howard Marshall (2003), F. LaGard Smith (2003), Ben Witherington III (2011), and John Zens (2011).⁴¹

⁴¹Basil F. C. Atkinson, *Life and Immortality: An Examination of the Nature and Meaning of Life and Death as They Are Revealed in the Scriptures* (Taunton, UK: Phoenix Press, [1962]); Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); idem, "Judgment in the Book of Revelation," *Ex Auditu* 20 (2004): 1-24; idem, "Hell," n.d. accessed Sept. 5, 2014, <http://richardbauckham.co.uk/uploads/Accessible/Hell.pdf>; F. F. Bruce, "Paul on Immortality," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971): 457-472; David L. Edwards and John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 312-320; E. Earle Ellis, "New Testament Teaching on Hell," in *Eschatology in Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 199-205; Edward W. Fudge, "Putting Hell in Its Place," *Christianity Today* (August 6, 1976): 14-17; idem, *The Fire that Consumes*, 3d ed., the first edition was published in 1982 (*The Fire that Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment* [Houston, TX: Providential Press, 1982]); idem, "The Final End of the Wicked," *JETS* 27 (September 1984): 325-334; idem, "'The Plain Meaning': A Review Essay," *Henceforth* 14 (1985): 18-31; Joel B. Green, *Evangelism through the Local Church: A Comprehensive Guide to All Aspects of Evangelism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990; repr., Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992); idem, ed., *What about the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004); idem, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2008), 177-180; idem, ed., *In Search of the Soul: Perspectives on the Mind-Body Problem—Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, 2d ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005); Michael Green, *The Day Death Died: Did Jesus Christ Really Rise from the Dead?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982); Harold Guillebaud, *The Righteous Judge: A Study of the Biblical Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment* (Taunton, UK: Phoenix Press, [1941]); Hilborn, et al., *The Nature of Hell*; Phillip E. Hughes, *The True Image: The Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989); I. Howard Marshall, "The New Testament Does Not Teach Universal Salvation," in *Universal Salvation?: The Current Debate*, ed. Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 55-76; Clark H. Pinnock, "Fire, Then Nothing," *Christianity Today* (March 20, 1987): 40-41; idem, "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent," 243-260; idem, *A Wideness*

Roger Olson argues that annihilationism is “simply a reinterpretation of hell” within the acceptable “mosaic of Christian belief” and laments over “its harsh condemnation by a few fundamentalists” and proposes that it “should not deter Christians from accepting one another as equally believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁴² Gregory Boyd affirms: “The joy of heaven is only conceivable if the damned have been annihilated and are remembered no more. When all the biblical evidence is viewed together, it must be admitted that the case for annihilationism is quite compelling.”⁴³

The intense theological debate between traditionalists and conditionalists continues unabated. The first Rethinking Hell conference was held in Houston, Texas, July 11-12, 2014. As Clark Pinnock graphically explains: “How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the Gospel itself.”⁴⁴

in God's Mercy; idem, “The Conditional View,” 135-178; idem, “Annihilationism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 462-475; Clark H. Pinnock and Robert C. Brow, *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); Powys, *Hell*; F. LaGard Smith, “The Tormenting Conundrum of Hell,” in *AfterLife: A Glimpse of Eternity Beyond Death's Door* (Nashville, TN: Cotswold, 2003), 165-197; John R. S. Stott, “The Logic of Hell: A Brief Rejoinder,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18 (January 1994): 33-34; Travis, *The Jesus Hope*; idem, *Christian Hope and the Future*; idem, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 196-199; idem, “The Problem of Judgment,” *Themelios* 11 (January 1986): 52-61; idem, *Christ and the Judgment of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in the New Testament*, 2d ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 1st ed. pub. 1986; Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, 27-41, reprinted as *The Enigma of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985); idem, “The Case for Conditional Immortality,” in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell: Papers Presented at the Fourth Edinburgh Conference on Christian Dogmatics, 1991*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 161-191; Ben Witherington III, “And Now—The Case for Permanent Residence in Hell,” accessed Sept. 5, 2014, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2011/03/19/and-now-the-case-for-permanent-residence-in-hell/>; Nigel Wright, *The Radical Evangelical: Seeking a Place to Stand* (London: SPCK, 1996); and John Zens, *Christ Minimized? A Response to Rob Bell's Love Wins* (Omaha, NE: Ekklesia, 2011). See also Greg Boyd, “The Case for Annihilationism,” accessed Sept. 5, 2014, <http://reknew.org/2008/01/the-case-for-annihilationism>, who admits: “While I am not completely convinced of this position, I think it is worthy of serious consideration” (par. 1).

⁴²Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity & Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 329.

⁴³Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 336.

⁴⁴Pinnock, “The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent,” 246-247.

Michael Green uncompromisingly writes: “What sort of God would be he who could rejoice eternally in heaven with the saved, while downstairs the cries of the lost make an agonizing cacophony? Such a God is not the person revealed in Scripture as utterly just and utterly loving.”⁴⁵ Gregory MacDonald asserts that such a God would be a “cosmic torturer.”⁴⁶ John Wenham emphasizes: “I cannot see that endless punishment is either loving or just. . . . It is a doctrine which I do not know how to preach without negating the loveliness and glory of God.”⁴⁷ Stephen Travis concurs that endless torture in hell is “incompatible with the love of God in Christ.”⁴⁸

C. Restorationists (or Universalists):
Hell Fire that Ultimately Purifies
and Saves Everyone

Restorationists claim that all people will ultimately be saved, including the wicked, because hell fire will purify them; that is, while in it, the wicked will grow in their understanding of God’s unselfish love for them, accept it, and so at the end be restored and receive eternal life. This understanding is built on the recognition that after death the immortal soul of the wicked cannot go immediately to heaven but will suffer in the fire of God’s judgment. This fire will gradually cleanse them and then, at some future time (the precise moment will depend on the individual’s response to this purification process), everyone will finally be saved. Those who defend this position speak about God’s last judgment in terms of God’s restorative (rather than retributive) justice, which is understood as another side of God’s love.

It needs to be stressed, however, that there are various opinions regarding restorationism, depending on one’s understanding of the nature of God, the authority of Scripture, the role of retributive judgment, predestination, and free will.⁴⁹ Gregory MacDonald argues for three different groups of universalists.⁵⁰ Proponents of universalism stress the biblical hope that God’s love will save us all. Richard Bauckham affirms: “Only the belief that all men will ultimately be saved is common to all universalists”⁵¹ They claim that at the end all people will be saved, even though some adherents allow for the final destruction of those who resist God’s loving work for them and, after

⁴⁵Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church*, 69, 72.

⁴⁶Gregory MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist*, 2d ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 136.

⁴⁷Wenham, “The Case for Conditional Immortality,” 185-187.

⁴⁸Travis, *Christian Hope*, 135.

⁴⁹Trever Hart, “Universalism: Two Distinct Types,” in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*; Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 3d ed., 279-286.

⁵⁰MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist*, 134-135.

⁵¹Richard Bauckham, “Universalism: A Historical Survey,” *Themelios* 4, no. 2 (January 1979): 49.

their suffering in hell, will end up in the lake of fire.⁵² Generally speaking in this universalistic interpretation the devil and the fallen angels will also be ultimately saved. This redemptive judgment takes some time and will be different for each individual soul. Classical universalism affirms that the *hell* texts do not speak about eternal condemnation or damnation but underscores that hell's existence is only temporary, that after a certain period of time hell ceases to exist and everyone is saved.

Advocates of universalism begin to appear in the third century A.D. Hell as the place where the fire will actually purify is introduced by Clement of Alexandria and then further refined by Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, who stress that the love of God is a process that continues after death and that the decisions of people in this life are not final. This position is defended by many contemporary universalists. The *soul* ultimately chooses its own fate in heaven after undergoing this fiery purification process. Recently, there has been a revival of universalism with Rob Bell's *Love Wins*,⁵³ provoking more discussion on this topic with books written in reaction to his position.⁵⁴ The conviction that, after death, God gives another chance for people to be saved is very appealing and has gained great popularity lately.⁵⁵ Furthermore, some prominent theologians like Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Hans Küng, and Karl Rahner have been sympathetic toward universalism.⁵⁶

⁵²See Baker, *Razing Hell*, 106-124. Her view is unique, allowing for the possibility that not all people will be saved. Thus she seeks to combine annihilationism and universalism.

⁵³Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York: HarperOne, 2011). See also Rob Bell, *The Love Wins Companion: A Study Guide for Those Who Want to Go Deeper*, ed. David Vanderveen (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

⁵⁴See, for example, Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle, *Erasing Hell: What God Said About Eternity, and the Things We Made Up* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2011); Kevin DeYoung's blog, "God is Still Holy and What you Learned in Sunday School is Still True: A Review of 'Love Wins,'" accessed Sept. 5, 2014, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2011/03/14/rob-bell-love-wins-review/>; Mark Galli, *God Wins: Heaven, Hell, and Why the Good News Is Better than Love Wins* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011); Larry Dixon, "Farewell, Rob Bell": *A Biblical Response to Love Wins* (Columbia, SC: Theomedian Resources, 2011); James K. Wellman, Jr., *Rob Bell and a New American Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2012); Zens, *Christ Minimized?*

⁵⁵The principal evangelical defenders of this view are Jan Bonda (1998), Thomas Talbott (1999), Randy Klassen (2001), Gregory MacDonald (2006), Sharon Baker (2010), and Rob Bell (2011); MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist* (Gregory MacDonald is a pseudonym of Robin Parry); idem, ed. *All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011); Thomas Talbott, *The Inescapable Love of God* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal, 1999).

⁵⁶For details, see MacDonald, ed., *All Shall Be Well*, 23-24; Packer, "Universalism," 172-173. John MacQuarrie asserts: "A doctrine of conditional immortality is at least

Rob Bell summarizes:

And so a universal hugfest where everybody eventually ends up around the heavenly campfire singing “Kumbaya,” with Jesus playing guitar, sounds a lot like fantasy to some people. . . . There must be some kind of “second chance” for those who don’t believe in Jesus in this lifetime. . . . “Who could doubt God’s ability to do that?” . . . And then there are others who ask if you get another chance after you die, why limit that chance to a one-off immediately after death? And so they expand the possibilities, trusting that there will be endless opportunities in an endless amount of time for people to say yes to God. As long as it takes, in other words. At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God’s presence.⁵⁷

R. C. Sproul sharply criticizes universalism: “A prevailing notion is that all we have to do to enter the kingdom of God is to die. God is viewed as so ‘loving’ that he really doesn’t care too much if we don’t keep his law. The law is there to guide us, but if we stumble and fall, our celestial grandfather will merely wink and say, ‘Boys will be boys.’”⁵⁸

The universalist view stands in total opposition to both the traditional view of eternal torment in hell and the conditionalist position stressing that immortality is received as a gift on the basis of faith in Christ Jesus.

*Evaluation of the Three Approaches:
Issues and Brief Answers*

The scope of this article allows only for a summary evaluation (without going into a detailed argumentation) and is written from the annihilationism point of view. It is significant to recognize that there is practically no middle road among these three views; they are mutually exclusive. There is no way to harmonize or reconcile them.

The understanding of biblical truth is often difficult to discern because of long traditions of interpretation and our emotions attached to them. It is useful to be reminded that people are devoted to interpretations that are dear to them. God gives His revelation in order for believers to discern the truth that needs to be accepted and lived by. Our reason, common sense, and feelings should not dictate our understanding of biblical truth, but neither should they be neglected for they can be helpful for checking to make sure our interpretation is in harmony with God’s revealed Word.

The unending torture or punishment in hell is not consistent with the biblical understanding of God’s love, His justice, and His final victory over evil! It is impossible to believe in the existence of eternal hell and at the same

preferable to the barbarous doctrine of an eternal hell. . . . But perhaps the Christian hope can carry us further even than a belief in conditional immortality. . . . We prefer a doctrine of ‘universalism’ to one of ‘conditional immortality.’” (*Principles of Christian Theology*, 2d ed. [New York: Scribner’s, 1977], 361).

⁵⁷Bell, *Love Wins*, 105-107.

⁵⁸Sproul, *Reason to Believe*, 99-100.

time speak about the restoration of the universe to its original state where there will be no devil, evil, sin, suffering, and death.

Christians who believe in the immortality of the soul but do not hold to the eternal conscious torture in hell are in a maze and stand at a dead-end street. Only one option remains for them, namely universalism, a belief that God will work after death with the “souls of the wicked” and in the end all will be saved, thus the torture and suffering will one day end.

On the one hand, universalism is rightly criticized by traditionalist and annihilationists for the absence of God’s retributive judgment and for a second chance for conversion and change after death.⁵⁹ On the other hand, universalists join annihilationists/conditionalists against traditionalists in rejecting the awfulness of eternal conscious punishment in hell. However, traditionalists and annihilationists passionately criticize each other’s views on different grounds.

If universalism or traditional views are correct, then Satan’s lie uttered in the Garden of Eden would be true: “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:5), and not God’s declaration: “. . . when you eat from it you will surely die” (Gen 2:17). Adam and Eve did not die immediately after eating from the forbidden fruit because God’s grace was proleptically applied to them in anticipation of Christ’s victory on the cross (Gen 3:15, 21; Rev 13:8; see also Eph 1:3-4; 1 Pet 1:20). When they died, they died in view of the Messiah who will come as their Savior, and bring victory over Satan through His death (Gen 3:15, 21; 4:1; cf. John 5:28-29; 12:31-32) and salvation for those who believe (John 3:16; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7). However, those who do not accept God’s amazing grace manifested fully in Christ remain under God’s wrath and will perish (John 3:36; 2 Thess 2:8-9; Rev 20:14-15). Paul rightly affirms: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23). Our choices ultimately have eternal consequences.

Central and Critical Issue: Immortality of the Soul

Both, the traditional as well as universal views stand or fall on the premise that each individual has an immortal soul as an integral part of his or her existence.⁶⁰ However, if this presupposition regarding the immortal soul

⁵⁹See, for example, Packer, “Universalism,” 169-194; G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ (Studies in Dogmatics)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 387-423.

⁶⁰Pascal underlines: “The immortality of the soul is something of such vital importance to us, affecting us so deeply, that one must have lost all feelings not to care about knowing the facts of the matter. All our actions and thoughts must follow such different paths according to whether there is hope of eternal blessings or not, that the only possible way of acting with sense and judgment is to decide our course in light of this point, which ought to be our ultimate objective” (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* [London: Penguin, 1966], 156). Current most popular books on the immortality of the soul are Eben Alexander, MD, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012) and Todd Burpo, with Lynn Vincent, *Heaven Is for Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* (Nashville, TN: Thomas

does not hold, both interpretations collapse. On the other hand, if humans have an immortal soul which can live independently of one's body, then the annihilationist's view is automatically ruled out. Pinnock correctly discerns and claims: "Why would anybody have turned the notion of destruction into everlasting life in hell, creating this monstrous problem? We attribute it to the influence on theology of the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul. With that view entering the picture, the shift is logical and inevitable. If souls are immortal and hell exists, it follows that the wicked will have to suffer consciously forever in it. If the soul is naturally immortal, it has to spend eternity somewhere."⁶¹

Recent studies in theological anthropology present new excellent views on the human being and the notion of soul that impact our understanding of our being and immortality. At least three such in-depth research studies can be commended: the scholarly work of David P. Gushee, Nancy Murphy, and Joel B. Green. Gushee declares: "Unlike the Greek notion that the body decays while the self floats off to heaven, a biblical (especially a Jewish) understanding seems to envision no such separable existence between body and soul or spirit. When we die, all of us dies."⁶² Murphy describes the non-reductive physicalism of anthropology that seriously accepts biblical monism in contrast to dualism. She wholeheartedly embraces physical and relational functions of our existence and also stresses human moral responsibility. Instead of a soul, she uses the notion of self: "The term *self* is used in a variety of ways in psychology and philosophy. What is at issue here is not the question of what it means to be a self. Rather the issue is that of having a self-concept."⁶³ She claims that humans are physical and that "it is the brain that does the work once attributed to the mind or soul."⁶⁴

The expression *immortal soul* and the teaching that humans are born immortal or with immortal souls or spirits are not found in the Bible. Humans or souls are not inherently immortal. Human immortality is always derived from God: "Who [God] alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen" (1 Tim 6:16 NIV). Eternal life is God's gift to believers only (John 3:16; 10:27-28; 17:3; Rom 2:7; 6:22-23; Gal 6:8). Man has no conscious existence apart from the body, and after he dies his consciousness ceases to operate. Death is a sleep or rest (Psalm 13:3; John 11:11-15; Acts 13:36; Rev 14:13). Immortality is conditional and depends on our positive response to

Nelson, 2010). The latter book was made into a movie in 2014.

⁶¹Pinnock and Brow, *Unbounded Love*, 92.

⁶²David P. Gushee, *Only Human: Christian Reflections on the Journey Toward Wholeness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 49.

⁶³Nancey Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism," in *In Search of the Soul: Perspectives on the Mind-Body Problem. Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 124.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 132.

God's goodness, on the acceptance of the gospel. This immortality is God's gift given to believers at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor 15:51-55; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

Joel Green, using his background in neuroscience and biblical studies, states that we need a better understanding of biblical anthropology. He argues for the biblical wholistic view of humankind. He is for monism, is against Greek dualism, and stresses that humans are a unit and do not possess an ontologically distinct soul; therefore he rightly denies that after physical death the soul lives in an "intermediate state."⁶⁵ He ends his study with the hope of resurrection⁶⁶ and powerfully declares: "Nothing in the created human being is intrinsically immortal. Resurrection and embodied afterlife are God's doing, divine gift."⁶⁷ F. F. Bruce powerfully declares:

In biblical usage immortality belongs inherently to God alone; otherwise it belongs only to those to whom God gives it. Again, where human beings are concerned, immortality in the Bible is predicated of the body, not of the soul.

In our western culture, thought and language about immortality have been largely determined by Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But any attempt to combine Plato's doctrine with the teaching of the Bible can lead only to confusion. For Plato did not mean by immortality what the biblical writers mean by it, and what Plato meant by the soul is not what the biblical writers mean by the soul.

For the Christian, the hope of immortality is bound up with the resurrection of Christ.⁶⁸

Why do many Christians believe in a conscious eternal torture? Because eternal punishment in hell goes hand to hand with the belief in the immortality of the soul. From the historical perspective, there was (1) first invented the teaching about the immortal soul, and then (2) eternal torment in hell because the soul cannot die. This kind of thinking about the soul is well demonstrated by Billy Graham's statement:

How important is your soul? Jesus said our souls are more valuable than all the rest of the world put together. One reason is because our souls will never die. Your body will die, but your soul (or spirit) will live forever. Your soul is so valuable that Christ was willing to give His life to redeem it (Matt 16:26). . . . If we realize we were created in God's image and have a God-given soul, we won't live like animals. Our souls make us uniquely human,

⁶⁵Joel Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, 177-180. See idem, *In Search of the Soul*. Also see Gushee, *Only Human*, contra John W. Cooper who argues for the existence of an intermediate state for the human soul on the basis of his holistic dualism (*Body, Soul, Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989]).

⁶⁶Joel Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Body*, 140-180.

⁶⁷Ibid., 175.

⁶⁸Thus F. F. Bruce in the "Foreword" for the book of George Wisbrock, *Death and the Soul* (Oakbrook, IL: ZOE-Life Books, 1990), i.

and they give dignity and value to every human life. . . . Most of all, our souls are the part of us that can experience God and have fellowship with Him. Because we have souls, we have the capacity to know God and be His friends forever. We were equipped by our Creator not only to live on this earth, but also to live in touch with heaven. This was the Great Design of the Great Designer.⁶⁹

Mark Galli writes: “Regardless of its location, heaven seems to be the place where the faithful go immediately after they die.”⁷⁰ John W. Cooper explains that the soul of the dead people (*soul* is called by him a *person*) departs from them and dwells in Sheol in a kind of lethargic mode of existence. Such “persons are not merely distinguishable from their earthly bodies, they are separable from them and can continue to exist without them.”⁷¹ Cooper states:

The persons who lived in the world—Jacob, Samuel, Job—exist after death in some ghostly (quasi-bodily) state even though their flesh is dust, their bones are buried, and they may not be actively “relational.” By implication, self-identical persons must be distinguished from their earthly bodies and able to exist without them, unnatural as this may be. Contra Green, then, “some essential part of the human being” does survive death.⁷²

Belief in the immortality of the soul is taken from Greek philosophy. Pythagoras’s religious teachings (a younger contemporary of Daniel) were based on the teaching of metempsychosis, which claims that the soul never dies and is destined to a cycle of rebirths until it is able to free itself from the cycle through the purity of its life. He believed in transmigration, or the reincarnation of the soul again and again into the bodies of humans, animals, or vegetables until it became immortal. His ideas of reincarnation were influenced by ancient Greek religion. Plato (roughly speaking, a contemporary of the last Old Testament prophet Malachi) enhanced this Hellenistic teaching and made a belief about the human immortal soul so prevailing that it became a popular view. During the intertestamental period, this thought about the eternal torture (Jdt 16:17) and praying for the dead (2 Macc 12:39-45) began penetrating Judaism.⁷³ Josephus Flavius mentions that Pharisees believed in the immortality of the soul.⁷⁴

⁶⁹Billy Graham, *The Journey: How to Live by Faith in an Uncertain World* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2006), 25-26.

⁷⁰Galli, *God Wins*, 79.

⁷¹Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 77.

⁷²John W. Cooper, “Exaggerated Rumors of Dualism’s Demise: A Review Essay on Body, Soul, and Human Life,” *Philosophia Christi* 11, no. 2 (2009): 458.

⁷³But see Tobit 14:6-8; Sirach 7:17; 19:2-3; 21:9; 36:7-10; Baruch 4:32-35; 1 Maccabees 2:62-64; 2 Maccabees 7:9, 14. For details, see Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 3d ed., 85-97; Jacques B. Doukhan, “Le judaïsme et l’immortalité de l’âme” (Maîtrise en Hébreu thesis, University of Strasbourg, 1967).

⁷⁴Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.14; *Antiquities* 18.1.2-3.

Tertullian (ca. 155-222), Christian apologist, was one of the first among Christians⁷⁵ who claimed that humans have an immortal soul: “I may use, therefore, the opinion of Plato, when he declares, ‘Every soul is immortal.’”⁷⁶ Oscar Cullmann challenges Tertullian’s view and stands in opposition to it. He wrote a very influential book in which he argues that the idea of immortality is of Greek origin.⁷⁷ Brevard Childs explains: “It has long been noticed that according to the Old Testament man does not have a soul, but *is* a soul (Gen 2:7). That is to say, he is a complete entity and not a composite of parts from body, soul and spirit.”⁷⁸

Some scholars try to defend life after death by simple appeal to common sense because there is no biblical statement in regard to it. For example, Stewart Goetz states: “Scripture as a whole does not teach that the soul exists. Scripture simply presupposes the existence of the soul because its existence is affirmed by the common sense of ordinary people.”⁷⁹

The Westminster Confession states: “After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls.”⁸⁰ It directly contradicts Gen 2:7: “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being [*nefesh chayab*]” (NIV). The basis of biblical anthropology is that we are a soul, we do not have a soul. Hans Wolff asks: “What does *nepheš* [soul] mean here [in Gen 2:7]? Certainly not soul [in the traditional dualistic sense]. *Nepheš* was designed to be seen together with the whole form of man, and especially with his breath; moreover man does not

⁷⁵Athenagoras of Athens (ca. 133-190 A.D.), see especially chaps. 12-15 in his *On the Resurrection of the Dead*; and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 A.D.), *Recognitions* 5:28; idem, *Miscellanies* 5:14.

⁷⁶Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, in chap. 3. Quoted in Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 3rd ed., 30.

⁷⁷Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1958).

⁷⁸Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 199. Death causes a reversal of God’s creation activity. Our identity is in His hands. Ecclesiastes says it in a poetic language: “Remember him [the Creator]—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl 12:1, 6-7 NIV). “Spirit” here means “character” (Ps 32:2), our identity. We are not forgotten by God, our names are in the book of life (Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 20:15; 21:27), and He will resurrect us to a new full life.

⁷⁹Stewart Goetz, “A Substance Dualist Response,” in *In Search of the Soul: Perspectives on the Mind-Body Problem—Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 139.

⁸⁰The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, “Confession of Faith of Creation,” 4.2, accessed Sept. 14, 2014, http://www.opc.org/wcf.html#Chapter_04.

have nephesh, he *is nephesh*, he lives as nephesh.”⁸¹ God created us as a vibrant animated body but not as an incarnate soul.

The soul as a human being is mortal.⁸² Ezekiel 18:4 states that a soul, i.e., person, who does not live according to God’s will, will perish: “The soul who sins will die” (NAS). It means that a soul (human being) can sin and die. Jesus confirms it: “Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). Note that Jesus speaks about the whole person (“soul and body”) being destroyed in hell (*gehenna*). The soul does not exist without the body and does not survive the death of the body. Only God is able to kill the soul. Soul here means the life of a person (it does not refer to an *immortal soul*), life in his total destiny; meanwhile body represents only a physical temporary existence. Claude Tresmontant correctly asserts: “By applying to the Hebrew *nephesh* [soul] the characteristics of the Platonic *psyche* [soul], . . . we let the real meaning of *nephesh* escape us and furthermore, we are left with innumerable pseudo-problems.”⁸³

George Wisbrock aptly comments on the proclamation of Jesus to Mary: “That Jesus did not go up into a Heavenly Paradise to sit at God’s right side on the day He died may also be demonstrated by another very simple to understand act. Shortly after God brought Him up out of His grave *on the third day after His death and burial*, He said to Mary Magdalene, ‘Do not touch Me, for I have NOT YET gone up to My Father.’”⁸⁴ The same author also insists that in Jesus’s declaration on the cross to the repentant criminal, which is mistakenly taken as a proof of an immortal soul, the comma should be inserted after the word *today* and that this time expression should be put at the end of the sentence: “For rather than tell the criminal he would be with Him in Paradise on the very day they both died, Jesus instead said, ‘Truly **I SAY** to you **TODAY**, You shall be with Me in Paradise’ (Luke 23:43). In full agreement with the repentant criminals [criminal’s] request, it will happen: ‘**When You come in Your Kingdom**’ (Luke 23:42).”⁸⁵

According to 1 Samuel 28, the rebellious king Saul went to the witch of Endor because God did not communicate with him anymore. Who then spoke to Saul? The careful analysis of this incident demonstrates that Saul did not encounter the soul or spirit of the dead Samuel who at that time was in the grave but experienced the performance of an evil spirit who played the part of the prophet Samuel in order to completely discourage the king.⁸⁶

⁸¹Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 10.

⁸²This is contrary to the common understanding of immortality in relation to the human soul that survives death and continues its endless conscious existence.

⁸³Claude Tresmontant, *A Study in Hebrew Thought*, trans. Michael Francis Gibson (New York: Desclee, 1960), 94.

⁸⁴George Wisbrock, *Death and the Soul* (Oakbrook, IL: ZOE-Life Books, 1990), 331 (emphasis his).

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 332 (emphasis his).

⁸⁶For the important insight, see Eriks Galenieks, *The Nature, Function, and Purpose*

Several pertinent studies of this story lead to this conclusion (see, especially, the outstanding studies of Grenville Kent).⁸⁷ Satan is a master of disguise and presented himself in the appearance of Samuel, because he can even come as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). The next day, lacking God's presence in his life, lost in despair, Saul commits suicide (1 Sam 31:1-6). Because God did not answer Saul, he in his troubling situation went to a forbidden source, a spiritualistic encounter. The narrator of 1 Chronicles clearly states that "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse" (1 Chr 10:13-14 NIV).

Jesus' parable about the Rich Man and Lazarus as recorded in Luke 16:19-31 does not prove that humans have immortal souls. Christ's story seeks to illustrate that we need to love and obey God presently, because after death there is no second chance to learn how to serve God:

"And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us." He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (NIV).

The penetrating study of Kim Papaioannou brings a correct perspective to this parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.⁸⁸

Traditional View: Key Points

The issues between traditionalist and conditionalists mainly evolve around five areas: (1) linguistic studies on the meaning of words like Sheol, *repha'im*, maggots, fire, eternal, perish, Gehenna, Hades, or Tartarus; (2) exegetical arguments related to several texts (for example, Isa 66:24; Dan 12:2; Rev 14:9-11) and passages (like Matt 25:31-47 or Luke 16:19-31); (3) literary argument (nature of God's judgment; how to interpret parables and the symbolic book of Revelation); (4) moral argument regarding the punishment and torture

of the Term Sheol in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 6 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2005), 290-298.

⁸⁷Grenville J. R. Kent, *Say It Again, Sam: A Literary and Filmic Study of Narrative Repetition in 1 Samuel 28* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011); idem, "'Call Up Samuel': Who Appeared to the Witch at En-Dor? (1 Samuel 28:3-25)," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 52, no. 2 (Autumn 2014): 141-160.

⁸⁸Kim Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell*. See also John A. Szukalski, *Tormented in Hades: The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and Other Lucan Parables for Persuading the Rich to Repentance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

which is closely related to the image of God; (5) and theological argument regarding the meaning of the justice of God and His final judgment. In this evaluation we deal only with a few crucial terms and concepts (thus adding to those arguments already explained above).

The following principles are important in interpreting Scripture. One needs to proceed: (1) from clear texts to unclear, from known to unknown; (2) from the metanarrative to the sub-stories; and (3) from general to particular. For example, see terms or phrases related to the divinity of Jesus which do not at the first glimpse affirm this biblical truth, like *firstborn, unique Son, Son-Father* relationship, “You are my son, today I have begotten you.” We need always to begin with the plain meaning of the text, like destroy, death, punish, etc., and then to explain symbolic language, metaphors, figures of speech, or idiomatic and poetic expressions.

The same is true for the texts referring to the so-called eternal punishment in hell. First, the term *hell* does not appear in the Hebrew Bible even though some English Bible translations render the word *Sheol* as *hell* (see KJV translation in Deut 32:22; 2 Sam 22:6; Isa 5:14; 14:9; 28:15, 18; and another 25 times). However, this reading is a classic example of eisegesis, i.e., putting one’s own ideas into the biblical text, because the term Sheol does not point to hell.

1. *Sheol*

Sheol is found 66 times in Old Testament texts. Both the wicked and the righteous descend to *Sheol* (Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Num 16:30, 33; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9; Job 21:13; Ps 49:17; 89:49; Eccl 9:10; Isa 14:9, 11, 15; 38:10; Ezek 31:15-17). In addition, the Lord redeems the faithful from *Sheol* (Hos 13:14), no one can hide before God in Sheol (Ps 139:8; Amos 9:2), and there is no work or other activity in *Sheol* (Eccl 9:10). Nowhere in the Bible is *Sheol* described as the shadowy underworld where the dead live or where human souls/spirits continue their existence.

The term *Sheol* is a designation for the grave, the place of the dead (see, for example, the consistency of the NIV translation where in the majority of cases the word *Sheol* is translated as *grave* [57 times], but also as *death* [5 times], *realm of death* [once], *deepest depths* [once], *gates of death* [once], and *depth* [once]).⁸⁹ Eriks Galenicks unequivocally states in his dissertation that the word *Sheol* is synonymous with the grave and concludes: “The current exegetical investigation clearly demonstrates that the term Sheol not only is synonymous with the grave in its general sense, but also has nothing to do with the so-called underworld, where the spirit or souls of the dead would continue their miserable existence in a disembodied state.”⁹⁰ He analyses his findings in the following way:

⁸⁹See the translation summary of the term *Sheol* in Galenicks, *The Nature, Function, and Purpose*, 4-6.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 612.

The summary of the current exegesis leads to the basic conclusion that the term Sheol refers to the place of the dead, which by its nature, function, and purpose entirely harmonizes with the anthropological, theological, and eschatological paradigm of the Hebrew Scripture. At the same time, the Hebrew Scripture provides no support for the idea that the term Sheol is somehow associated with one's after-death existence in the so-called underworld.

In spite of the fact that there is slight but extremely important distinction between an individual grave and Sheol, the common noun "grave" functions as the miniature model or prototype for the term Sheol, which, in turn, as the proper noun points to the general place of the dead, regardless of its location, form, type, or content, and that is why it is best to associate it with the grave.⁹¹

2. *Repha'im*

Another term of the Hebrew Scripture which is misapplied is the word *repha'im*. Michael Fox claims that *repha'im* are *ghosts* or *shades* which "are the spirits of the dead."⁹² Roland Murphy states that these *shades* should be "identified with the inhabitants of Sheol who have no real 'life,' but only a shadowy existence."⁹³ Does *repha'im* mean the shadowy existence of the human spirit? This term actually refers to: (1) people/nation—the *Rephaim* (Gen 14:5; Deut 2:11; 2:20); (2) the land of *Rephaim* or the Valley of *Rephaim* (Deut 2:20; 3:13; Josh 15:8; 18:16; 2 Sam 5:18, 22; 23:13; 1 Chr 11:15; 14:9; Isa 17:5); and (3) the dead and not to dead spirits. This term is a synonym for the dead (Job 26:5; Ps 88:10; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Isa 14:9; 26:14, 19).

William White plainly explains: "It is clear that this ancient quasi-mythological term was used merely to satisfy the requirements of Hebrew poetic structure and in no way indicates any specific connotation to the root *repa'im* other than as a synonym for 'the dead' and 'the place of the dead.'"⁹⁴ Green concludes his study on the *rephaim* in definite words: "*Rephaim* refers to those whose abode is Sheol, the place of the dead. Found in the OT only

⁹¹Ibid., 621. For further nuances of the term *grave*, see in his dissertation pp. 600-602, 612-615. For the discussion on the New Testament terms of Hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus, see especially, Bradley Jersak, *Her Gates Will Never Be Shut: Hope, Hell, and the New Jerusalem* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 13-67, 185-210; Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes*, 3d ed., 44-50, 116-154, 223-233.

⁹²Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 122.

⁹³Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 17.

⁹⁴William White, "*repa'im*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 2:858.

in poetic texts, the ‘shades’ are portrayed through simple parallelism as ‘the dead.’ . . . The *rephaim* are simply the human dead whose place is the grave.”⁹⁵

Biblical texts speak for themselves: “Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you?” (Ps 88:10 ESV). “For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead:” (Prov 2:18 NKJV). “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead [*repha'im*]” (Isa 26:19 ESV).

3. *Worms (Maggots) Will Not Die*

How to understand the biblical phrase: “The worms [Heb. *tola'im*] that eat them [the wicked dead] will not die” (Isa 66:24 NIV)? In the context of Isaiah 65–66, the wicked are those who do not serve the Lord and rebelled against Him (Isa 66:3b), and finally they are “slain by the Lord” (Isa 66:16). Gary V. Smith comments on the last verse of the book of Isaiah: “The final verse contrasts the wonderful destiny of God’s servants with the terrible destiny of those sinners who failed to trust God. . . . The sword will devour those who refuse to love God.”⁹⁶ First, the description is physical. These wicked are seen, and they have physical bodies. These maggots are not preying on the souls or immaterial spirits of the deceased! Second, nowhere is presupposed that these worms are endowed with immortality. They do not receive a gift of eternal life. No divine miracle is performed on them. Third, this picture of maggots that eat the dead bodies of the wicked is a metaphor of the same sort as the picture of the fire that will not be quenched. The imagery is transparent: these dead persons have no chance to be alive again. The judgment on these wicked is final, and it means that God’s judgment of destruction will not be stopped until complete consummation has been accomplished. There is no escape from this ultimate death. No one can rescue the wicked from this horrible end. No reverse is possible. Judgment is ultimate and destruction is complete. It will not be interrupted until the bodies perish; thus, the final destiny of the wicked is irrevocable and permanent.

4. “*Their fire shall not be quenched*” (Isaiah 66:24)

“And they shall go out and look on **the dead bodies** of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall **not be quenched**, and they shall be an **abhorrence** to all flesh” (Isa 66:24 ESV [emphasis mine]; see Isa 66:15, 17). To *quench* a fire is to put it out, to prevent it from burning up or stop it before it accomplishes its task. It means it has not been extinguished but has done what fire naturally does: total destruction. Edward Fudge convincingly states: “Throughout the Bible, from the first appearance of the phrase until its last, ‘unquenchable fire’ always denotes

⁹⁵Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, 155.

⁹⁶Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, The New American Commentary, vol. 15b (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2009), 752.

fire that is not capable of being *extinguished*, and that is therefore *irresistible*.⁹⁷ Ezekiel states: Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will kindle a **fire** in you, and **it shall devour** every green tree in you and every dry tree. The blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from south to north shall be scorched by it. All flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it; it shall not be quenched” (Ezek 20:47-48 ESV [emphasis mine]; see Isa 34:10; Jer 7:20). Daniel I. Block writes: “When the doctrine of hell develops in the New Testament, it borrows much of its imagery from the Old Testament, particularly the images of perpetual suffering through maggots and unquenchable fire in Isa 66:24.”⁹⁸ I agree that the New Testament borrows imagery from the Old Testament, but it is always consistently in the sense of final destruction. The prophet Isaiah explains the final and total destruction of Edom, and he describes it with the familiar terms that the fire that will consume Edom will burn “night and day” and “will not be quenched,” and that “its smoke will rise forever,” and thus turn into “burning sulfur” (Isa 34:9-10 NIV). This imagery is plainly later taken and applied in Rev 14:10-11 and 20:10 in passages which are full of symbolism. It points to God’s irreversible and total destruction.

The Old Testament explicitly states what will happen to the wicked when they are condemned to death by fire or other means of destruction. For example, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24-28), the Flood narrative (Gen 6:11-13; chaps. 7-8); Isa 66:24; Matt 13:30, 40; Matt 25:31-47; John 15:6; John 3:16, 36; 2 Thess 1:4-10. See also passages which mention and use different imagery for total and unstoppable desolation (Gen 19:24-28; Deut 29:23; Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40; Lam 4:6; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Luke 17:28-32; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7).

Matthew 25:41, 46 does not teach eternal torment at all, despite repeated claims of the traditionalist’s interpretation. The nature of the *eternal punishment* is not described, and it is set in contrast to eternal life, as an opposite destiny to eternal life. The *eternal fire* is described elsewhere in Matthew as a consuming fire, not a tormenting one: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12 NIV). Isa 34:8-10 states: “For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause. Edom’s streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night or day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate” (NIV).

Gregory Beale ends his article on “The Revelation on Hell” with the following statement: “It still remains true that Revelation 14:11 and 20:10-15 are the Achilles’ heel of the annihilationist perspective. Though some argue that the suffering of unbelievers is temporary, the likelihood is that John believed in an endless judgment of the ungodly.”⁹⁹ Ralph Bowles concludes his interpretation of Rev 14:11:

⁹⁷Fudge, 131.

⁹⁸Block, “The Old Testament on Hell,” 65.

⁹⁹Beale, “The Revelation on Hell,” 134.

The traditional reading of the elements of this verse misses the inverted parallelistic structure of the unit Revelation 14:9-11. When the chiasm is discerned, the meaning of the text is seen to give no confirmation to “eternal torment”. Rather, this text fits well into the Conditional Immortality interpretation. This view holds that God will finally and fully bring his enemies to judgement, with absolute destruction and extinction as the result.¹⁰⁰

Even Carson who argues for eternal torment in hell, admits: “What is hard to prove, but seems to me probable, is that one reason why the conscious punishment of hell is ongoing is because sin is ongoing.”¹⁰¹

John in the book of Revelation states:

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.” (Rev 14:9-11 NIV)

Also in the chapter about the final destruction of the devil and the wicked, John proclaims:

They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Rev 20:9-10 NIV).

Understood as God’s judgment, the effect of this fire is everlasting and that for evil there is no point of return. Evil will be under God’s control for all eternity, will never occur for a second time, is eternally checkmated, and is no more. The annihilation is total. God will not miraculously keep an eternal fire or in any way sustain the special eternal form of the wicked, fallen angels, and the devil in order to punish them perpetually. This is a very speculative approach to the biblical teaching on the execution of divine judgment. As before the rebellion of Lucifer against God, there was full harmony in heaven so it will be again when evil in all its forms will be destroyed.

H. Guillebaud comments on the New Testament teaching on punishment: “Apart from four or five passages, there is not even an appearance of teaching everlasting torment in the Bible.”¹⁰² The doctrine of eternal torment actually rests on just four *core* texts which appear to teach it: Matt 18:34-35; Mark 9:43-48; Rev14:10-11; and Rev 20:10. For each of these core texts, there are convincing and consistent alternative exegetical interpretations.

¹⁰⁰Ralph G. Bowles, “Does Revelation 14:11 Teach Eternal Torment? Examining a Proof-text on Hell,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2001): 36.

¹⁰¹D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 533.

¹⁰²Guillebaud, *The Righteous Judge*, 12.

5. *Eternal, Forever—‘olam*

The term *forever* or *eternal* (Heb. *‘olam*) is very relative in the Hebrew Scriptures. It may refer to (1) eternity with a beginning and an end (for example, slaves in Exod 21:6 [the NIV rightly translates the term *‘olam* in this context: *for life*]; the priesthood in Exod 40:15; Num 25:13); (2) eternity with a beginning but without an end (eternal life of all redeemed; see Mark 10:30; John 3:16, 36; 5:24); and finally, (3) eternity without a beginning and without an end (only belonging to God Himself; see 1 Tim 6:16; cf. Deut 33:27). The term sometimes refers to *age-old* like in Gen 49:26 (mentioning *age-old mountain*) or a *long time ago* or *those long dead* (Ps 143:3), or *ancient* (Ps 24:7). But always the textual context defines the precise meaning of the term *eternal*. To the believers in God, immortality is given as a gift through Christ Jesus (John 11:26; Col 3:3-4).

6. *Wicked Will Perish and Be No More*

On the other hand, there are many indisputable, unequivocal, and unambiguous biblical texts which refer to the total destruction of the wicked, and that after the annihilation they are no more (see especially Ps 1:4, 6; Isa 11:4; Isa 33:12; 51:6). Malachi declares: “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them” (Mal 4:1 NIV). Barry Webb on Isa 66:24 notes: “As it stands, it seems to depict annihilation rather than eternal torment. The bodies are dead.”¹⁰³ Hans Küng writes: “In the ‘eternal punishment’ [Matt 25:46] of the Last Judgment the stress lies on the fact that this punishment is definitive, final, decisive for all eternity, but not on the eternal duration of the torment. . . . [T]he ‘eternity’ of the punishment of hell may never be regarded as absolute.”¹⁰⁴

7. *Daniel 12:2*

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2 ESV). The word *contempt* (Heb. *dera’on*, abhorrence, aversion, loathsome) is used in the Hebrew Bible only in Dan 12:2 and in Isa 66:24. The meaning of this term is secured by its context: the texts speak about condemnation in relation to judgment and resurrection. Daniel speaks about eternal condemnation and shame for the wicked, and Isaiah explains that the wicked will be destroyed because no one could stop the devouring fire to fulfill its purpose of obliteration; the rebellious unrepentant people are doomed to eternal non-existence, but the righteous to eternal life.

¹⁰³Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles’ Wings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 251.

¹⁰⁴Küng, *Eternal Life?*, 140.

Daniel 12:2 also points to the decomposition of the body; dead are sleeping in the dust but are raised from their sleep. This text does not refer to any intermediate state during or after death. There is no ground for such a claim here or somewhere else in the Old Testament. It is once again confirmed that between death and the resurrection people sleep in the dust because we are dust, and to dust we shall return (Gen 2:7; 3:19).

Universalism—Dead-End Street

Universalism is correct by stressing that the conscious eternal torture of the wicked in hell cannot be supported by biblical teaching when explained in its context. This is in harmony with the conditionalist or annihilationist view, but universalists go far beyond. On the basis of God's love and His final victory over evil, they override any objections and questions about the efficacy of the cross, and argue for the salvation of all. Some, like Origen, even argue that the devil and his evil angels will be at the end redeemed from eternal perdition.¹⁰⁵ However, even though Christ died for all sinners (Rom 5:6, 8; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14-15), only those who believe will be saved (John 3:16; Rom 3:22-28; 5:15). So there is a vast difference between these two interpretations, because conditionalists stress that God's love goes hand in hand with His justice, and underline the importance of personal faith as a response to God's blazing grace demonstrated on Calvary. Thus, universalism is rightly criticized on various biblical grounds. The additional arguments (besides those already mentioned above) involve the following points:

1. The Bible teaches that people will have no new or second chance for salvation after they die (Luke 16:28-31; John 5:25-30; Heb 9:27). The possibility of a postmortem second chance is totally unscriptural. Choices and decisions we make during our lifetime are final and are taken seriously by God. Nobody can alter them. There are no new multiple chances given after death for conversion. There is no additional grace given after a person passes away; there is no salvation beyond the grave.
2. As stated above, universalists presuppose the unbiblical idea of the immortality of the soul. Bell writes: "Prior to that [resurrection], then, after death we are without a body. In heaven, but without a body. . . . Those currently 'in heaven' are not, obviously, here. And so they're with God, but without a body."¹⁰⁶ This conviction is built on the belief that every person has an immortal soul which after death goes either to heaven or hell. Those in hell go through the process of purification, some form of purgatory, which at the end closes with the admittance of everyone into heaven. Thus God's love wins and everyone is saved for eternity. God's redemption will be accomplished, and the Lord will finally be all in all (Eph 1:10). Cross

¹⁰⁵See Origen, *De Principiis* 3.4.1-5.

¹⁰⁶Bell, *Love Wins*, 56.

explains regarding the Protestants' view of purgatory that it "was openly rejected by the Reformers, who taught that souls are freed from sin by faith in Christ alone without any works, and therefore, if saved, go straight to heaven."¹⁰⁷ However, evangelical universalists' view becomes very close to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. In this respect, there is a very engaging book written by Brett Salkeld, *Can Catholics and Evangelicals Agree about Purgatory and the Last Judgment?*, who demonstrates this close affinity.¹⁰⁸ Jerry Walls in the recent book on this topic defends an understanding of purgatory that is, according to him, compatible with Protestant theology and the doctrine of eternal hell.¹⁰⁹ Donald Bloesch speaks about postmortem repentance: "It is my contention that a change of heart can still happen on the other side of death."¹¹⁰ He further declares: "I believe that the restoration of hades as an intermediate state in which we wait and hope for Christ's salvation may speak to some of the concerns of those who embrace purgatory."¹¹¹ Bloesch explains: "Even when one is in hell one can be forgiven."¹¹² An outstanding evangelical theologian Miroslav Volf states: "Post-mortem change is an essential precondition for the resolution of the problem within the sphere of cultural productivity; without it past cannot be redeemed and history cannot be set right."¹¹³ Volf underlines the necessity

¹⁰⁷F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1145.

¹⁰⁸See, Brett Salkeld, *Can Catholics and Evangelicals Agree about Purgatory and the Last Judgment?* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2011). It needs to be stressed that both—the Catholic teaching on mortal sins and Miroslav Volf—affirm that some people will be condemned to hell: "We should not, however, shy away from the unpleasant and deeply tragic possibility that there *might* be human beings, created to the image of God, who, through the practice of evil, have immunized themselves from all attempts at their redemption" (Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996], 297).

¹⁰⁹See Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory: Rethinking the Things That Matter Most. A Protestant View of the Cosmic Drama* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015). See also his book, *Purgatory: The Logic of Total Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a recent Catholic defense of the purgatory doctrine, see Gary A. Anderson, "Is Purgatory Biblical," *First Things* 116 (November 2011): 39-44.

¹¹⁰Donald Bloesch, *Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 146.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 152.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 227.

¹¹³Miroslav Volf, "Enter into Joy! Sin, Death, and the Life of the World to Come," in *End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*, ed. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000), 276-277. See also his "The Final Reconciliation: Reflections on a Social Dimension of the Eschatological Transition," *Modern Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2000): 91-113.

of postmortem change, and he speaks about the “eschatological transition.”¹¹⁴ James Wellman, Jr., comments: “Without stating it, Bell implies a form of purgatory, a Catholic dogma that has long been rejected by Protestants. The doctrine of purgatory, however, provides a solution to many Christian dilemmas.”¹¹⁵

3. Jesus died for all, but only those who believe in Him and accept personally the gift of salvation can be saved. Salvation at the end does not include everybody. There are those who perish eternally. God is the God of life but does not tolerate evil. If He punishes and destroys, it is His *strange work* and *foreign act* and *alien task* (Isa 28:21-22), but it is still His action (like in the case of the flood), judgment at the second coming or at the final judgment at the end of the millennium, because He acts as the Heavenly Surgeon to eradicate the cancer of sin from the Universe. Otherwise evil will spread and destroy everything that is good, beautiful, and meaningful.
4. Joel Green defines God’s wrath as “handing people over to experience the consequences of the sin they choose (Rom 1:18, 24, 26, 28; cf. Wisdom 11:11-16; 12:23).”¹¹⁶ God’s wrath or punishment does not lead to repentance, only the recognition and acceptance of God’s goodness may change the human heart. The kindness of God leads to a new life and transformation. Only a person overwhelmed with God’s love will let Him be Lord of his or her life. Salvation is presented in the Bible as a result of willful and never-forced capitulation and surrender to God. It is God’s amazing and blazing grace and His incredible compassion that leads people to repentance (Rom 2:4). Saved people obey God out of love and gratitude; this type of obedience is not forced or superficial. Jesus states: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15 ESV). If hell was able to lead people to repentance, Christ would not be needed. There is nothing biblical in the following equation: punishment/torture + time (eternity) = salvation of all sinners!
5. It is also against the gospel teaching from another aspect—what God has done in Christ for sinners. Salvation is only in Christ and does not come as a result of escaping suffering in hell. Faith in Christ is crucial and must be active in order to be saved (John 3:16; Rom 3:21-31). It is closely related to a person’s loving response to the call for repentance, confession of sins, forgiveness, faith, and obedience, resulting in a new life of holiness. Believers are a new creation in Christ Jesus (see 2 Cor 5:17).

¹¹⁴Volf, “Enter into Joy,” 257.

¹¹⁵Wellman, *Rob Bell and a New American Christianity*, 131.

¹¹⁶Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 54.

6. God respects our decisions. C. S. Lewis, even though himself a traditionalist, aptly states about our choices: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice, there could be no Hell.”¹¹⁷
7. Preaching about the Divine judgment is important, but the last judgment brings out the punitive judgment (wicked are condemned on the basis of their evil deeds; everyone is judge according to their acts; see Ps 62:12; Eccl 12:14; Jer 17:10; 32:19; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:17; John 5:28-29; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 2:23; 18:6; 20:12; 22:12).¹¹⁸ Divine judgments are not only pedagogical tools to tell us what is right and wrong, what is valuable, and what are the temporal consequences of our sinful behavior, but they also demonstrate what attitudes and evil things are not acceptable by our holy God, and what will be thus terminated forever. They are real warnings of the terrible and dreadful destiny of those who rebel against God, do not accept Jesus as the solution for their sinfulness, and refuse the gift of salvation. At the end, the presence of sin will no longer be tolerated, and the universe will be cleansed of it. God assures that the sinful things will pass away: “I am making everything new!” (Rev 21:5 NIV). Evil will be no more and then God will be all in all (Hab 2:14; 1 Cor 15:24-28; Eph 1:9-10; Phil 2:10-11; Rev 5:13).
8. The love and righteousness of God always go together and the holiness of God has to be seen in the lives of people here and now. Rob Bell’s book *Love Wins* has an excellent and appealing title but an *easy* (cheap), simplistic solution for a deep problem. People either believe in the eternal punishment in hell or in *apokatastasis panton* [= restoration of all], i.e., universalism (salvation of all at the end). The crucial thing is to recognize that the Bible stresses that not only God’s love but also His justice will win. God rightly answered Job: “Will you discredit my justice and condemn me only to prove that you are right?” (Job 40:8; my own translation). God can be trusted because He is love, good, kind, but also truth, and justice. In Him love and justice kiss each other (Ps 101:1) and was manifested in its fullness at the cross. God is the Lover of humanity (Deut 7:8; 33:3), wants to save everyone (1 Tim 2:4), and has no delight in the death

¹¹⁷C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1946), 69. In contrast to Lewis, I understand hell as a place of total destruction and annihilation where the unbelievers will eternally perish after the last judgment, and not to be a place of eternal punishment for the immortal souls of the wicked.

¹¹⁸Ivan T. Blazen, “Salvation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 290-292; Gerhard F. Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.

of the wicked (Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11). But it does not mean that He saves people against their will¹¹⁹ or sometimes after their death. This life is the only time to decide for or against God. And He does not force anyone to follow Him.

Hope of Resurrection in the OT

As I have already mentioned, only God is immortal (1 Tim 6:16); and at the second coming of Jesus, God's faithful people will receive immortality as a precious gift from Him (1 Cor 15:51-55; 1 Thess 4:14-17). Hope of eternal life is already presented in the Hebrew Scriptures. Consider carefully the following texts: Job 19:25-27; Ps 49:15; 73:24; Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:1-14; Dan 12:2; Hos 6:1-3; 13:4. Lutheran theologian Paul Althaus aptly stresses: "Death is more than a departure of the soul from the body. The person, body and soul, is involved in death. . . . The Christian faith knows nothing about an immortality of the personality. . . . It knows only an awakening from the real death through the power of God. There is existence after death only by an awakening of the resurrection of the whole person."¹²⁰ God's revelation is primarily about life and not death, and this life comes from God's loving intervention on behalf of His people. God is for us, and He longs to take the redeemed home in order to be always with His followers (John 14:1-3; Rom 8:31-39). He will be their God, and they will be His people forever (Rev 21:3; 22:3-4).

Conclusion

All three views depend on the understanding of the nature of the human soul. If the soul is immortal, only options one or three are possible. However, if we do not have an immortal soul, then in this case there is a better alternative view: conditional immortality and the annihilation of the wicked as demonstrated above. After death, the human's soul or spirit does not go to heaven or hell but the whole person sleeps and waits for the resurrection and judgment. In this view, there is nothing like the salvation of a soul or conversion of an immaterial spirit. The Bible knows nothing about an immortal soul; such a notion does not exist in the Scriptures.

Humans are mortal for two reasons: first, because they were created dependent on their Creator God and do not possess natural immortality; secondly, because of their rebellion and own choice to live an autonomous life without God. Thus sinners are condemned to death (Rom 6:23). However, God desires to give human beings abundant life (John 10:10) and in addition even eternal life (John 3:36; 5:24; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11-12). If we repent and come to Him (Joel 2:12-13; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38; 16:30-31), we are saved (Gal 3:26-29; Eph 2:4-10). The basis for salvation today is identical to the

¹¹⁹This is recognized even by the universalist Baker, *Razing Hell*, 106-124, thus allowing for exceptions from universal salvation.

¹²⁰Paul Althaus, *Die Letzten Dinge: Lehrbuch der Eschatologie* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1957), 157.

original conditions given by God when humanity was created: cultivating a personal trust relationship with God, enjoying His presence, and living in total dependence on Him in obedience (see Gen 1-3; John 1:12; 3:16; Rom 1:16; 3:21-26).

The three views on hell spring from three different understandings of God. Universalists believe that God is love and does not eternally punish but ultimately saves everyone by purifying the wicked by fire and giving them new chances after death. Traditionalists believe in the God of love who demonstrates His justice and holiness by eternally punishing those who rebel against Him. Conditionalists believe in the God of love who ultimately demonstrates His love, truth, and justice by revealing His holiness and glory in the final divine judgment, and then He finally annihilates the unrepentant (Revelation 20) and creates everything new (Revelation 21–22).

Our survey and evaluation of these three understandings of immortality show that each view has a different understanding of God's justice. For traditionalists, justice is punitive in the sense that the wicked will be punished and tortured eternally. For universalists, justice is mainly purificative; God's fire will ultimately result in people accepting God's love and thus all sinners will be saved after their deaths. For conditionalists, ultimate justice is punitive. However, this executive judgment based on their choices (Eccl 12:13-14; Rom 2:6; 2 Tim 4:18; Rev 20:12) is time limited, and at the end it will eliminate all destructive forces that stand against God, His people, and His law. This holy demonstration of God's justice, which is the expression of His love, will have restorative purposes—life without sin, evil, death, crime, or pain but abundant life in love, peace, joy, harmony, and safety.

Our understanding of God and the image we cultivate about Him has a direct impact on our theology of hell and immortality. Whatever we say in biblical studies or in theology reflects our portrayal of God, how we view Him, His character, and actions, and this interpretation of the rich biblical material has tremendous influence on our practical everyday life. We need to always keep in mind what kind of God we present in our presentations and discussions and what kind of character of God we create with our statements about Him and the realities of life.

God respects our choices. He does not force anybody to follow Him. Even though He wants to save everyone only those who believe will actually benefit from His death for us. If we could be reconciled with God and saved after death, why would Jesus need to die for our sins? Force and torment can never produce a true repentance and a love relationship. Maybe it may help to escape some troubles of life, but it does not convert the heart (Rom 2:4).

The main question is not, "If you died today, would you go to heaven?" but "Am I saved in Christ Jesus?" Paul triumphantly proclaims: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1 ESV). C. S. Lewis speaks in a powerful way about three surprises in heaven: "Who's there; who's not; and the fact that you're there."¹²¹ Our assurance of

¹²¹Stan Mitchell, "Three Surprises in Heaven," posted Oct. 20, 2011, <http://frenchurchofchrist.org/three-surprises-in-heaven> (Sept. 17, 2014). Similar thoughts

salvation springs only from God's firm Word, not from our performance (John 20:31; Rom 5:1-2; 8:1; Gal 2:16; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:28; 4:17; Jude 1:23-24).

At the end, ultimately God wins; His love wins after demonstrating that He treated sinners, evil angels, and Satan with fairness. When He proves to the universe that He is the God of love, truth, justice, freedom, and order, He can exterminate evil forever and all those who associated with evil, thus evil will be no more and all traces of sin will be destroyed. He will triumph in His love and justice: "Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge'" (Rom 3:4 NIV; see also Ps 51:4). The cancer of evil will be removed by the heavenly Surgeon, and all evil will be eradicated and annihilated through God's revelatory judgment. God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:25-28; Eph 1:10).¹²² I agree with N. T. Wright who underlines:

The whole point of my argument so far is that the question of what happens to me after death is *not* the major, central framing question that centuries of theological tradition has supposed. The New Testament, true to its Old Testament roots, regularly insists that the major, central concern is God's purpose of rescue and re-creation for the whole world, the entire cosmos.¹²³

In summary, God's message is not only about a love that wins, but about Christ who is love, truth, and justice and because of that He wins. Jesus personifies love, truth and justice. Love without truth and justice is a sentimental experience without a border—it is a fluttering butterfly. Truth and justice without love is cold calculation, hard facts, and can kill. The minimization of Christ is the central issue at stake here. Christ in His fullness—not only a construct of love without truth, justice, and freedom. At the end God's justice and righteousness will prevail (see Ps 89:14-15). God's moral power wins, never force. The God of love, truth, justice, freedom, and order rules the Universe. He is the only Warrant of these eternal values. My motto of life expresses this basic biblical truth: *The love, truth, and justice of God will prevail!*

God's grace is amazing in being able to transform sinners into God's responsible children. We will then praise the Lord for His goodness: "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps 85:10 NIV). David expressed it well: "I will sing of your love and justice;

are attributed to Martin Luther (but also by many others) where he speaks about three surprises he will encounter in heaven: (1) there will not be people who he thought would surely be there; (2) there will be people who he thought would never be there; but (3) the biggest surprise will be that he will be there.

¹²²Jiří Moskala, "Toward a Biblical Theology of God's Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment (An Overview of a Theocentric-Christocentric Approach)," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 138-165; idem, "The Gospel According to God's Judgment: Judgment as Salvation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 22, no. 1 (2011): 28-49.

¹²³N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 184.

to you, LORD, I will sing praise” (Ps 101:1 NIV). God’s victory through judgment resulting in the eradication of evil will be glorious and triumphant as John states:

And they sing [the redeemed] the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Rev 15:3-4 ESV)

Paul explains: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11 ESV). Jesus solemnly declares: “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev 3:5 NKJV).

THE CREATION ORDER—HIERARCHICAL OR EGALITARIAN?

JAN A. SIGVARTSEN
Berrien Springs, Michigan

The biblical creation account of Gen 1–3 is unique among the ancient Near Eastern creation texts by the great emphasis it places on the creation of the primordial woman and on the equality of the sexes. A strong case could be made that this equality emphasis is one of the key theological points made by the author of the Genesis narrative, especially when considered in light of the other ancient Near Eastern accounts which do not even mention the origin of the woman, as noted by Nahum M. Sarna.¹ This article will take a closer look at the biblical account and investigate the type of relationship the text promotes between man and woman, both before and after the Fall. **Figures 1 and 2** provide a concise overview of the key elements regarding this issue in Gen 1–3. Genesis 1:26-29 and Gen 2:7, 18, 20-25 address the relationship between the sexes before the Fall, while Gen 3:6 functions as the dividing point between the pre- and post-Fall perspective, and Gen 3:6-21 provides the post-fall view.

The Definition of Man (Genesis 1)

Then God said, “Let Us make man [earthlings] in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” So God created man [earthlings] in His own image; He created him [*’ōtō*, third person masculine singular²] in the image of God; He created them male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful [*pērū*, plural], multiply [*ūrbeū*, plural], fill [*ūmil’ū*, plural] the earth, and subdue it [*wēkibšūhā*, plural]. Rule [*ūrdū*, plural] the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” God also said, “Look, I

¹Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 21.

²In contrast to the English language, most languages, including Hebrew, are gender specific, that is, masculine or feminine (although a certain word may be assigned a different gender based on the language). Since “earthling” [*’ādām*] is a masculine singular noun, it requires a masculine pronoun (the noun and the pronoun have to be in agreement with each other, both in gender and number), in this case, the third person masculine singular pronoun, the suffix (*ō*), translated as “him” (*’et* is the object indicator and is not translated). Thus, the use of the singular form of the masculine noun and pronoun does not indicate that God speaks only to the male, thereby excluding the female; it is used because of the gender of the noun and nothing more. In addition, the Hebrew language would always refer to a group with a masculine pronoun if there is at least one masculine member of that group. The only time a feminine pronoun is used is if there are only females in the group. Thus, if theology should be based on the gender of a certain noun, then the Holy Spirit must also be viewed as a woman, since the noun “Spirit” (*rūah*) is a feminine noun in Hebrew.

have given you [*lākem*, plural] every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be for you [*lākem*, plural]. (Gen 1:26-29, CSB).

One argument sometimes used in support of a hierarchy or male-headship/female-submission view is that God named the humans “man,” thus implying male headship.³ This argument ignores the wordplay between the Hebrew words “man” and “ground/land/earth” in Hebrew, *’ādām* and *’ādāmā*, which is first introduced in Gen 2:7, when God formed *’ādām* out of the dust of the *’ādāmā*.⁴ To keep this wordplay in the English language, “earthling” or “earth-being” may be a more appropriate translation. Be that as it may, when the author of the biblical creation account uses the word *’ādām* for the first time, it is defined as both “male (*zākar*) and female (*nēqēbā*).”⁵ This definition is crucial, since it emphasizes the unity between male and female—both are humans and in God’s image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). At this point in the creation story, *’ādām* is a generic term for humans (both male and female) and not the first name of the first male Adam.⁶ Based on this biblical definition of *’ādām*, the following observations can be made regarding the relationship between male and female in Gen 1: (1) both male and female are created in God’s image and likeness (1:27c); (2) both male and female appear to be created at the same time (1:27); (3) both male and female are assigned the same task/role by God—“rule over animals and the earth” (1:26b, 28c). There is no indication in this creation account that the woman had a different function than the man; (4) both male and female receive the same blessing from God (1:28); (5) God speaks to both male and female by using the personal pronouns “them” and plural “you,” in addition to the plural form of the imperatives—be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, and rule (1:28-29); and (6) both male and female receive the same diet from God (1:29). From this, it becomes clear that the emphasis of Genesis 1 is on the unity and the equality between the sexes, thereby leaving no room for male headship or hierarchy.

³Philip B. Payne discusses the eleven most often used biblical arguments from Gen 1-3 used by people arguing for male headship (*Man and Woman One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009], 43-54); this paper is only considering four of them.

⁴This wordplay also appears after the Flood when God promises: “I will never again curse the ground (*’ādāmā*) because of man (*’ādām*), even though man’s (*’ādām*) inclination is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done” (Gen 8:21). Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotes are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

⁵The same definition is repeated in the introduction of Noah’s genealogy in Gen 5:2.

⁶The first time *’ādām* is used as a proper name is in Gen 2:20 where the first male realizes his uniqueness, hence Adam, and realizes that he is in need of an equal like himself.

The Creation Order of Humankind (Genesis 2)

A second argument sometimes used in support of male headship or the hierarchical view is that the male was created before the female in Gen 2, thus suggesting that males should have authority over females. This argument ignores the literary structure used by the author to reveal the primary focus of the chapter.⁷ Much in the same way that the Sabbath functions as the climax of Gen 1, the creation of the woman followed by the first “marriage” functions as the climax of the Eden Narrative in Gen 2-3.⁸ The first indication that the woman is the main emphasis of this second creation story is the number of verses describing her creation, six in all (Gen 2:18-23) compared to only one verse describing the creation of the man (Gen 2:7). Sarna notes that this “is extraordinary in light of the generally nondescriptive character of the biblical narrative and as such is indicative of the importance accorded this event.”⁹ This is further emphasized by God’s declaration that it is not good for the man to be alone; this imperfection was rectified only when God finally created the woman to be the man’s equal partner at the climax of the story. By the end of chapter 2, the first couple lives in a harmonious relationship in which both were naked yet not ashamed (Gen 2:25). Therefore, the creation of man is mentioned first not because he was the most important element of the story; rather, he was mentioned first to emphasize the importance of the woman. In the same way, Gen 1 starts with the earth being formless and empty (Gen 1:2), but this does not automatically make it the focus of the narrative. Instead, it functions as the catalyst which drives the story to its climax, the Sabbath. In light of the literary structure, the whole purpose of the creation account is to make the earth into a place fit for life and where humans can dwell in perfect harmony with God. This is encompassed in the Sabbath rest.

What then is so important about the woman that she is the climax of Gen 2? Is it that the creator of humans has now created a human whose body can create other humans (Gen 4:1)? Even more so, Gen 3:15 and 3:20 reveal that the woman will give birth to a specific child who will crush the head of the serpent, the source of all evil; hence she will be “the bringer of the savior.” Because of this life-giving aspect of the woman, Eve (*ḥavvah* or *ḥayyah*¹⁰) is recognized as the mother of all living (*ḥay*), another Hebrew wordplay.

⁷Zdravko Stefanovic, “The Great Reversal: Thematic Links between Genesis 2 and 3,” *AUSS* 32, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1994): 53.

⁸Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1978), 45-47.

⁹Sarna, *Genesis*, 21.

¹⁰Sarna suggests Eve, *ḥavvah*, may be an archaic form of *ḥayyah*, “could mean ‘living thing,’ life personified” (Sarna, *Genesis*, 29).

Woman as Man's Helper—Defender, Ally, or Benefactor
(Genesis 2:18, 20, 22)

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make an *'ezer* [ally, defender, benefactor] as his complement." So the LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no *'ezer* [ally, defender, benefactor] was found as his complement.¹¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the LORD God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called "woman," for she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

A third argument sometimes used in support of male headship, or the hierarchical view, is that the woman was created to be a helpmate to the man, thus giving the woman an inferior function. Unlike in the English language and Western mindset, a helper in the biblical sense is more than just "Daddy's little helper." A simple word study of the Hebrew noun used for "helper" (*'ezer*) shows that in every case in which this word has been used in the Pentateuch, apart from Gen 2, it always refers to God as the helper (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29). The English words defender, ally, or benefactor, may better describe the meaning of this Hebrew noun. In other words, just because God is our "helper" would not make God inferior to us. Thus, instead of viewing the woman as inferior and submissive to her husband, she should be considered an equal in every way. However, to prevent a reader from assuming that the woman is superior to the man since she is his ally (*'ezer*), the author of the Eden Narrative states that she was to be the man's equal, corresponding to him (*kēnegdō*, "like" or "in front of" him—Gen 2:18, 20), "bones of my bones, flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23).¹² It is important to note that it is God who first names the female "woman" (*ishshā*, Gen 2:22). This, according to Jacques Doukhan, is further supported by the male, who uses a pairing of "divine passives" when celebrating his newly created equal—"this is called"

¹¹It is important to note that the creation of the animals in Genesis 2 takes place right after God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Thus, the creation and naming of the animals functions as the catalyst for the first male to also recognize this "not good" situation and the need for someone who he could recognize as his equal or counterpart.

¹²It is also interesting that the creation act of the woman itself (Gen 2:21b-22a) has the same number of Hebrew words as the creation act of the man (Gen 2:17), sixteen in each case. This may be an additional indicator that they should be considered equal.

(*l'ezō 't yiqqārē*) and “has this been taken” (*lūqōhā-zzō 't*).¹³ Only by recognizing her as his counterpart, *'ishshā* (“woman”), is he able to understand himself as *'ish* (“man”)—a Hebrew wordplay emphasizing their togetherness. In this context, the Hebrew word for woman, *'ishshā*, may be translated best as “wife” or “mate.” The following observations can be made regarding the relationship between male and female in Gen 2: (1) woman is made to “complement,” be an equal, to man (2:18b); (2) woman is to be an ally, defender, and benefactor for the man (2:22)—that is, the Hebrew word *'ezer* always refers to a stronger partner (e.g., God is a stronger ally, defender, and benefactor than humans); (3) man is not complete without an equal, an ally, defender, and benefactor (2:18, 20b); (4) woman, in contrast to the animals, was created from the same substance as the man, that is, from his rib (2:21-22); (5) woman was recognized by the man to be an equal, a counterpart—“flesh of my flesh, bones of my bones” (2:23); (6) man leaves both his father and mother when entering a relationship with a woman—that is, father and mother are viewed as a family unit with no hierarchical distinction implied (2:24);¹⁴ (7) man and woman unite into one flesh when starting a new family unit (2:24b)—that is, they function much like the plurality of the Godhead (Gen 1:26; Deut 5:6) and thus should be equal members of the unity, being made of the same substance and unified in mission and purpose; (8) both man and woman were naked but felt no shame, suggesting a shared moral purity (2:25).

From these observations, it may be seen that the emphases in Gen 2 are on the creation of the woman as the man’s equal, her role as his ally/defender/benefactor, and on the ensuing marriage.¹⁵ There are no indications that the man was considered superior to the woman; thus, as in Gen 1, there is no room for male headship or hierarchy in Gen 2. This is important since it shows that the creation of human beings is an egalitarian structure. The next question is, did the equality between the sexes continue after the Fall?

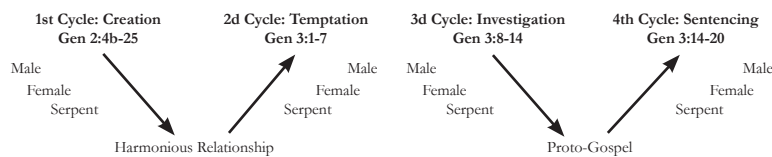
¹³Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 46-47.

¹⁴Since Adam did not have any parents, this should be understood as an anachronistic comment, explaining the origin of the marriage custom practiced at the time when the Eden Narrative was written down. This may indicate that the larger purpose of Gen 2-3 is to explain why the world is the way it is. If God created a perfect world, why is there so much evil? Why are people dying before their time, or of old age, or in childbirth? Why are women subjugated by the men, within their marriage and/or within the larger society? Why do humans have to work so hard for a living? Genesis 2-3 also reveals what God intends to do to solve the problems of evil.

¹⁵It is interesting to note that this dual emphasis in the two creation stories, Sabbath and family relationship, also appears in the Decalogue, in which these two “institutions” both appear as positive commandments—remember (Exod 20:8) and honor (Exod 20:12)—in contrast to the other eight which are worded as negative commandments—don’ts.

The Man Was Questioned First (Genesis 3)

A fourth argument sometimes used to support a male-headship or hierarchical view is that God questioned the man first after eating of the forbidden fruit, thereby suggesting that God viewed the man as the representative of the human race, even allowing him to speak on behalf of the woman. This argument ignores the importance of the literary structure of a text in underscoring the key message—that God will provide a solution to the problem of sin which had been introduced into the world through the rebellion of the first human couple. This literary structure starts in Gen 2, with the creation of the male, continues with the creation of the female, and ends in Gen 3:1 by introducing the serpent. The next cycle, the temptation, starts with the serpent, progresses to the fall of the female, and ends with the fall of the male. The third cycle starts with God questioning the male, then the female, and finally, God speaking to the serpent. The last cycle curses the serpent, makes predictions relating to the female, and finally, ends by the predictions relating to the male. The first complete cycle brings attention to the harmonious relationship between husband and wife (Gen 2:25), while the second cycle reveals the proto-gospel (Gen 3:15)—the focus of both these cycles would then be the female, completing God’s creation and the bringer of God’s salvation.



This complex structure would collapse, and the theological message would be lost, if the author did not start or end each cycle with the male. Thus, God starts questioning the male in order to highlight the salvation message through the “verdict” given to the woman.

He Will Rule over You—Predictive or Prescriptive?

Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you? [*’ayyekkā*]”¹⁶

¹⁶This specific interrogative particle is used by God to ask a deeper question. Umberto Cassuto notes that God is asking: “Why are you there [hiding]? Is that where you should be? Come out and face me!” (*From Adam to Noah: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989], 156). It may be of some importance

And he said, “I heard You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” Then He asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” Then the man [the male] replied, “The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.” So the LORD God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate.” (Gen 3:6-13).

It is important to note that God only cursed the serpent (Gen 3:14) and the earth (Gen 3:17) as a consequence of the first humans’ rebellion of eating the forbidden fruit. God’s words given to the first couple only describe the consequences they would now have to experience due to the disharmony which had entered God’s creation. Before the Fall, the couple experienced a harmonious relationship in which they were both equal (Gen 2:23-25). Their rebellion destroyed this perfect unity and deception (Gen 3:6), and blame (Gen 3:12) entered their relationship; they found themselves naked (Gen 3:7) and afraid (Gen 3:10).

The consequences affecting primarily Adam were that the earth would be cursed due to his rebellion, and humans would no longer be able to enjoy freely of the blessings from the ground. Instead, they would have to labor in pain to receive food (Gen 3:17-19). Ever since, humans have tried to minimize the effect of this curse and make life easier for themselves.

The consequences affecting primarily the woman would bring her sorrow, toil, and pain. The childbearing that would bring salvation to humanity would also cause the woman great pain and sometimes death (e.g., Gen 35:18). The second part of the consequences of the woman’s rebellion has caused much discussion: “Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you” (Gen 3:16). It suggests that Adam would rule over his wife. Instead of living in a harmonious relationship as intended by God at the creation, sin is the source for the subordination of the woman. Sin is the beginning of the hierarchical view and the subordination of the woman. The question is, were these words to the woman intended as a prediction or as a prescription, or were they something that God instituted as the ideal for marriage and male-female relations in a sinful world? One point most Bible believers would agree upon: God wants only what is best for people, even if they live in a sinful world. This begs the question, does male headship have a positive function in society, or would it be better to view submission of women as a manifestation of sin and we humans (especially followers of God) should instead strive for an egalitarian view which was the ideal presented before Adam and Eve rebelled against God?¹⁷ Is there any empirical support from the behavioral

that this particle happened to also be the opening word of Lamentations (Lam 1:1), suggesting that God may also have expressed some grief when calling out for the humans.

¹⁷The reader also needs to consider the reach of this statement. Should God’s word be understood within the marriage framework, or should it be read more broadly as a reference to the relationship between the sexes? It could be argued that in practice it does not make much difference, since the marriage relationship often reflects the

and social sciences indicating that the male headship model has efficacy? If not, scholars are cautioned against recommending an interpersonal model that may be highly problematic, and could potentially place both men and woman at risk.

Genesis 3 concludes with God clothing both Adam and Eve in tunics (*kuttōnet*—that is, priestly garments), suggesting that both the male and the female were to have a priestly role in the now sinful world (Gen 3:21). The Hebrew word for “tunic” is a technical term which always refers to the priestly garments in which God instructed priests to be clothed. However, in this verse this priestly role is emphasized even more, since it is God himself who does the act of clothing. This point becomes even stronger when this verse is read in its proper sanctuary context—the Garden of Eden as the archetypal sanctuary.¹⁸ Thus, if priestly garments are mentioned in relation to the sanctuary and God is clothing or instructs the clothing of the person, this person is always a priest (Exod 28–29; 39–40; Lev 8:5–13). Both Adam and Eve served in the archetypal sanctuary as priests (Gen 2:15–18).¹⁹

The equality between the sexes is also emphasized after the Fall, and several observations can be made from the text in support of this view: (1) both were tempted regarding the forbidden, fruit and both broke God’s commandment (3:6); (2) both were in it together when they ate the fruit (the narrative emphasizes the togetherness of their fall, noting that “she also gave some [fruit] to her husband, who was with her” [3:6]); (3) both had their eyes opened and became aware that they were naked, suggesting that both experienced the consequences for their moral choice (3:7); (4) both felt a need to cover themselves (3:7); (5) both were afraid and hid in the garden when they heard God walking in the garden (3:8); (6) both were questioned and held responsible for their actions, indicating that God speaks directly to both of them and both have access to God (3:9–13); (7) both were affected in the same way by their decision to break the commandment; they started to pass the blame onto someone else (3:12–13) (it could be argued that Adam speaks first, not necessarily because he was in charge, but rather because he wanted his story, in which he blames the woman, to be heard first and influence the outcome); (8) both would experience gender-specific consequences for their actions—consequences affecting primarily the woman (3:16) and the man (3:17–19); (9) both would ultimately suffer death (3:19); (10) both received new clothes from God (3:21), tunics made of skin rather than the loincloths

larger society. If the larger society is egalitarian, any marriage within that society would be more likely to also be egalitarian. If, on the other hand, there is a strong sense that a marriage should be hierarchical, it is also very likely that the larger society would become more hierarchical.

¹⁸Greg K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 66–80; John H. Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 109–110.

¹⁹Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch*, 100–101.

they had made for themselves of sewed fig leaves; (11) both “became [or were] like God, knowing good and evil” (3:22); and (12) both received the same punishment, expulsion from the Garden without access to the Tree of Life (3:23-24).

The emphasis in Gen 3 is that both the man and the woman sinned, both were affected by their choice, and both were expelled and had to die outside the Garden. The order of God’s questioning and sentencing serves as a part of the literary structure which has the proto-gospel (Gen 3:15) as its chiasmic climax (serpent-woman-man [Gen 3:1-7]; man-woman-serpent [Gen 3:10-14]; serpent-woman-man [Gen 3:14-19]), and does not suggest a male headship or hierarchy. Thus, there is no indication in Gen 3 that only the woman should be blamed or held more responsible for the Fall. This understanding, however, changed during the Second Temple Period.

It Was the Woman’s Fault—She Gave It to Me

The negative view of women, with relation to the Eden Narrative, seems to have developed in the period between the Old and the New Testaments when several extrabiblical books, known as the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, were written.²⁰ Many of these books expand, comment upon, and rewrite the biblical account and present an early indication of how biblical passages were read and understood at the time of the New Testament, including the Eden Narrative (Gen 2–3) and the “Sons of God and the Daughters of Men” passage in Gen 6.²¹ The *Life of Adam and Eve*, although there is no scholarly consensus regarding dating and provenance of this book, is traditionally believed to have been written by a Palestinian Jew in Hebrew or possibly in Greek around the Common Era (100 B.C.E.–200 C.E.), and the Christian interpolations (additions) were added by the Christian community who valued and safeguarded this book over the following centuries.²² This

²⁰This negative view was not unique to the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, but is also found in Philo, Josephus, and early rabbinic literature. However, the Jewish view of this time period was not any worse than what appears in Greek literature and in early Christian literature. See Payne, *Man and Woman One in Christ*, 31-40.

²¹The Second Temple Period texts do not present a consensus view regarding when the “Fall” of humankind happened. The prominent view considers Gen 2–3, “Eve’s transgression,” as a description of how sin came to dominate the world (e.g. *Jubilee* 3:17-35; *Life of Adam and Eve* 18:1; *Sirach* 25:24), while the minority tradition considers Gen 6, where women have sex with angels, as the cause (e.g., *1 Enoch* 6-9). Whereas *1 Enoch* 6:1-4 mentions that the fallen angels desired and swore an oath that they would choose human wives for themselves, the *Testament of Ruben* makes the women the cause for their desire, since they seduce them, thus becoming the sexual predators, causing the angels to fall (*T. Reu.* 5:6). The New Testament follows the first tradition, although later Christian interpreters, as noted by Susan L. Greiner (“Did Eve Fall or Was She Pushed?” *BR* 15, no. 4 [Aug 1999]: 16-23, 50-51) combined the two and started to view the “Fall” and sin as having to do with sexuality (“original sin”).

²²For a discussion on the providence and dating of the book, see: Gary

book deals specifically with the Eden Narrative and expands upon and explains in more detail the “blessings” and “curses” mentioned in Gen 3. In addition, it inserts a lengthy narrative section in the narrative gap between Gen 3:24 and Gen 4. Reading this expansion in light of the Eden narrative, it becomes apparent that several new elements have been added to the story.

It is interesting to note the explanation given to Gen 3:16 regarding the judgment God gave to the woman due to her transgression in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 25:1-4 (the Greek version of the text). The author views the second half of Gen 3:16 in light of the first half, thereby understanding the whole verse as related to childbirth. Thus, the desire experienced by the woman is her sexual desire (considered sinful) for her husband, even though it ultimately causes her pain and suffering and even the possibility of death. Her husband, on the other hand, will rule over her. Like Gen 3:16, this text is not clear either as to whether the “ruling over you” is a part of God’s “punishment” for her transgression or a natural consequence of just living in a sinful world.

Genesis 3:16

¹⁶He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children in anguish.

Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

Apocalypse of Moses 25:1-4

¹And the Lord turned to me and said:

“Since you have hearkened to the serpent, and transgressed my commandment, you shall suffer torments and intolerable pains; you shall bear children in much trembling and in one hour you shall come to the birth, and lose your life, from your sore trouble and anguish. But you shall confess and say: “Lord, Lord, save me, and I will turn no more to the sin of the flesh.” [But even another time you shall so turn.] And on this account, from your own words I will judge you, by reason of the enmity which the enemy has planted in you. And you shall return again to your husband and he will rule over you.”

A. Anderson, “Life of Adam and Eve,” OB 2:1332-1333; Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 49; M. D. Johnson, “Life of Adam and Eve: A New Translation and Introduction,” OTP 2:252; J. Levison, “Adam and Eve, Literature Concerning,” (DNTB, 4-5).

Although the book was probably composed in Hebrew or perhaps Greek, it only survived through its various translations (Latin [by the name, “*Vita*”], Armenian, Georgian, and Slavonic), and the current Greek form (by the name, “*Apocalypse of Moses*”). These translations and textual variations of the book reflect how the Adam and Eve tradition developed independently during the Christian Era. These five textual traditions are titled “The Books of Adam and Eve.” For a synopsis of these books, see Gary A. Anderson and Michael E. Stone, eds. *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2d ed., SBLJL 17 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

The Latin version of the text, the *Vita*, proposes that Satan rebelled against God because he would not accept God's creation hierarchy in which humans were placed above the angels (*Vita* 13:2–14:1), as suggested by Ps 8:5 (v. 6 in MT).²³ It was due to Satan's expulsion from heaven, caused by his refusal to accept humans' elevated position, that he sought revenge against Adam and Eve by influencing them to break God's commandment (*Vita* 13:2-16:1). The *Apocalypse of Moses* also reveals that it was Satan who spoke through the serpent when Eve was tempted, explaining how a serpent was able to speak in the first place: "The Devil said to him [the Serpent]: 'Fear not, only be my vessel and I will speak through your mouth words to deceive them'" (*Apoc. Mos.* 16:4b). As soon as Satan with the help of the serpent had successfully tempted Eve, she was used by Satan to deceive Adam: "For, when he [Adam] came, I opened my mouth and the Devil was speaking, and I began to exhort him" (*Apoc. Mos.* 21:3). The text places the whole blame for the fall on Eve through Adam's words: "And Adam said to Eve: 'O Eve, what have you done to us? You have brought great wrath upon us which will rule over our entire race'" (*Apoc. Mos.* 14:2); "And to me [Eve] he said, 'O wicked woman! What have you done to us? You have deprived me of the glory of God'" (*Apoc. Mos.* 21:6). As the *Vita* concludes: "What you have done will be passed on to your children after my death" (*Vita* 44:2).

Topic	Gen 3	Life of Adam and Eve	Pericope
Satan's explanation for why he tempted humans		11:1-17:2 (not in Gr.)	4-5
Temptation of the serpent	3:1	15:1-16:4	17-18
Temptation of Eve	3:1-6a	17:1-20:5	19-22
Temptation of Adam	3:6b-7	21:1-6	23
God's investigation	3:8	22:1-4	24
God questions Adam	3:9-11	23:1-3	
Adam blames Eve	3:12	23:4a	
Eve blames serpent	3:13	23:4b-5	
God gives sentence to Adam	3:17-19	24:1-4	25
God gives sentence to Eve	3:16	25:1-4	
God gives sentence to serpent	3:14-15	26:1-4	
Adam and Eve expelled from Garden	3:22-24	27:1-29:6	26-27
Life outside the Garden	4:1-5:5	Remaining sections	

²³The Hebrew text reads: *wattēhassērēhū mmē'at mē'ēlōhīm wēkābōd wēhādār tē'attērēhū*—"You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor," while most English translations follows the Septuagint, which has amended the texts and has replaced "God" with "the angel," placing humans below the angels as opposed to God (ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχὺ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους δόξης).

Following is a list of changes and additions which have been added to the Eden Narrative by the *Life of Adam and Eve*: (1) Satan sought to revenge himself on the humans (*Vita* 13:2-16:1); (2) Adam seems to be the representative of the human race and the head of the family, which is suggested by Satan's ultimate goal of making Adam break God's commandment (21:1-6); (3) the serpent is possessed by Satan in order to tempt Eve (15:1-16:4); (4) Eve is possessed by Satan in order to tempt Adam (17:1-20:5); (5) Eve was alone when tempted by the serpent/Satan (7:2); (6) Eve had to promise/swear that she would give the fruit to Adam after she had eaten of it (19:1-3); (7) the serpent argued that Eve had to share the fruit with Adam so she would not be ranked higher than him after she had eaten the fruit (19:1-3),²⁴ suggesting, in contrast to the biblical account, that hierarchy was a part of the relationship between Adam and Eve; (8) the fruit is considered "the poison of his [Satan's] wickedness, which is (the sense of) desire, which is itself the beginning of every sin (19:3);²⁵ (9) Eve became naked first, thus experiencing the consequences of sin even before deceiving Adam (20:1, 4-5); (10) Eve covered her nakedness before she came to Adam to tempt him (20:4-5); (11) Eve receives the blame for the Fall (14:1; 21:3, 6; 22:3 [*Vita* 44:2]); (12) it was Eve who told Adam to blame her for the Fall if God became angry after Adam ate the fruit (Ge. [44](21):4b; Gr. 23:4); (13) the consequences of Eve's sin would affect the whole of humanity, thus the idea of "inherent sin" or "fallen nature" (14:2; *Vita* 44:2); (14) Adam did not eat freely, but Eve betrayed him, that is, he was beguiled by Eve, who wittingly made him eat of the forbidden fruit (21:1-6); (15) before Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they were clothed in light, but after the fall the glory of God disappeared (20:1-2; 21:6) and they found themselves naked (20:1, 4-5; 21:5);²⁶ (16) the fall receives a sexual connotation—"Sin of the Flesh" (25:1-4); and (17) the complex literary structure of Gen 2-3 has collapsed, thus emphasizing Adam's elevated role by "sacrificing" the salvation aspect of the structure (22:1-26:4 | Gen 3:8-19).

²⁴The Armenian and Georgian translation adds, in the words of Satan, that if Eve would not give Adam the fruit: "you [she] will become prideful and become jealous of Adam and you will not make him eat of it, and he will be like an animal before you [her], as you [Eve] were before God, because God was jealous of you" (Ge. [44](19):1c). Thus, Satan argues that Eve would be ranked higher than Adam if she did not also give Adam the fruit to eat. It should also be noted that only Adam (14:1 [not in Greek]) and later Seth (Ar./Ge. 23[3]:2b; Gr.12:1-2; La. 39:1-2; Ge./Ar. 39[12]:1-2; Sl. 11-15.12) carry the title "Image of God," and not Eve, suggesting that both Adam and later Seth were ranked higher than Eve.

²⁵The Armenian translation explains that this "sin" is a reference to the desire of sins, harlotries, adulteries, and greed (Ar.[44](19):3).

²⁶The Targum Pseudo Jonathan on the Pentateuch also has this addition to the Eden Narrative, it states: "And the eyes of both were enlightened, and they knew that they were naked, divested of the purple robe in which they had been created. And they saw the sight of their shame, and sewed to themselves the leaves of figs, and made to them cinctures" (Gen 3:7, PJE).

The Latin version adds a few more details (*Vita* 3:2b; 35:2): (1) Eve takes full responsibility for the Fall; (2) Adam is dying because of her sin; (3) Adam is considered innocent; and (4) Eve alone introduced mortality to the world.

Considering the additional elements appearing in this list, it becomes apparent that many of these proposals became a part of the traditional reading of the Eden Narrative. Although the biblical text emphasizes the equality between the sexes, the view presented in this pseudepigraphical text—that Eve was to be blamed for the original sin and that Adam, the man, was to be the representative of humanity, which is why Adam was the ultimate prize for Satan—became the accepted understanding of the Genesis creation accounts. Greiner concludes:

By blending the original Genesis account with the noncanonical seduction stories, later authors and artists turned sex into a sin and Eve into a sexual temptress, the ancestress of witchery, the root of evil and the cause of the Fall. As almost any Renaissance painting of Eve will confirm, the most familiar portrait of Eve is not the image of the first woman of the Hebrew Bible, but the corrupted figure from the pseudepigrapha.²⁷

Conclusion

This article investigated the type of relationship the biblical creation account promotes between man and woman, both before and after the Fall. The pre-Fall emphasis is on unity and equality, an egalitarian view between the sexes, leaving no room for male headship or hierarchy. Genesis 1 presents both sexes as being created in God's image and likeness and adds that they were given the same task, to rule over animals and the earth. This egalitarian creation order is also the emphasis of Gen 2 in which the woman serves as the climax and the main emphasis in the same way the Sabbath serves as the climax of Gen 1. This article also noted that Gen 2 presents the male and the female as equal partners, the woman being the ally, defender, and benefactor of the man, both fulfilling the same duty for God, to "guard and protect" the Garden.

This harmonious relationship between the man and the woman, or husband and wife, changed due to the Fall. It seems as far as God was concerned, the equality continued, since he questioned them both and held them both responsible for their transgression. He also clothed them both in priestly garments, indicating they were both to continue their joint priestly duties even after the Fall. It is in light of this disharmony caused by sin that God's words to the woman should be considered: "he will rule over you." Thus, male headship and female submission were a result of the Fall. This being the case, the hierarchical view should not be considered the ideal and be upheld as God's original plan, but rather, the symptom of the disharmony caused by sin. Hence, God's people should be aiming toward and working for full equality between the sexes, to minimize the consequences of sin. The hierarchical, reading combined with a negative view of the woman, in which she carries the full responsibility for the Fall and is blamed for the original sin,

²⁷Greiner, "Did Eve Fall or Was She Pushed?," 50-51.

is not the biblical account. On the contrary, it developed during the Second Temple period and became the filter later interpreters used when reading the Eden Narrative.

FIGURE 1

Relationship Between Man and Woman: Genesis 1–3 (Part 1)

Pre-Fall
<p>Gen 1:26-29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human = male + female = God's image and likeness • To rule (<i>rādā</i>) over God's creation • God's commandment given to both → Equality between male and female → God gave the same role to both male and female
<p>Gen 2:7 Creation of male (<i>yāšar</i> = form/fashion) 16 words Gen 2:21b-22a Creation of female (<i>bānā</i> = build) 16 words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Equally important, since the same number of words. → Creation of female has the same position in the 2nd creation story as the Sabbath holds in the 1st. • Not good → good/completeness (naked) - Gen 2:23-25 • Chaos → Sabbath - Gen 2:1-3 <p>Gen 2:18 20, 23, 24 - Woman, an equal to man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I will make 'a helper' <u>who is like him/as his counterpart</u>" - ²<i>e'ēseh-llō 'ēzer kēnegdō</i> • "but for man was not found 'a helper' <u>who was like him</u>" - <i>ūlē'ādām lō²-māšā² 'ēzer kēnegdō</i> • "Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" - <i>ešem mē'āšmay ūbāsār mibbēsārī</i> <p>→ "For this (<i>lēzō 't</i>) is called woman (<i>iššā</i>) because from man (<i>iš</i>) has this (<i>zō 't</i>) been taken." • The man was not the first to call her "woman." • The designation "woman" comes from God (Gen 2:22). • Jacques Doukhan notes that Gen 2:23 contains a pairing of "divine passives" - lends further support to God naming the woman: • "this is called (<i>lēzō 't yiqqārē</i>' - v: niph. imp. 3rd m.sg.) • "has this been taken" (<i>lūqōḥā-zzō 't</i> - v: qal. pass. perf. f.sg.) • Leave (<i>āzab</i> → cleave (<i>dābaq</i>) → become one flesh (<i>wēhāyū lēbāsār 'eḥād</i>).</p>
<p>Gen 2:15-18 - God-given role for humans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This role given to both man and woman ("the helper")? • <i>'abad /šāmar</i> - "to work and watch" or "to do service [in the law], and to keep its commandments → a priest and not just a gardener. • See, Sailhamer, <i>The Pentateuch</i>, 100-101. • The Garden of Eden: The first archetypical temple
Gen 3:6 - The Fall

FIGURE 2

Relationship Between Man and Woman: Genesis 1–3 (Part 2)

Post-Fall
<p>Gen 3:16—Should this verse be understood as:</p> <p>Egalitarian vs. Hierarchical Within Marriage vs. General Relationship Prescriptive vs. Prediction</p>
<p>Gen 3:16-21 - God’s “curse” on woman and man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harmonious relationship between man and woman before the Fall (Gen 2:23-25) was destroyed by accusations (Gen 3:12) and deception (Gen 3:6) and they found themselves naked (Gen 3:7) and became afraid (Gen 3:10). • It should be noted that neither the woman nor the man are cursed by God. However, God did curse the serpent/Satan (Gen 3:14) and the ground (Gen 3:17). <p>Gen 3:16 - Consequences affecting primarily the WOMAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoped for something good from the tree (<i>‘ēṣ</i>) but would instead receive sorrow, toil, pain (<i>‘āṣab</i>). • Childbearing, which will bring salvation (Gen 3:15), will at the same time be painful. • However, her “desire” will be for her husband and he will “rule over” her. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were to enjoy the blessing of procreation → pain, sorrow, toil • They were supposed to live in a harmonious relationship → subordination of the woman. → God’s blessings were tainted by the introduction of sin. <p>Gen 3:17-21 - Consequences affecting primarily the MAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tree (<i>‘ēṣ</i>) also affected the man - he would no longer be able to enjoy freely of the blessings from the ground, but would instead have to labor in pain (<i>‘āṣab- ‘iṣṣābôn</i>) to receive food. • The man names his wife, Eve (<i>ḥavvah</i>), since she will be the mother of all living (<i>ḥay</i>).
<p>Gen 3:21 - God clothed them in tunics (priestly garments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>kuttonet</i> - technical term, referring to the priestly garments when God is the subject of the clothing (Sailhamer, <i>The Pentateuch</i>, 109-110). • They continued in their roles as priests. • They were expelled from the sanctuary - The Garden of Eden. • They brought the <i>proto-evangelium</i> to the world.

**IDOL MEAT AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN:
REFLECTIONS ON CHURCH UNITY**

ASRS Presidential Address
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Baltimore, MD

CARL P. COSAERT
Walla Walla University
College Place, Washington

Last year in Chicago the Adventist Society of Religious Studies (ASRS) decided that the theme of this year's meeting would be: Adventism, Scripture, and Unity. The theme was chosen in the hope of providing the church with helpful discussion regarding the challenges we face in preserving the unity of a growing denomination that encompasses more than 17 million people of vastly different backgrounds and cultures around the world. As I began thinking about the specific direction of my presidential address last year, several people suggested I focus my paper around my background in New Testament textual criticism, picking perhaps an interesting textual variant that might shed some light on our discussion of unity. As much as I tried, I could just not come to peace on that option, though it would have been in many ways an easier and safer paper. So I apologize to those of you who were hoping for a titillating Friday night presentation on textual criticism. I decided, instead, to pick a much more sensitive and therefore risky subject—the issue of the ordination of women in relation to the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At the outset of my address, however, I want to state clearly that my purpose is not to make an argument either for or against the ordination of women. My goal is rather to consider the current situation in light of the issue of church unity.

It is somewhat ironic that I've chosen this topic, since for the vast portion of my ministry I've had little interest in the issue of the ordination of women. As a student and pastor, and even during my first few years as a professor, I was always far more interested in the debates about the nature of sin, righteousness by faith, and the humanity of Christ than I ever was with the issue of women in ministry. Although I was personally uncomfortable with the idea of having a female pastor, and questioned the practice of ordaining women in light of certain passages in the Bible, particularly those of the apostle Paul, the issue seemed largely irrelevant to me. As I look back now, however, I see that all those other debates have largely subsided. Yet the issue of the ordination of women has not only not gone away, but it has grown to the point that in the minds of some it now has the potential to threaten the unity of this denomination more than any other issue.

Although I used to be largely opposed to the ordination of women, my personal perspective on the issue has changed over the last several years as

I began working on a project in 1 Timothy. As a result of my work, I was invited to present a paper on 1 Tim 2 at the General Conference's Theology of Ordination Study Committee in Baltimore last summer.¹ While I went into the meeting with some degree of optimism that a historic consensus might be reached, I did not leave nearly as optimistic. Those arguing for and against ordaining women seemed strongly entrenched in their positions, with little common ground between them. As I talked with various people, many felt that without divine intervention they simply did not see how a consensus could be reached.

Complicating the issue is the fact that the divide between the two camps is not just the classical division between liberals and conservatives, or even between our two societies. Individuals on both sides of the issue belong to Adventist Theological Society (ATS) and Adventist Society of Religious Studies (ASRS), and I believe those on both sides of the issue also hold a high view of Scripture and appeal to it for the sole basis of their position. The two groups simply disagree over how to interpret several passages from Scripture—and in particular the question of whether God created men and women as equals. Those favoring ordaining women argue God did and that the headship/leadership of men over women was instituted only after the Fall, and that it applies only to husbands and wives in the home.² Those on the other side claim that God established male headship over women from the very beginning.³ As an extension of that divine ideal, the headship of men over women also applies to life within the church. Therefore, on the basis of the creation order, it is claimed that women are not only unsuited to serve as senior pastors,⁴ but in the minds of some, they should not even serve as local elders.⁵

With little hope of resolving the current theological impasse, and with neither side at all pleased with the status quo, the situation we face as a church

¹Carl P. Cosaert, "Paul, Women, and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timothy 2:8-15" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 23, 2013).

²E.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Considerations" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 24, 2013).

³E.g., Paul S. Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako, "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 24, 2013); P. Gerard Damsteegt, "Headship, Gender, and Ordination in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 23, 2013).

⁴Ingo Sorke, "Adam, Where Are You? On Gender Relations" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 23, 2013), 37.

⁵Damsteegt, 33. Stephen Bohr, "A Study of 1 Peter 2:9, 10 and Galatians 3:28" (paper presented at the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Baltimore, MD, July 23, 2013), 76.

appears rather hopeless. At the same time, however, I am reminded that it is in the midst of seemingly impossible situations that God often works in mighty ways. As I began to think about how God might work in this situation, I decided to start looking for examples of how He worked in the past (1 Cor 10:11). My hope was to find a comparable situation that might prove helpful in resolving our current dilemma. I quickly discovered, however, that although Scripture is full of stories about God's divine intervention, not all of them apply equally to our current situation. For example, while God overcame all odds to deliver Hezekiah from the Assyrians surrounding Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18-19), just as He had delivered the children of Israel from the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Exod 14), I'm not convinced that either of these stories is similar enough to our current situation for valid lessons to be drawn. Our challenge is not from outside, but division from within.

Others have suggested that the mutiny of Korah during the Exodus serves as an appropriate analogy (Num 16).⁶ While this analogy certainly includes the issue of leadership, it falters on several points. First, it assumes an equivalency between the temple and the church. This is certainly not the case, at least in Protestantism. The temple was a place where sacrifices were offered and where God dwelt. As such, the ministry of the earthly temple ceased with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The ministry of the church is far more comparable to a Jewish synagogue—a place for worship, teaching, and community. Secondly, ministry within the temple was limited not only to Jewish men, but only men from the tribe of the Levites, with the further qualification that only the sons of Aaron could serve as priests. Those distinctions are no longer valid. Moreover, the only solution this model proposes would be divine intervention leading to the destruction of those seen on the wrong side of the issue—hardly a constructive framework for moving forward today (Num 16:31-35).

A more promising analogy is the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, since there we find a division within the church. The issue faced at the Jerusalem Council was whether circumcision was a prerequisite to faith in Jesus. Although the issue was internal, it centered on the fundamental teaching of the church—the gospel. Those who argued circumcision was necessary were ultimately claiming that belief in Jesus was not sufficient for salvation. In response to this claim, the Council declared that salvation is rooted in faith in Christ alone. Faith in Jesus did not need to be supplemented with circumcision. To the extent that either side in the issue of women's ordination seeks to make their position an issue of salvation, the Council in Jerusalem serves as a warning not to add anything to the gospel message. I am not saying that the issue of ordination is not an important issue. Clearly it is. Nor am I saying that

⁶Stephen Bohr, "Mutiny in the Camp: Korah's Rebellion" (*Great Apostasies of the Bible* 6; Fresno Central SDA Church: Secrets Unsealed, accessed October 7, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cdAj3xoYz4>; John Witcombe, "None Dare Call it Rebellion," *OrdinationTruth.com* (2013), accessed October 7, 2013, <http://ordinationtruth.com/featured/none-dare-call-it-rebellion>; Ronald W. Pierce, "Male/Female Leadership and Korah's Revolt: An Analogy?," *JETS* 30 (1987), 3-10.

obedience to the word of God is not important. Obedience to Christ is of utmost importance. What I mean is that I do not think ordination is a salvation issue. I find it hard to believe that we would claim that a person would be damned for the position they take on the issue of ordination. If we do, then we need to consider seriously our position in light of the Acts 15 decision against circumcision.

As helpful as the Jerusalem Council is for our current situation, I think there is still a better analogy, one that more fully parallels the situation we find ourselves in as a denomination. As it turns out, that analogy is actually related to one of the issues that came of the decision reached in Acts 15, though it might sound rather odd at first. I am referring to the question among the believers in Corinth over whether Christians should eat food that had been offered to idols. While this analogy does not address the issue of leadership, it does deal directly with a situation in which different opinions had the potential of destroying the unity of the early church in Corinth—as well as the unity of the larger sisterhood of churches. And unlike the issue of circumcision in Acts 15, where one side was in the right and the other wrong, the issue of food offered to idols was not so cut and dried. It was a situation where both sides needed to adjust their perspective. For these reasons, Paul's reaction to the problem in Corinth has the potential for providing us with some helpful insights on how we might address the theological stalemate we face today as a world church with the issue of the ordination of women.

Before drawing implications for our situation today, I'll first "flesh" out the subject by briefly considering the issue of idol meat and the early church, and then Paul's reaction to the division among believers on it in Corinth.

Idol Meat and the Jerusalem Council

The expansion of the missionary focus of the early church to include Gentiles into the body of Christ was anything but easy. The earliest Christians were Jews who saw themselves as followers of a Jewish Messiah. Although they had reoriented their practice of Judaism on the person of Jesus, they made no distinction between what we might call Jewish culture and theological belief. The earliest Christians were not opposed to the inclusion of Gentiles as followers of Jesus, but for them it meant that Gentiles had to become Jews. The influence of purity laws and the belief that contact with Gentiles made a person ritually impure made the association with uncircumcised Gentiles unthinkable to some. It was Peter's disregard for these purity concerns that outraged a group of Jewish Christians when they learned that the apostle had shared a meal with a Roman centurion, let alone that he had also baptized him (Acts 11:1-3).

As the number of uncircumcised Gentile converts increased rapidly in connection with the missionary activities of the apostle Paul, the situation finally reached a breaking point. After the influence of a group of Jewish believers had shattered the blessing of fellowship between Jewish and Gentile

Christians around a common meal in Syrian Antioch (Gal 2:11-14),⁷ a council was called in Jerusalem to settle the issue of whether Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be full-fledged members of the Christian church (Acts 15:1-29). Although strong opinions were expressed on both sides, the testimony of the apostles Peter and Paul ultimately prevailed. It was decided that Gentiles did not need to submit to circumcision in order to be Christians—they could be Christian without becoming Jewish, a conclusion the Spirit was already confirming through the presence of Spirit-filled Gentiles.

In considering what other issues might hinder the fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers, the Council ruled that while Gentile believers need not become Jewish, they should abstain from four practices that were seen as a source of defilement.⁸ Drawing upon the laws in Leviticus 17 and 18 that addressed the behavior of foreigners living among Israel,⁹ Gentile Christians were asked to abstain (Gr. *apechō*, “avoid contact”) from: (1) things polluted by idols, understood primarily as a reference to idol meat¹⁰ (cf. 15:29; 21:25); (2) sexual immorality, a reference to the illicit sexual relations outlined in Lev 18, and by application probably temple prostitution; (3) eating things

⁷I advocate here the belief that the Southern Galatian theory best explains the situation between Acts and Paul’s letter to the Galatians. For the arguments associated with this view, see e.g., Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 8-20; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 3-18.

⁸There are several interesting textual variants associated with the so-called apostolic decree. The textual dilemma surrounds whether the decree contained three or four stipulations, and if only three, which of the four should be eliminated—a few witnesses omit the reference to sexual immorality (*porneia*; p⁴⁵), while others omit the reference to eating strangled meat (*pniktos*; Codex D) and even add a negative form of the Golden Rule. As the different readings suggest, the confusion centered on whether the decree was intended to be entirely ceremonial, ethical, or a mixture of the two. Although the evidence for the latter two readings appears to date back as far as the first half of the second century, the strength of the textual evidence and the textual critical principle that the most difficult reading is to be preferred overwhelmingly indicates the quadrilateral form of the decree is most likely the initial reading. Carl P. Cosaert, “A Quadrilateral Or Trilateral Decision? The Textual Variants of the Apostolic Decree” (unpublished manuscript, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002); Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 379-383.

⁹Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 109; Darrell Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 505-07; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, SP 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 273.

¹⁰The noun *aligēma* (“pollution”) occurs only here. The fact that idol meat is in mind can be seen in the noun’s verbal form (*aligein*) in the LXX, where it occurs five times in relation to matters of food (Dan 1:8; Mal 1:7 (x2), 12; Sir 40:29). This is confirmed with the specific use of the word *eidōlothyton* (“offered to a cultic image/idol”) in the other two accounts of the decree in Acts 15:29 and 21:25. Johnson, 266.

strangled, that is meat not properly drained of blood;¹¹ and (4) eating blood (Acts 15:20). The list is repeated with minor variation in Acts 15:29 and 21:25. As leading missionaries to the Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned with taking the news of this decision to the Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 15:23-25).

Although much could be said about the ruling, two items are particularly significant for our consideration. First, the purpose of the fourfold Jerusalem proscription was not to produce some kind of a creed, but a practical attempt to preserve the fellowship and unity of the church. As Richard Davidson notes, its concern was not “primarily theological but more sociological in nature.”¹² As such the decree does not outline what the church was to believe, but what the church was to be—an inclusive body of Jews and Gentiles united together in their devotion to Jesus. This is evident in James’ interpretation of Amos 9:11-12 LXX as a prophecy about the exaltation of Christ, the seed of David, and the establishment of His people. The passage in Amos states that Jews would not be the only ones included in God’s eschatological restoration of David’s kingdom, but that it would also include Gentiles who would be welcomed just as they were—solely upon the basis of God’s grace.¹³

The concern for the unity of the church is also evident in that three of the four proscriptions involve dietary practices associated with food eaten among Gentiles, and particularly in connection with rites and feasts in pagan temples: idol meat, things strangled, and blood.¹⁴ The association of these activities with idolatry would have inhibited Jews from fellowshiping with their Gentile brothers and sisters around a common meal. This would have been a significant problem among early Christian churches in eastern cities like Antioch, where a minority of Gentile believers interacted with a larger number of Jewish believers. Preserving the ability of Jews and Gentiles to eat together was clearly an important aspect behind this ruling. Table fellowship not only contributed to the unity of the church, but it also served as a visible manifestation of the message of the gospel—the message of reconciliation (Eph 2:1-22).¹⁵

¹¹E.g., Philo, *Special Laws* 4:122-123.

¹²Richard Davidson, “Which Torah Laws Should Gentile Christians Obey? The Relationship Between Leviticus 17–18 and Acts 15” (paper, Evangelical Theological Society 59th Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, Nov. 15, 2007). I am particularly thankful to Richard Davidson for providing me with a revised and expanded edition of his paper, which is now coauthored with Erick Mendieta. This citation is from page four of that manuscript.

¹³David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 432; N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone: Part 2* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 45; John Stott, *The Spirit, The Church, and The World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 247-250; Bock, 503-505.

¹⁴Bock, 506.

¹⁵Bradley Blue, “Food Offered to Idols and Jewish Food Laws,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 307.

The second item of significance for our consideration is that the prohibition against eating idol meat is not explicitly mentioned in Leviticus 17 or 18. The actual prohibition in Leviticus is against sacrificing to demons or idols—thus a prohibition against idolatry.¹⁶ This suggests that the ruling should not be seen as coming directly out of a strict application of Lev 17 and 18 to the Gentile believers, but in this particular instance a more general application in harmony with the ethos of the text.¹⁷ Although idol meat is not explicitly mentioned in Leviticus, the association of it with idolatry would have been easily made in the minds of Jewish believers—just as sexual immorality was also associated with pagan temples.

Here it is important to remember that pagan temples functioned both as a place of worship, which meant sacrifice, and a sort of restaurant. After dedicating and sacrificing an animal to a temple's god or goddess, a portion of the sacrificial meat would often be cooked and then served to the worshipper and his family as part of a celebratory meal in one of the many banqueting rooms within a temple complex.¹⁸ Such celebrations were notorious for leading to other forms of unseemly behavior, particularly sexual immorality. With few public spaces large enough to accommodate significant events, temples were a popular place to gather for celebratory events involving a meal. An invitation to one such meal survives from ancient Corinth: "Heraias asks you to dine in the dining room of the Sarapeum at a banquet of the Lord Sarapis tomorrow, namely the 11th, from the 9th hour."¹⁹

Surplus temple meat would also be sold in the local market place to the general public. Since meat was a delicacy in the ancient world, most of the meat in a Gentile market would be meat that had been originally offered as part of a sacrifice. With such strong connections to idolatry, it is little wonder that the Jewish Christians who formed the Jerusalem Council would have associated eating idol meat as a source of impurity that would have hindered full fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers.

While the ruling in Acts 15 certainly sought to maintain the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers, the prohibition against eating idol meat was

¹⁶Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 243-244.

¹⁷Bock, 506-507; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 464-465. This does not undermine the perspective linking Acts 15 and Lev 17 and 18; it merely demonstrates the association of eating idol meat with idolatry in the mind of the early church.

¹⁸Evidence of this can be seen in the discovery of at least 36 dining rooms in connection to the temple to Demeter in Corinth. Though it was not functioning in Paul's day, it illustrates what sort of facilities would have been found in other Corinthian temples in the first century. See Nancy Bookidis, Julie Hansen, Lynn Snyder, and Paul Goldberg, "Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth," *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 68 (1999), 1-54.

¹⁹Cited in, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 164.

not universally accepted among some largely Gentile congregations. Evidence that eating idol meat was a controversial topic among believers can be seen in the fact that the practice is condemned in the church elsewhere in the New Testament, as well as in other Christian writings on into the second century.²⁰ If it were not a problem in the church, it certainly would not need to be condemned. In his letters to the believers in Pergamum and Thyatira, John the Revelator rebukes the church for tolerating the practice of partaking of idol meat (Rev 2:14, 20). A warning against eating idol meat is also found in the Christian writing known as the Didache: “Now concerning food, bear what you are able, but in any case keep strictly away from meat sacrificed to idols, for it involves the worship of dead gods.”²¹

It is important to note that in both of these instances, the practice of eating idol meat is not prohibited in itself. The Didache condemns it because of its connection to false worship, while it is linked with sexual immortality in Revelation.

The clearest evidence we have of the controversial nature of the issue of idol meat among believers, however, is among Gentile Christians in the city of Corinth.

Idol Meat and the Corinthians

Although founded by the apostle Paul during his second missionary journey, and under his tutelage for 18 months, the largely Gentile church in Corinth quickly lost its way after his departure. During his later ministry in Ephesus, news reached the apostle that the church in Corinth had splintered into factions with disagreements on a number of different issues. The issue of idol meat was one of those problems dividing the church. One group within the church had absolutely no qualms about the legitimacy of eating idol meat, while others were seriously opposed to it. The fact that Paul spends three chapters discussing the issue illustrates that he recognized that this was more than just a minor rift. It was a major issue that had the potential to split the church.

On one side of the issue was a group of Gentile believers who not only saw no problem in eating meat that had been part of a sacrifice offered in a pagan temple, but who also saw nothing wrong with even eating the meat in a pagan temple. What was the problem, they reasoned? The pagan gods were not real, after all—every Christian should know that (cf. 1 Cor 8:1, 4). Moreover, Paul had not barred Christians from fellowshiping with non-believers. So what was the harm in attending a wedding feast or funeral for

²⁰For an excellent account of the issue of food offered to idols within the first three centuries of the church in relation to Paul's discussion of the issue in Corinth, see John Brunt, “Rejected, Ignored, or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food Offered to Idols in Early Christianity,” *NTS* 31 (1985), 113-24.

²¹*Did* 6:3 in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3d ed.; ed. and trans. Michael Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

a friend that was held in a pagan temple, as they regularly were, or from participating in social or business activities that would have required joining in a meal being hosted at one of the many temples in Corinth? It was not as if they were actually acknowledging the lordship of these so-called gods. They knew better than that. Their overall mentality toward the issue can be seen in the statement: “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better of if we do” (1 Cor 8:8). Overly confident in their own wisdom, these individuals not only looked down upon those with different opinions as spiritually naïve, but they also appear to have been trying to educate them by belittling their opinion and pressuring them against their conscience to join them in the freedom of “eating in an idol’s temple” (1 Cor 8:10).²²

At the same time, another group of Gentile believers were extremely uncomfortable with this practice. Although these individuals had come out of idolatry and now believed in the existence of only one almighty God, the draw to the old way of life made them extremely uncomfortable with having anything to do with the pagan cult. Regardless of the arguments of others, they wanted nothing to do with meat offered to idols, whether it was eaten in a temple or even bought in a local market. Paul therefore refers to these individuals as the “weak,” since “their conscience would not allow them to eat meat sacrificed to gods that, to use Paul’s words, the ‘strong’ knew did not exist (1 Cor 8:4-6).”²³ The practice of their opponents, however, put the “weak” in a difficult position. They not only had to deal with the theological pressure from their fellow Christians within the church on this issue, but they also faced the social pressure from outside the church as they struggled to explain why they refused to join in public celebrations at pagan temples, while other Christians had no problem in doing so. As is often the case in these sorts of interpersonal problems, the “weak” appear to have responded by condemning the “strong” for claiming the freedom to eat idol meat (1 Cor 10:29-30).

Paul’s Response to the Corinthians

What is fascinating about Paul’s response to this difference of opinion among the Corinthian believers on the issue of idol meat is the way he goes about solving it, or should I say the way he does not solve it. In the eyes of some, Paul’s response in Corinth should have been relatively simple. The Jerusalem Conference had made a clear ruling on this issue. They had asked that Gentiles no longer partake of food offered to idols. All Paul needed to do was to apply the ruling in Acts 15 to the situation in Corinth. He could have simply said the following: “Now concerning food offered to idols: we all know that the church already has a position on this subject. Official church policy requires that Gentiles abstain from food that has been sacrificed to idols. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

²²Murphy-O’Connor, 569-560.

²³Larry Richards, *1 Corinthians* (Nampa, ID: 1997), 145.

Therefore, make sure you are in conformity on this issue so your actions may give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.”

Yet, surprisingly, Paul’s response is nothing like this at all. Although the apostolic ruling addressed this very issue, Paul does not even mention it. And instead of giving what would have been a rather straightforward response of three or four sentences, Paul launches into a complicated and lengthy explanation that spans three entire chapters (8-10).

Paul’s failure to mention the Jerusalem Council’s ruling on idol meat was certainly not due to any lapse of memory on his part. The decision of the Council was huge in regards to circumcision—Paul would not have forgotten it. Moreover, along with Barnabas, he had been commissioned to announce the ruling to the Gentile believers in the East (Acts 15:22-26). His actions, I believe, were deliberate. Under the influence of the Spirit, Paul realized that if he simply evoked official church policy, he would have undermined the very cause that had prompted the Council’s decision in the first place—preserving the fellowship and unity of the church. Paul had to find a way to preserve the unity of the church, but to also uphold the principle behind the ruling itself.

It is also clear that the believers in Corinth needed far more than just another rule. The church had deeper issues that needed to be addressed. They were not struggling due to a lack of information, but the failure to see how that information should affect the way they lived the Christian life. He had to find a way not simply to say no, but to help the Corinthians develop a more mature level of obedience in response to the work of Christ.

Paul goes about this in a masterful way. In addition to refusing to apply a rule in a sort of mechanical fashion, the apostle also refused to take sides on the issue. Since his argument spans three chapters, it is often easy to miss this point. At first glance, his appeal to the “strong” in chapter 8 to discontinue eating meat in an idol’s temple for the sake of others appears to place Paul in the camp of those opposed to idol meat. His warning against idolatry in chapter 10 also gives the same appearance. Although it is true that idols have no real existence, he warns the “strong” that idolatrous practices are connected to demonic activity (10:19-20). So while idol meat may not be harmful in and of itself, Christians cannot eat idol meat in connection with pagan worship without being negatively influenced (10:21-22).

Yet right when it looks as if Paul has completely taken the side of the “weak,” he turns around and says that believers should “eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience” (10:25). If you buy meat, you don’t have to look at the label. Paul’s point here is not clean or unclean meat, but temple meat. His concern, as Witherington notes, “is clearly one of venue rather than menu.”²⁴ This certainly was not the position of the weak. Not only does Paul not see a problem with Christians purchasing and eating meat offered in the meat market, wherever it comes from; he adds that when invited to the house of an unbeliever they should also eat what is served to them without worrying about whether it had been

²⁴Witherington, *Acts*, 466.

offered to an idol or not (10:27).²⁵ Evidence that some of the more affluent Corinthian believers would likely encounter just this sort of situation can be seen in Plutarch's (c. 46–120) account of a sumptuous meal served in the affluent home of a certain Ariston near Corinth:

Ariston's cook made a hit with the dinner guests not only because of his general skill, but because the cock he set before the diners, though it had just been slaughtered as a sacrifice to Heracles, was as tender as if it had been a day old.²⁶

The fact that the “weak” would not have supported Paul's position can be seen in the exception Paul makes in regards to eating at the home of an unbeliever. “But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—I do not mean your conscience, but his” (10:28-29a).

Since abstaining from eating was for the sake of the individual pointing out that the food had been offered in sacrifice, it seems unlikely that the “someone” Paul has in mind is a pagan—whether the host or another guest. After all, the host was the one who planned the dinner, and seeing idol meat on the menu would not have posed a problem of conscience for a non-Christian guest.²⁷ It is far more likely that the informant Paul has in mind is a Christian who belongs to the “weak” within the church—either a slave serving the food within the household of the unbelieving host, or perhaps another Christian guest.²⁸ Worried about the consumption of idol meat, this sort of fellow Christian would have felt compelled to whisper some word of warning into the ear of another Christian guest.

In making this exception, Paul refused to place himself in either camp. Those opposed to idol meat would be opposed to it in any case, while those in

²⁵It is interesting to note that Paul does not refer to meat purchased in the marketplace with the same terminology used earlier. He uses the more pejorative word *eidolōthyton* (“idol meat”) to refer to meat sacrificed and eaten in an idol's temple (8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19), but the somewhat more gentle term *hierothyton* (“sacrificial meat”) to refer to temple meat eaten in an individual's home (10:28).

²⁶Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 6.10.1 (Hoffleit, LCL).

²⁷Archibald T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC; 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 221-222; C. F. G. Heinrici, *Das erste Sendschreiben des Apostel Paulus an die Korinther* (Berlin: Hertz, 1880), 287-288.

²⁸Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 787; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 177; David Horrell, “Theological Principle or Christological Praxis? Pauline Ethics In 1 Corinthians 8.1-11.1,” *JSNT* 67 (1997): 103; J. Weiss, *Der Briefe an die Korinther* (NTD 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 264-265. Although others argue that the “someone” is an unbeliever (e.g., David Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 495), in the end the point is still the same. Paul is not opposed to Christians eating idol meat in itself. His concern is about the venue within which it is eaten.

favor of it certainly did not think that their freedom to eat had to be limited by the fears of fellow believers whom they looked upon as spiritually immature. If Paul had taken either side in the argument, instead of helping the situation, he would have merely added fuel to the fire. By trying to stay above the fray, Paul was able to attempt to foster a spirit of unity, rather than encouraging the “us” versus “them” mentality that was already crippling the church.

Finally, in addition to refusing to apply a rule and take sides on the issue, Paul also set out to solve the problem by attempting to reframe the issue from focusing on the boundaries of Christian freedom to the issue of love. Some of the Corinthians had embraced their freedom in Christ to the exclusion of concern for their fellow believers. These individuals felt it was their right to partake of food offered to idols. They knew better than others. Paul, however, wanted them to look at the issue from a larger perspective than just themselves. He wanted the “strong” to consider the issue from the standpoint of unity. How would their actions affect the body as a whole? What impact would their actions have on the spiritual life of others within the community of faith? Paul attempts to refocus the issue on love in each of the places where he anticipates push-back from the Corinthians (cf. 8:8-13; 10:27-29). Moreover, Paul does not merely command these Corinthians to surrender their rights; in chapter 9 he models how his own ministry was not based on getting what rightfully belonged to him, whether familial or financial rights (9:5-12a), but in living a life of self-denial for the benefit of others (9:12b, 15-23).

Although Paul focuses entirely on his response to the “strong” in 1 Cor 8-10, his implied response to the “weak” is also one of mutual acceptance.²⁹ This is evident in Paul’s fuller discussion of food issues dividing the “weak” and the “strong” in Rom 14:1–15:13, although idol meat is not explicitly mentioned. “Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats” (Rom 14:3). Thus the solution to the problem of idol meat in Corinth is not in Paul’s declaration that one side is the winner and the other the loser—after all, both sides had valid points. The solution was in both sides realizing the validity of aspects of the other’s perspective, and learning to live together in unity—a unity not based in uniformity, but one that allowed for diversity in perspective in areas not in opposition to the gospel message itself.

Reflections on the Ordination of Women

What connections or lessons might Paul’s counsel to the division among the believers in Corinth over the issue of idol meat have for us in regard to the division within our own church on the issue of women’s ordination? As I’ve reflected on this, the following observations may be of some value.

First, for the sake of unity, we should be careful to avoid allowing or encouraging a “rush to judgment” on the issue of ordination by attempting to enforce our own sort of apostolic ruling—in this case either some church policy, or perhaps the actions of the 1990 or 1995 General Conference

²⁹Hays, 178.

Sessions regarding ordination. As Paul certainly realized in Corinth, evoking official policy when major issues of unity are involved is often interpreted as nothing more than a political power play that almost always results in further division rather than unity. Where there are strong feelings on issues that are not part of the core beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the better decision is to encourage dialogue that allows people's opinions to be heard on the issue.

In this regard, the General Conference has shown considerable wisdom in establishing division-wide study committees and the larger General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) to encourage dialogue on ordination that allows people's opinions and voices to be heard. In a church that is run more and more by committees and enacted policies, it is easy to bypass this process in favor of just enforcing policy. Administrators are often interested in keeping issues as simple and clear as possible, and often have little patience for the ways in which they feel theologians tend to "complicate" issues. Yet this is exactly what the apostle Paul did in Corinth. Instead of merely quoting the apostolic ruling, he complicated the issue by dedicating three entire chapters to discussing it. Paul did not complicate the issue just because he was a theologian, but because when church unity is at stake, simple answers are never satisfactory. Although individuals on both sides of the issue would prefer it, a quick decision would leave one side feeling that their perspective was not given a fair hearing.

Secondly, it would be wise to also follow Paul's lead in making sure that while arguing for one side or the other on ordination, we do not lose sight of the priority of love. For Paul the issue of idol meat was not merely a doctrinal matter; it was also about people and the way they were treated. In our case, we should not forget that in discussing the ordination of women we are ultimately talking about a group of fellow believers in the advent movement who feel called by God to do a work of ministry—many of whom are currently holding positions of leadership. If we approach ordination in a mechanical fashion, as if these women did not exist, whether we favor ordination or not, we are guilty of making the same mistake both sides made in Corinth: failure to care genuinely for their fellow believers. The "strong" were guilty of this by arguing their position with absolutely no thought about the believers who were affected by their actions, while the "weak" did the same thing by attributing the worst to the actions of the "strong" (10:30). Maligning our opponents or belittling their perspectives only leads to division.

Redefining the issue of women's ordination around love does not necessarily mean that one side has to entirely surrender their position on this issue. When Paul says, "If food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble," he is condemning the "strong" for trying to force the "weak" to eat idol meat against their conscience. Although Paul himself sees no problem in idol meat itself (10:25-27), he realizes that forcing another person whose conscience is not clear on the issue is actually making that person commit what they feel is an act of sin. In our case, the equivalent to this would be attempting to force a woman to be ordained when

her own conscience was not clear on the issue. Another example would be forcing one or more of our world divisions to follow the lead of the North American Division on the issue of women's ordination, or for that matter, in forcing the North American Division and others not to ordain women because some world divisions oppose it.

N. T. Wright's comments on this point are strongly worded, but worth noting:

This isn't an excuse for people with small minds and badly educated consciences to prevent the rest of the church doing things that are harmless in themselves. Sometimes people from a very narrow background, full of rules and restrictions which have nothing to do with the gospel itself and everything to do with a particular social subculture, try to insist that all other good Christians should join them in their tight little world. But in a case like that the rule-bound Christians are in no danger of being "led astray." They are quite sure of their own correctness.³⁰

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, is recognizing that a lack of agreement on some issues does not necessarily mean the unity of the church is at risk. Or to put it another way, unity does not necessarily require uniformity.

Due to Paul's lengthy and complicated response to the issue of idol meat in Corinth, the point is often missed that Paul's failure to condemn the practice of eating idol meat outright was actually not in harmony with the literal reading of the Jerusalem Council's decision prohibiting eating food offered to idols. As such, the church in Corinth was actually not in harmony with the "official policy" of the world church.

Surprisingly, Paul does not seem concerned about this reality. His lack of concern for following the exact letter of the apostolic ruling does not betray an attitude of rebelliousness nor a desire to separate from the larger church body. If it did, Paul certainly would not have reminded the Corinthians at the end of his letter of the importance of contributing to the financial collection he was gathering as a show of unity and support for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-3). In the same way that Paul did not feel his actions in Corinth were opposed to the greater unity of the early church, so we should avoid labeling the decisions of those unions who have voted to ordain without regard to gender as acts of "defiance," "rebellion," or "apostasy."³¹ Such harsh terminology is itself certainly not conducive for prompting the very unity these critics claim to champion. While we may not agree with the decision unions or conferences have made in relation to ordination, they certainly have not ceased from adhering to the central teachings of Adventism, nor have they ceased supporting the world church financially. In fact, in each case, they

³⁰N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 103.

³¹OrdinationTruth.com, "Netherlands Union Renews Rebellion Against General Conference." July 7, 2013. Accessed November 15, 2013. <http://ordinationtruth.com/2013/07/07/netherlands-union-renews-rebellion-against-general-conference/>.

have sought the guidance of the Spirit as they have moved forward under the direction of their individual constituencies.

Although we might find Paul's actions in Corinth troubling to a certain extent, I believe Paul's actions were motivated by two convictions.

First, Paul's utmost concern was clearly for the unity of the local church in Corinth. Like any pastor, his primary responsibility was the situation of the church at hand. The greater unity of the worldwide church would have meant nothing without the local unity of the church under his jurisdiction. After all, in the broadest sense, unity was the ultimate concern of the fourfold ruling of the Jerusalem Council. Since the issue of eating idol meat itself was not central to the message of the gospel, Paul did not feel compelled to risk damaging the work of a struggling church in Europe over the issue.

While I personally wish that the various union conferences that have acted to ordain without regard to gender could have waited until after the Theology of Ordination Study Committee had completed its task, I believe that, like Paul, they too felt their actions were necessary to best further the cause of God in their local field, which, after all, should be their primary concern.

Secondly, Paul likely felt that although his position on idol meat was not in harmony with the literal reading of the decree of the Jerusalem Council, it certainly was in harmony with the spirit of the ruling. The concern with idol meat was ultimately a concern about the dangers of idolatry. While Jewish believers tended to link the two together, the two were not necessarily one and the same. After all, even the passages in Lev 17 and 18 that formed the basis of the apostolic ruling did not specifically condemn idol meat; it was idolatry that was prohibited (Lev 17:7-9). In the situation in Corinth, Paul had clearly condemned the practice of participating in social events that involved attending pagan temples. While the Jewish believers in Jerusalem questioned some of Paul's actions (Acts 21:20-21), Paul certainly did not believe that local variance in aspects of church practice in Corinth was opposed to the larger unity of the church.

If Corinth could differ from other churches on the issue of idol meat and still be united with the larger body of Christ—perhaps we need not fear that recognizing the right of local unions to establish their own ordination policies in regard to gender will undermine the unity of the world church. After all, on this issue at least, unions do seem to be the Pauline equivalent of a local church, since each is responsible for maintaining the unity of the church in its own region and in its own way. Besides, the unity of the church has not been hindered by the decades-long practice of allowing each of the world divisions to determine whether General Conference policy allowing local women elders is implemented in their field.

Does this address all our issues? No, I'm sure it doesn't. No analogy is perfect. But I do think Paul's response to the situation in Corinth shows us a path forward. As such it deserves our careful consideration as we seek to preserve the unity of the Advent movement as it encompasses an ever-growing number of believers and cultures around the world.

THE TWO WITNESSES AND THE LAND BEAST IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

KAYLE B. DE WAAL
Avondale College of Higher Education
Cooranbong, Australia

The two witnesses of Rev 11:3-7 and the land beast of Rev 13:11-15 are perplexing passages with potent symbols that John enlists in communicating his visions to the members of the seven congregations in Asia Minor. This article proposes a literary and theological relationship between the two witnesses and the land beast. While this proposal is not new, the article aims to develop more fully the relationship between the land beast and the two witnesses in the following manner: (1) by examining the Old Testament background of especially the land beast; (2) by strengthening the relationship between these two passages on the basis of verbal and thematic parallels; (3) by articulating a freshly nuanced position on the identity of the land beast in contradistinction to other scholarly views; (4) and by demonstrating an aspect of the cosmic conflict between the two witnesses and the land beast.¹

¹The literary and theological relationship between Rev 11:3-7 and Rev 13:11-15 has only been explored by a few scholars. A monograph on the chiasmic relationship between these two chapters has been written by Antonius King Wai Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiasmic Reading of Revelation 11:1-14:5*, LNTS 283 (London: T & T Clark, 2005) who will be an important conversation partner in this article. The most detailed comments are those of Edith Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*, JSPSup 17 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 100, in which she states that “the two witnesses are foiled, for example, by the two beasts. This is underscored by the time period used in both chapters (1260 days = 42 months at 11:2, 3 and 13:5), and by the early reference to the beast in 11:7.” She also refers to the contrasting reactions to the wonders performed at 11:13 and 13:4. The earliest reference I could find that refers to the relationship between the two witnesses and the land beast is that of Martin Kiddle, *Revelation* (London: Hodder, 1940), 252-54. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 707, follows Kiddle but does not develop the idea any further. Other commentators make only passing reference to the relationship between the chapters. John Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 46, suggests that “there is no structural break at the end of chapter 11 . . . the references to ‘three and a half’ bind 11-13 together.” Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 367; Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 30, and Louis Brighton, *Revelation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) also provide passing reference to this literary relationship. The most sustained development of this relationship is the work of Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002). Cf. Kenneth Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 172-196.

The cosmic conflict between God and Satan is an important biblical background against which to understand the book of Revelation and is the framework within which this article will explore the relationship between these two entities.² Further, the scholarly consensus is that the Old Testament is indispensable for a responsible interpretation of the book of Revelation.³ Gregory Beale says, “the Old Testament in general plays such a major role that a proper understanding of its use is necessary for an adequate view of the Apocalypse as a whole.”⁴

The methodology in this article builds on the work of Jon Paulien and Beate Kowalski.⁵ We will not be slavishly following Paulien and Kowalski in

²See Sigve Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of the Apocalypse*, LNTS 337 (London: T & T Clark, 2007). Recent scholarly discussion has denoted the cosmic controversy more explicitly: see Gregory Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997). Idem., *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Stephen T. Davis (ed.), *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). Boyd, in particular, has demonstrated how the notion of combat myth is central to the thinking and worldview of many cultures. He correctly asserts, however, that the mythic combat stories in these cultures anticipate the warfare worldview found in Scripture. While I have cast the cosmic conflict as the central background against which the book of Revelation must be understood, Adela Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 232, sees “the paradigmatic character of Rev. 12 for the book as a whole” as “illustrated in terms of the pattern of the combat myth.” She argues that the entire book of Revelation must be seen within this mythic combat. For critique of Collins see Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 62. The cosmic conflict is especially portrayed in Rev 12–14. The notion of a final conflict between God and Satan is anticipated in the eschatological period which would result in Satan's defeat (see 1QM 15.12-16.1; 17.5-8; 11QMelch 13-14; *T. Levi* 18.12; *T. Dan.* 5.10; Sibylline Oracles 3.796-807; *T. Jud.* 25.3).

³A number of important monographs have been written: Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development*, JSNTSup 93 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); David Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003) and Marko Jauhainen, *The Use of Zechariah in Revelation*, WUNT 2. Reihe 199 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

⁴G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSOTSup 166 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 61.

⁵Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, AUSDDS (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 156-157 and Beate Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes*, Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge 52 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 57-59. Their methodology is built on the

the implementation of the methodology but it will serve as a guide in our interpretation. The text reads:

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

This is an intriguing passage full of cryptic symbolism. A number of scholars restrict the identity of the land beast to the first-century C.E. context. An example is the following comment by Brian Blount: “Because John’s mythical portraits often have historical referents, this false prophet [referring to the land beast] is likely also a cipher or a [prophetlike] person or entity who encouraged devotion to the Roman beast. John probably had in mind the people and infrastructure that institutionally embodied Asia Minor’s commitment to the imperial cult.”⁶

While the symbols can be applied to the first-century context in which they emerge apocalyptic symbolism often has a cosmic sweep that must be taken account of.⁷ Furthermore, scholars fail to take seriously enough the prophetic nature of Revelation and that the symbol of the land beast therefore addresses issues beyond John’s day.⁸

following principles. First, Scripture is given in the time, place, language, and culture of the specific writer/audience. Second, Scripture employs the language of the past to describe and explain the present and the future. Cf. J. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative, A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 37 and Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (London: T & T Clark, 1993), 201.

⁶Brian Blount, *Revelation*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 257. After reviewing a host of suggestions that scholars have put forward, David Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 756, asserts “that the beast from the earth represents the imperial priesthood.” Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 203, contends that the land beast points to the elite families in Asia Minor. These elite families “led sacrifices, underwrote festivals, built temples, voted honors and so forth as part of their full range of civic duties. The elite families mobilized the masses in support of the emperor and enhanced their own standing in the process.”

⁷See K. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, SBT 2/22 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1972), 28-33.

⁸The identification of the exact genre of the book of Revelation is a complex issue that is beyond the purview of this article. See the following important discussions: David Hellholm, “The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John,” in *SBLSP*, (ed.) Kent Harold Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 164-165;

There are no historical referents or precedents to a number of events that John points to in Rev 13:11-15. First, there is no evidence that any individual or entity was able to call fire down from heaven for public viewing as John writes in Rev 13:13.⁹ Second, “there is no evidence to demonstrate that an image of the emperor could speak and mandate worship in the late first-century C.E.”¹⁰ Third, there is no evidence in the first century C.E. that the whole world population was marked with the mark of an entity that enabled them to advance economically.¹¹

Fourth, scholarly attempts to calculate the number 666 to signify Nero, Domitian or another Roman emperor have not secured any firm consensus.¹² Fifth, while John states that the land beast had the power to kill those who refuse to worship the image of the first beast, no elite families or authorities had such power and there are no historical references to such an experience.¹³ I will argue that the symbol of the land beast has applicability beyond John’s day to the time before the *parousia*.

Determining Symbols

The symbol of the beast has been introduced by John in Rev 11:7. There the beast is in opposition to the two witnesses. The adversarial relationship between the beast and the two witnesses is evident in John’s use of the idea of make war (ποιήσῃ μετ’ αὐτῶν πόλεμον), overpower (νικήσῃ) and kill (ἀποκτενεῖ) and its emergence from the abyss is in similar fashion to the

David Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre,” *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65-96. In my view all three aspects of the genre, namely, apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary, need to be kept in mind in the process of interpretation. While I disagree with the literalist interpretation put forward by Robert Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 29-39, his analysis of what constitutes prophecy is helpful. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 25-28, maintains that (1) the gift of prophecy involved the divine inspiration of the spokesperson or writer; (2) the prophetic gift provided exhortation and encouragement; (3) the gift incorporates prediction of the future into its function; (4) the gift of prophecy entailed some degree of authority; (5) the NT prophet had the ability to discern the truthfulness of other prophecies; (6) most NT prophecy was oral but some was written. The New Testament clearly predicts developments that will affect the church. The “man of lawlessness” will arise before the *parousia* (2 Thess 2:3); there is to be a “falling away” or rebellion (Acts 20:29, 30); times of stress will arise (2 Tim 3:1-9); and persecution will increase (1 Pet 4:12).

⁹A. K. W. Siew, *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 268.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 270.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 271. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 516, contends that “there is no evidence that the death penalty had been imposed during Domitian’s reign.”

locust plague of Rev 9:1-2. The beast of Rev 11:7 “comes up” (ἀναβαλῖνον) from the abyss while the land beast “comes up” (ἀναβαλῖνον) from the earth. The verbal parallels suggest that the beast of Rev 11:7 is the same as the beast of Rev 13:11.

The phrase “another beast” (ἄλλο θηρίον) points to a relationship of continuity between the sea beast of Rev 13:1-10 and the land beast. There are a number of striking similarities between the sea beast and the land beast.¹⁴

Sea Beast	Land Beast
Ascends from the sea (v. 1a)	Ascends from the earth (v. 11a)
Has ten horns on its head (v. 1b)	Has two horns like a lamb (v. 11b)
The dragon gives authority to the first beast (v. 2)	The sea beast gives its authority to the land beast (v. 12a)
The world is amazed at the sea beast whose fatal wound is healed (v. 3)	The land beast makes the earth worship the sea beast whose fatal wound is healed (v. 12b)
The sea beast speaks arrogant words (v. 5)	The land beast speaks to deceive (v. 14)
The sea beast makes war and conquers the saints (v. 7)	The land beast kills those who refuse to worship the sea beast (v. 15)

The verbal and thematic connections between the two beasts suggest a very close relationship between them. The principal description of the land beast is that it speaks like a dragon though outwardly its horns are those of a lamb. This beast therefore looks like a lamb—gentle, small, and timid. On the other hand, it speaks like a dragon indicating that its very person is corrupt and violent. The aforementioned table points to continuity between the land beast, the sea beast, and the dragon. According to Siew, “what is striking is that the land beast appears to be like *the Lamb* but its nature takes after *the Dragon*.”¹⁵ The land beast’s parody of the Lamb Jesus is weak, however, since Jesus the Lamb has seven not two horns (see Rev 5:6). Furthermore, the real Lamb Jesus died in sacrifice and weakness and was raised by God’s power. The fake lamb promotes the sea beast who pretends to have recovered from a similar fate to that of Jesus.¹⁶

The land beast emerges from the earth. The symbol of earth has both good and bad connotations in Revelation. The inhabitants of the earth (τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) are on the wrong side of the conflict in Rev 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6.¹⁷ The earth is seen in a positive way in Rev 12:16

¹⁴Ibid., 176.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 351.

¹⁷According to Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 239, the term is used in Revelation to consistently designate those in opposition to God and the faithful

where the earth helped the woman.¹⁸ However, as the narrative of Revelation continues the earth is filled with fornication and corruption (Rev 14:3; 17:5). The symbol of earth therefore points to an entity that God uses to protect his church and preserve its welfare but in the period before the *eschaton* the earth becomes more corrupt.¹⁹

The beast has two horns which generally point to political power.²⁰ The land beast entices the inhabitants of the earth to set up an image to the first beast. Old Testament writers refer to the inability of images and idols to speak and act (see Ps 115:4-5; Isa 46:7; Jer 10:5) because they have no life in them (Ps 135:17; Jer 10:14; Hab 2:19).²¹ However, the land beast is able to make the image speak.

The Land Beast—Counterfeit Holy Spirit

The book of Revelation depicts an unholy trinity in the form of Satan, the sea beast, and the land beast.²² The phrase “fire falling from heaven” (πῦρ ποιῆ ἔκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνειν) would remind John’s hearers about the falling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2. The land beast is a counterfeit of the work of the Holy Spirit as it brings down fire from heaven just as the

community. Furthermore, Bauckham states the term τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐρανὸν ten times in Revelation (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 (twice); 13:8; 14 (twice); 17:8; 17:2 (where a stylistic change is made). *Contra* Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 524, who sees the term occurring nine times only.

¹⁸Beale, *Revelation*, 643-646. John is alluding extensively in Rev 12 to the exodus experience in the symbols of “wilderness,” “the two wings of an eagle,” and “the earth.” The earth swallowing the flood is a clear allusion to Exod 15:12 where the earth swallowed the Egyptians when they attempted to destroy the Israelites by pursuing them into the Red Sea. Later in the wilderness the earth also swallowed up and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families. According to Beale, *Revelation*, 675, “in both instances, God caused the earth to open and swallow that which opposed the establishment and welfare of his people.”

¹⁹Edward Adams, *The Stars will Fall from Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and Its World*, LNTS 347 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007) argues quite persuasively that the human space time continuum that is this world, will be destroyed at the *parousia*.

²⁰On the horn symbolism, see Margit L. Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography*, AUSDDS 4 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980).

²¹Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 421.

²²For various discussions on the theme of an unholy trinity in Revelation see: Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 368-373 and James L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 104, 124-128. According to Jürgen Roloff, *Revelation: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 161, the concept of a satanic trinity comes from Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740-1817).

Holy Spirit did at Pentecost.²³ It also works miracles on behalf of the sea beast (see Rev 13:12, 14). Because of this work, the land beast is later called the “false prophet” (see Rev 19:20).

Stefanovic provides the following table:²⁴

The Land Beast	The Holy Spirit
Called the false prophet since it deceives people (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)	Identified as the Spirit of truth (John 16:13; Rev 22:17)
Lamb-like (13:11)	Christ-like (John 14:26; 16:14)
Has the authority of the sea beast (13:12a)	Has the authority of Christ (John 16:13-14)
Directs worship to the sea beast (13:12b, 15)	Directs worship to Christ (Acts 5:29-32)
Performs great signs (13:13; 19:20)	Performs great signs (Acts 4:30-31)
Brings fire down from heaven (13:13)	Comes in fire at Pentecost (Acts 2)
Applies the mark on the hand or forehead (13:16)	Applies the seal on the forehead (2 Cor.1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30)

The thematic parallels suggest that the land beast is a deeply spiritual and yet deceptive entity. Its spirituality, however, is not of God but of the devil. The Holy Spirit makes the blessings of salvation by faith through grace alone a reality in the heart and life of a believer (Eph 2:8-10; Titus 2:13). The Holy Spirit leads people into all truth (John 16:13). Strikingly, the land beast has an appealing personal quality to deceive and entice people away from Christ and the everlasting gospel (Rev 14:6). John foresees a time when the land beast will counterfeit the ministry of the Holy Spirit with power and deception.

The Land Beast and False Prophecy

The religious dimensions of the land beast will now further be clarified by examining the internal dynamics of Revelation especially in relation to false prophecy. The symbol of the land beast is connected to Jezebel in Rev 2:20; the false prophet of Rev 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10; and Babylon in Rev 17:1-3 through the concept of false prophecy.²⁵ The concept of a false prophet in

²³Contra Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 127, who says the land beast is not the counterpart to the Holy Spirit.

²⁴Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 371.

²⁵See Leslie N. Pollard, “The Function of *Loipos* in the Letter to Thyatira,” *AUSS* 46, no. 1 (2008): 45-64 and Paul B. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 91, for a discussion that demonstrates the continuity between the symbol of Jezebel in Rev 2 and Babylon in Rev 17.

the local setting emerges in Rev 2:20 where John introduces Jezebel as a false prophet. Revelation 2:20 reads:

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

In this verse John highlights five activities that Jezebel is involved in.²⁶ First, she claims prophetic status which is something John calls in to question. Second, she teaches, an activity that also carries questionable associations since it is used pejoratively elsewhere.²⁷ Third, she beguiles or leads the early Christians astray with her assimilationist position in relation to the Roman Empire. Fourth, as a result of the teaching and beguiling activities of Jezebel some of the Christian community are indulging in fornication. Fifth, Christians are also eating food sacrificed to idols.

John was addressing the deceptive anti-Christian teaching that had crept into the church in his day. We might call it Romanized Christianity. The influence of the imperial cult, trade guild festivals, the pantheon of gods like Jupiter and Zeus, and so many other religious practices crept into the framework of Christianity. Compromise and the worship of false gods became more acceptable for the Asian Christians.

The symbol of Jezebel in particular functions as the local embodiment of false prophecy just as the symbol of the land beast functions as a false prophet in an eschatological sense. The notion of a false prophet therefore has both a local and eschatological setting with John ingeniously causing the local or historical to impact and influence the eschatological.

Furthermore, Jesus warned there would be false prophets in his Olivet sermon: “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Matt 24:24). Christ also linked false prophets with beasts. He states in Matt 7:15 that false prophets would “come . . . in sheep’s clothing but are inwardly ravenous wolves.” Beale contends that “the image of the wolf in lamb’s clothing suggests a traitor within the fold of the church.”²⁸ While Beale is correct to assert that false teachers and prophets are misleading members of the seven churches he fails to see this as part of the end-time conflict before the *parousia*.²⁹ Just as the early Christians were following Jezebel so too it appears that Christians will follow the land beast due to its deception and influence in the period before the end of human history.³⁰

²⁶These five points are from Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 115.

²⁷According to Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 115, 165, John only uses the verb διδάσκω in Rev. 2:14 to refer to the teaching activities of Balaam.

²⁸Beale, *Revelation*, 708.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰This view is reinforced when we see the relationship between Jezebel and Babylon.

The Old Testament Background

The notion of two horns (κέρατα δύο) in Rev 13:11 alludes to Dan 8:3.³¹ The Old Testament context needs to be taken into account in interpreting an Old Testament passage used in Revelation.³² The wider context of Dan 8 is not only a conflict between oppressive national powers that sought to persecute God's people but also cosmic powers that seek to challenge the authority and sovereignty of God.³³ Just as a power attacked God's dwelling in Dan 8:10-13 so too does the sea beast in Rev 13:6.

John also alludes to a miracle of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:21-24) by using the imagery of calling fire down from heaven (πῦρ ποιῆ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνειν).³⁴ 1 Kings 18 is about the Mount Carmel showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. John draws on this story to demonstrate the end-time conflict between God's people and those that follow Satan.

In Jewish and Christian circles it was presumed that Elijah would return before the end (see Mal 4:5-6).³⁵ The gospel writers were familiar with this teaching and subsequently identified John the Baptist with Elijah (see Matt 17:9-13). John is drawing on this New Testament background of this understanding of Elijah. By alluding to the Elijah stories in both the Old Testament and New Testament John sets up a dualism between Elijah, the true end-time prophet and anti-Elijah, the false prophet in Revelation.³⁶

³¹Osborne, *Revelation*, 511; Blount, *Revelation*, 256; Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 757.

³²David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 1, has demonstrated that the rabbis in pre-70 Palestine studied their sacred texts with due consideration for the literary and thematic context. Brewer summarizes the conclusions to his research: "the predecessors of the rabbis before 70 C.E. did not interpret Scripture out of context, did not look for any meaning in Scripture other than the plain sense, and did not change the text to fit their interpretation, though the later rabbis did all these things." Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, xi, writes that the allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation are meant to "recall the Old Testament context, which thereby becomes part of the meaning the Apocalypse conveys, and to build up, sometimes by a network of allusion to the same Old Testament passage in various parts of the Apocalypse, an interpretation of whole passages of Old Testament prophecy." *Contra* Steve Moyise who is opposed to any reading of Revelation that attempts to take into account the intention of John and the wider Old Testament context. See Steve Moyise, "Does the Author of Revelation Misappropriate the Scriptures?" *AUSS* 40, no. 1 (2002): 3-21 and Idem., "Authorial Intention and the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 39, no. 1 (2001): 35-40.

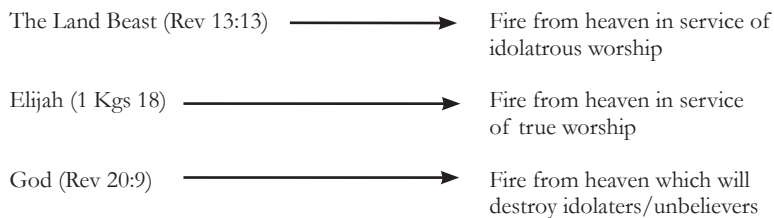
³³Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 122.

³⁴Blount, *Revelation*, 258. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 759, references Artermidorus and a dream of fire carried down to earth. While he is to be commended for finding the parallel, there are no contextual grounds for its use (which is often the case with the use of Greco-Roman sources).

³⁵See Dale C. Allison Jr., "Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 103 (1984): 256-258.

³⁶Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 122-123 and Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 421. Osborne,

Commentators are not clear on what the symbol of fire (πῦρ) represents. Morris argues that fire does not destroy the beast's enemies but is "simply meant to arouse admiration."³⁷ This is surely inadequate based on the depth of meaning the notion of fire has in Scripture. Stefanovic is not sure what the fire represents but argues that "it is effective in counterfeiting the truth and the gospel."³⁸ Beale also does not state what the fire is but does highlight the fact that fire comes out of the mouths of the two witnesses (Rev 11:5) where it "portrays the speaking of God's true word."³⁹ Like the symbol of earth and indeed other symbols, the symbol of fire has dual applicability and points to both God's salvific purpose to destroy sin and sinners and the malicious intent of the forces of evil in Revelation to in turn deceive God's people. The following diagram highlights the contrasting ways the symbol of fire is used.



While the land beast/false prophet appears to call fire down from heaven, only God can call down fire from heaven, not to deceive, but to destroy those who have aligned themselves with the unholy trinity. John is appealing to the Elijah stories to portray his local situation *and* the situation of God's people during the end-time conflict. An anti-Elijah power—the land beast/false prophet—will arise in the end-time conflict to act and speak like Elijah to deceive God's people.

The next Old Testament story that is of consequence is that of the three Hebrew worthies in Daniel 3.⁴⁰ The thematic and literary connection comes to the fore in the notion of forced worship and an image (εἰκόνη) set up for everyone to worship. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told to bow down to the image of the king. The image is sixty cubits high and six cubits wide (see Dan 3:1). John draws on Daniel 3 to set up an intentional contrast with the image in Rev 13:14 and the number 666.⁴¹

Revelation, 513, suggests that the false prophet parodies Elijah.

³⁷Morris, *Revelation*, 167.

³⁸Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 421. Keener, *Revelation*, 351-352 has a discussion about magic but does not address the notion of fire.

³⁹Beale, *Revelation*, 709.

⁴⁰See Keener, *Revelation*, 351; Blount, *Revelation*, 258.

⁴¹H. Ritt, *Offenbarung Des Johannes*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg, Germany: Echter Verlag, 2005), 72. The discussion of this number is beyond the purview of this study. For various discussions about the number 666 see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 769-771. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 761, also sees the connection to Dan 3:4 but does not

Both the Old Testament backgrounds of Elijah and Daniel focus on the issues of worship and a confrontation over worship. In the Elijah story it is religious leaders that force a confrontation over true worship while in the Daniel story it is a political leader that enforces worship. Having established the spiritual dimensions of the land beast together with its Old Testament background allows us to now turn attention to the identification of the two witnesses.

The Identity of the Two Witnesses

The identity of the two witnesses has perplexed scholars for long time.⁴² John has conflated Old Testament symbols in this passage from a range of Old Testament stories that make it difficult to understand. The passage (Rev 11:3-7) reads:

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Revelation 11:6 recalls the mighty deeds of Elijah who stopped the rain (1 Kgs 17:1-7; cf. Jas 5:17; Luke 4:25) and destroyed his enemies by fire (2 Kgs 1:10-12) as well as those of Moses who turned water into blood (Exod 7:17-21; Ps 105:29; cf. Rev 8:9; 16:3-6) and served as Yahweh's instrument in striking Egypt with plagues (Exod 7-12).⁴³ The primary referent for the two

see the connection with the number 666. Furthermore, Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 46, argues that Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to enforce his will on the populace for religious and political unity. This is indeed the case with the land beast in Rev 13.

⁴²Daniel Wong, "The Two Witnesses," *BibSac* (1997): 347, maintains that the two witnesses are two as-yet-unknown prophets, who will minister in the power of Moses and Elijah during the tribulation period. Charles H. Giblin, "Revelation 11.1-13: Its Form, Function and Contextual Integration," *NTS* 30 (1984): 433-459 (442-443), emphasizes the typological dimension of the two witnesses as expressive of "Christian prophetic testimony which accords with Scripture but transcends those foreshadowings." Paul Minnear "Ontology and Ecclesiology in the Apocalypse," *NTS* 12 (1966): 96-97, argues that they represent the "transcendental model" of all genuine prophecy, the archetype for all true understanding. Recently M. Oberweis, "Das Martyrium der Zebedaiden in Mk.10.35-40 (Matt.20.2-3) und Offb.11.3-13," *NTS* 44 (1998): 74-92, has posited that the two witnesses refer to James and John. See the insightful analysis of the two witnesses by Felise Tavo, *Woman, Mother and Bride: An Exegetical Investigation into the "Ecclesial" Notions of the Apocalypse* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2007) 197-223, with which I would be in broad agreement.

⁴³Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 275, writes: "In 11.5-6 it is clear that the Old Testament models for the two prophets are Elijah and Moses." Contra Siew, *The War*, 226-232, who argues that the two witnesses are both individuals and the church

witnesses is the *faithful* Christian church that authentically carryings out her prophetic witness during the Christian era and especially prior to the *parousia*.⁴⁴ Bauckham, who is representative of a range of scholars, states

That the two witnesses symbolize the church in its role of witnessing to the world is shown by the identification of them as lampstands (11:4), the symbol of the churches in ch. 1 (1:12, 20). That they are only two does not indicate that they are only a part of the whole church, but corresponds to the well-known biblical requirement that evidence be acceptable only on the testimony of two witnesses (Deut 19:15). They are therefore the church insofar as it fulfills its role as faithful witness.⁴⁵

Beale provides the following evidence for the view that the two witnesses refer to the church: 1) They are lampstands (11:4) which Revelation explicitly identifies as churches (1:20); 2) Just as Joshua and Zerubbabel were the high priest and king respectively seeking the restoration of their holy city, so the church as a kingdom and priests (1:6; 5:10) is seeking their New Jerusalem; 3) Just like John, the two witnesses prophesy (10.11; 11.3, 6) fulfilling the standard Christian mission of testifying for Christ (cf. 19.10) as well as adopting the world-wide responsibility of witnessing (11.9);⁴⁶ 4) The church is called to witness elsewhere in Revelation; 5) The number forty-two months is symbolic and hence the two witnesses would need to be symbolic and 6) The beast of 11:7 fights the people of God in 13:7.⁴⁷

The witnesses are identified as “my two witnesses.” The noun *μάρτυς* (witness) occurs five times in Revelation. Twice it is applied to Jesus (1:5; 3:14) and twice to his followers (2:13; 17:6). The term emphasises the Christological focus of the ministry of the two witnesses. The two witnesses symbolically point to the church of God that is called to live and proclaim the Old and New Testaments.⁴⁸

and George E. Ladd, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978), 154, who also states that the two witnesses are “actual historical eschatological personages” as well as “the witness of the church to Israel throughout the age.”

⁴⁴Jan Du Rand, *Die A-Z van Openbaring: 'n Allesomvattende Perspektief op die boek Openbaring* (Vereeniging, SA: Christelike Uitgewersmaatskappy, 2007), 370.

⁴⁵Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 85. See Beale, *Revelation*, 272-273, 573; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 603; Barr, *Revelation*, 9; and Keener, *Revelation*, 291-292. J. M. Ford, *Revelation*, 178, is novel. She suggests the two witnesses could represent the house of Israel (laity) and the house of Aaron (the priesthood).

⁴⁶Keener, *Revelation*, 291-292.

⁴⁷Beale, *Revelation*, 272-273.

⁴⁸See Ekkehardt Müller, “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11,” *JATS* 13, no. 2 (2002): 30-45, and Kenneth A. Strand, “The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3-12,” *AUSS* 19, no. 2 (1981): 127-135, who champion the view that the two witnesses are the Old Testament and New Testament.

The Relationship Between Rev 11 and 13

It will be argued in this section that a literary parallel structure exists between the two witnesses and the land beast and that this points to an aspect of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan in the end time. Literary parallel structures are determined on the basis of a pronounced similarity of concepts, symbols and themes mentioned in a broad basic context.⁴⁹

Literary parallel structures in Revelation demonstrate that the key to interpreting a passage may be found in a literary counterpart elsewhere. Since Revelation was to be read in a worship context, literary parallel structures, which are often repetitive, would have helped John's listeners in understanding significant matters he wanted them to know.⁵⁰ These structures would have also benefited the early Christians and prophets (Rev 22:10) in providing opportunity to compare, contrast, reiterate, and explain the message of the book.⁵¹

The following table outlines the verbal points of contact between Rev 11 and 13.⁵²

The Verbal Parallels between the Two Witnesses and the Land Beast	
Two witnesses (δυσὶν μάρτυσίν) (11:3)	Two horns (κέρατα δύο) (13:11)
Prophesy (προφητεύουσιν) (11:3)	Speak (ἐλάλει) (13:11)
Before the Lord of the earth (ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῆς γῆς) (11:4)	Before him (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ) (13:12)
Fire (πῦρ) (11:5)	Fire (πῦρ) (13:5)
To kill (ἀποκτανθῆναι) (11:5)	To kill (ἀποκτανθῆναι) (13:15)
Have authority (ἐξουσίαν) (11:6)	Have authority (ἐξουσίαν) (13:12)

⁴⁹Kenneth Strand, *Foundational Principles of Interpretation*, 31. For the usefulness of literary parallel structures in the interpretation of Revelation see William H. Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *AUSS* 23, no. 1 (1985): 37-54; idem., "Revelation 5 and 19 as Literary Reciprocals," *AUSS* 22, no. 2 (1984): 249-257.

⁵⁰See R. L. Jeske, "Spirit and Community in the Johannine Apocalypse," *NTS* 31 (1985): 452-466; J. P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16:17-19:10* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), 184-189; U. Vanni, "Liturgical Dialogue as a Literary Form in the Book of Revelation," *NTS* 37 (1991): 348-372, who argues that different parts of Revelation are assigned to a lector and the congregation.

⁵¹David Morsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament, A Commentary on Genesis – Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 29, makes similar comments in line with the Old Testament writings which Revelation is of course indebted to.

⁵²Siew, *The War*, 201.

Even though the verbal parallels are weak, they do strengthen the relationship between these two entities. Literary parallel structures are strengthened when there is a good representation of ideas and symbols between the two passages. The themes of war (Rev 11:5-7; 13:4, 7), conquer (Rev 11:7; 13:7) and worship (Rev 11:1, 13:3, 4, 8) unite Rev 11 and 13. The beast which makes a brief appearance in Rev 11:7 becomes the central character in Rev. 13 and the 42 months or three and a half times or 1,260 days (Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5) is found in both chapters.

The notion of war is seen in the use of terms like fire, kill, and authority. The two witnesses direct their fire against the enemies of God's people who in fact try to kill them. On the other hand the land beast uses fire to deceive. While both the land beast and the two witnesses have authority the source and exercise of that authority is very different. The following table highlights the thematic parallels:⁵³

The Thematic Parallels between the Two Witnesses and the Land Beast	
Prophets (11:10)	False prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)
Perform signs (11:6)	Perform signs (13:13-14; 19:20)
Receive authority from God (11:3)	Receives authority from first beast (13:12)
Torment inhabitants of the earth (11:10)	Deceives inhabitants of the earth (13:14)
Receives breath of life from God (11:11)	Breathes life into image of first beast (13:15)

The combination of both verbal and thematic parallels reinforces the relationship between these two entities. The verbal parallels are of course based on a similarity of language while the thematic parallels focus on similar ideas between the two passages. The signs performed by the two witnesses authenticate their witness while the signs performed by the land beast are designed to deceive. The sea beast has a unique quality, a quality that only God has, in that it can provide life. However, it is given this power by God as the divine passive (ἐδόθη) in Rev 13:15 indicates.⁵⁴ The land beast therefore receives life from the sea beast and exists to carry out its aims and purposes.

Both the land beast and the two witnesses direct their resources at the inhabitants of the earth (Rev 11:10; 13:14). Initially it appears that both entities are seeking to destroy the inhabitants of the earth with the words "torment" and "deceive" used to describe their activities. However, the inhabitants of the earth are tormented by the two witnesses in Rev 11:10 because of their flagrant disobedience of God while the land beast seeks to deceive them. Earlier on though in Rev 11:6 the two witnesses prophesy to the inhabitants of the earth in an endeavour to turn their hearts toward God. Both tables

⁵³Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 128.

⁵⁴Blount, *Revelation*, 258.

suggest that there is an intricate theological and literary relationship between the two witnesses and the land beast.

Conclusion

On the basis of the literary parallel structure we can conclude that an aspect of the end-time conflict before the parousia is between the faithful church carrying out her prophetic witness and the land beast. The literary parallel structure has been strengthened by both verbal and thematic connections between Rev 11:3-7 and Rev 13:11-15. The task and privilege of the church is to proclaim the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Word of God lifts up Jesus just as the Holy Spirit lifts up Jesus (John 14:16-19; 15:7-15). The land beast is opposed to the church, the Word of God, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The land beast is opposed to Jesus Christ because the sea beast is opposed him.⁵⁵

At the same time the land beast is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. This counterfeit spirit attacks the truth of the Word, the truth proclaimed by the church. This conflict is intensely spiritual and will not be evident to the senses. Many commentators get this aspect of the symbolism wrong. Robert Mounce says “in the final days of Antichrist the false prophet stands for the role of false religion in effecting the capitulation of mankind to the worship of secular power. It is the universal victory of humanism.”⁵⁶ Henry Swete states “in its wider significance the symbol may well stand for any religious system which allies itself with the hostile forces of the world against the faith of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷ Swete is vague in his comments with the idea of “any religious system.” Mounce, on the other hand, does not clarify what exactly he means by false religion. Is it any religion other than Christianity or can a false form of Christianity be classified as a false religion?

⁵⁵Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed*, 123-125, maintains that commentators are too quick to identify the sea beast with the Roman Empire or the Roman Emperor. He maintains that the symbol of the sea beast points more importantly to a parody of Christ. See the parallels between the sea beast and Christ in Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 370.

⁵⁶Mounce, *Revelation*, 259. Similarly Keener, *Revelation*, 239, says, “Finally the dual nature of the two witnesses provides a literary contrast with the two evil leaders in 13:11-12, one of whom also produces fire (13:13). The anointed king and priest contrast starkly with the wicked ruler and his priest in chapter 13. This portrait reinforces John’s contrast between the church and the world system; the latter holds power to kill God’s witnesses, but the witnesses will triumph nevertheless, even through their sacrifice.” Both Keener and Mounce refer to a world system.

⁵⁷Swete, *Revelation*, 169. In a related view, Eugene Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation, A Commentary for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 157, claims: “All who support and promote the cultural religion, in or out of the church, however lamb-like they may appear, are agents of the beast. All propaganda that entices humanity to idolize human empire is an expression of this beastly power that wants to appear Lamb-like.”

This article has demonstrated the strong affiliation of the land beast with the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to be a Christian without the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9, 10) and hence the Christian faith would not exist apart from the Spirit. This suggests that it will not be false religion but rather apostate Christianity that will lead humanity to worship a false religious power symbolized in the sea beast of Rev 13:1-10.⁵⁸ The counterfeiting work of the land beast and its extensive influence in the world suggest that the Christian faith will be under serious attack in the time before the parousia.⁵⁹ The Old Testament background of the land beast draws on the Elijah and Daniel stories which focus on false worship. Clearly in Rev 13 the key aspect of the end-time conflict is over the nature, purpose, and function of worship hence Revelation's call to worship the creator (Rev 14:7).

It would appear that the land beast has Christian roots and is supportive of the Christian church and hence the gospel of Jesus Christ but turns against the church to reveal a twisted and evil nature that seeks to destroy the church and all that it represents. John foresees a time when there will be enormous deception and corruption within the Christian community during the end-time. Contemporary Christians are safe only under the blood of Jesus and in obedience to the Word of God (Rev 12:10).

⁵⁸Both Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 420-421, and Brighton, *Revelation*, 358, are closer to this position.

⁵⁹Beale, *Revelation*, 831, maintains that "the false prophet without exception speaks to falsehood *within the covenant community of Israel or the church* in order to deceive (Matt 7:15; 24:11; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1)." Beale, however, restricts the deceptive activity of the beast to the seven churches which is something this article has argued against.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS AND WOMEN'S ORDINATION

BRUCE L. BAUER
Andrews University

BOUBAKAR SANOU
Andrews University

Introduction

The question of whether or not women should be ordained has been an issue in several Christian denominations. Although the Roman Catholic Church has categorically stated that this is not an option, the question still lingers and comes up from time to time.¹ The Anglican Church grappled with the role of women in ministry in an intense and focused way for several decades, then in 1971 it recommended to Hong Kong and other South Asian Anglican churches that “the ordination of women could be countenanced at the provincial level if there was full support from dioceses within the province.”² This recommendation has been embraced by the Anglican Church in the United States, New Zealand, and Canada.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has also wrestled with the prospect of ordaining women to pastoral ministry. After discussing and voting on this issue in several General Conference year-end meetings and sessions, the official position is currently that women should not be ordained. However, at the 2015 General Conference session delegates will consider whether or not the various divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist world church should be allowed to decide this issue for their region.

The multicultural nature of the Seventh-day Adventist Church often affects how its members position themselves regarding important issues in the church, and the issue of women's ordination is no exception. The questions relating to women's ordination have traditionally been addressed theologically in the church's effort to be biblically correct. Although this is an important approach, it does not effectively address all the challenges a multicultural church faces. In this article it is our aim to point out that the issues surrounding women's ordination must not only be viewed through theological lenses. The church must also take into consideration cultural issues when tackling this important issue. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church was birthed in North America, it has grown to become an international church. It is therefore not appropriate to think of Adventism in terms of what is practically acceptable or not acceptable for only the North American Church or for the Church in Africa or Asia or Europe. As missiologists, an important question that keeps demanding an answer is: “How can an international

¹Kessia Reyne Bennett, “Divided Anthropology: An Ontological Look at the Vatican's Rejection of Women's Ordination,” *AUSS* 52, no. 1 (2014): 101.

²Gilbert M. Valentine, “Flying Bishops, Women Clergy, and the Processes of Change in the Anglican Communion,” *AUSS* 51, no. 2 (2013): 219.

church approach this issue so that whatever is decided encourages members in all parts of the world?”

God and Human Culture

The Bible was not written in a cultural vacuum for it was the cultural context of the ancient Near East that served as the incubator for the thought and literature of the biblical people.³ The fact that God chose to reveal himself to Israel in the ancient Near Eastern cultural context points to the important fact that “God demonstrates his respect and appreciation for human culture by working through it rather than above or outside it.”⁴ God’s revelations were understood and accepted because they were culturally packaged. The biblical record is a clear portrayal of how God used human culture as a means to relate with human beings. Human beings can only relate meaningfully to that which is consistent with their worldview and culture. Glenn Rogers sums up this vital fact by pointing out that

God interacted with Abraham, Israel, and the Prophets, with Jesus, with the apostles, and with every one of us (including you and me) not in some otherworldly or heavenly context, but in the context of this material world, a world of human culture. . . . God uses human culture as a vehicle for interaction and communication with humans because human culture is the only context in which humans can communicate. This is not because God is limited. It is because humans are limited. Human culture is the only frame of reference humans have. If God wants to communicate with humans it must be within the framework of human culture.⁵

Because we believe that the church belongs to God, both church leaders and members must pay careful attention to God’s recorded dealings with people in their cultural settings. Both in the Old and New Testaments God made room for human culture with its weaknesses (e.g. Mark 10:1-12 where Jesus talks about divorce). In many instances, knowing the effect of drastic change, God chose to patiently work to change people’s practices in a culture rather than forcing things so quickly on a people that they could not handle the change. It is therefore quite appropriate to suggest that the revelation of God’s principles has often been progressive rather than spelling out God’s ultimate ethic or ideal. For example, he tolerated Jacob’s marriage to two sisters (Gen 29:15-28), a practice that he later outlawed (Lev 18:18)⁶ and in

³Henry Jackson Flanders, Robert Wilson Crapps, and David Anthony Smith, *People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 50.

⁴John Pilch, *Introducing the Cultural Context of the Old Testament* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 159.

⁵Glenn Rogers, *The Bible Culturally Speaking: The Role of Culture in the Production, Presentation and Interpretation of God’s Word* (Bedford, TX: Mission and Ministry Resources, 2004), 27, 28.

⁶Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 441.

the New Testament there is no frontal attack on slavery, yet who would argue for a biblical basis for slavery?

Culture is also a powerful force that shapes the assumptions and values of people in a particular cultural context. In all the discussions within the Adventist Church over the past thirty years on the issue of women's ordination very little has been written about how particular cultures impact this sensitive matter. There have been many studies from a biblical perspective, but few that have looked at how culture impacts biblical principles. Some people are even horrified when it is suggested that culture does play a role in defining and shaping the expression of a biblical principle in a particular cultural setting. Therefore, let us illustrate briefly a few areas where this can be seen.

Culture and Biblical Principles

First of all let us state right up front that we believe strongly that biblical principles have universal application—they are for all people in all settings for all time. However, we have observed that various biblical principles are interpreted differently in different cultural contexts. For example, let us take the biblical principle of modesty to illustrate this point. Just about everyone would agree that God's people should be modest. However, it seems that modesty is most of the times framed in terms of acceptable dress or behavior especially by women.

When I (Bruce) worked in Japan at the Seventh-day Adventist English Schools, the English School secretary often dressed in a kimono—a very modest type of dress. When Japanese women wear a kimono they are wrapped with cloth in a way to reveal very little shape and they are covered from the neck to the floor. One day one of the saints of the church came in and started to read the riot act to the secretary. When she had left I asked the secretary what all the finger pointing was about. She said that the church member had accused her of dressing like a prostitute. I was flabbergasted and asked her to explain. She told me that geisha girls wore their kimonos in a way that showed about two or three inches of the nape of their necks, and that when the church member saw a little of her neck that morning she had accused her of dressing like a prostitute. I had seen nothing revealing about her attire, but in that particular cultural context and to people from an older generation, showing the nape of the neck was considered immodest.

A second case in point is what is considered immodest in India. One hundred years ago missionary women from America and Great Britain went to India wearing dresses that reached halfway between the knee and their ankles, but they were considered terribly immodest. Why? Because they exposed a part of the body considered sensual in that particular culture—the leg between the knee and the ankle—body parts that were always covered by a sari or leggings that traditional Indian women wore. When the missionary ladies wore dresses that exposed that part of their bodies, it was like going topless in the West.

What we are trying to illustrate is that even though there is a biblical principle that God's people should be modest, particular cultures help define

modesty in their cultural context. Therefore, modesty can have various expressions.

Another point that is important to remember in connection with this discussion is that cultures are always changing, and what may have been considered immodest in 1930 or 1950 may be acceptable in 2015. Let's take the history of women wearing slacks in America as an example. In 1930 most women wore dresses in America—both at home and at work. Dresses were worn even on the farm. Then during the Second World War when women began working in the factories because so many men had gone off to war, many jobs demanded that the women wear slacks. Bit by bit American culture came to accept the fact that women could wear slacks in certain type of jobs. In the 1970s the mini-skirt came into fashion and it became almost impossible for Christian women to find dresses that had a modest length. Many women began to wear pant suits—a type of attire that was much more modest than what was being worn by many in the culture. Soon women were even wearing pant suits to church in the winter—something that was practical and was also becoming acceptable. Today, many women wear slacks to work or to dress-up occasions and that kind of attire is widely accepted even among Seventh-day Adventists as acceptable and modest dress. So, cultures change with time. However, if someone had forced the issue in the 1950s and had insisted that women could wear slacks back then it would have been culturally unacceptable even though most would have admitted that slacks could be a modest type of dress for women.

With these two concepts in mind—various cultures interpret biblical principles in different ways and a culture's concept of what is acceptable or unacceptable changes over time—the next section will look at some of the cultural hang-ups that are obstacles for some Adventists in some parts of the world that keep them from being open to gender neutral ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Issues of Purity and Ritual Cleanliness

There are still many cultures in our world that have similar views to the ancient Jews in connection with ritual cleanliness for they believed that “when a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean until evening” (Exod 15:19 NIV). In such cultures the very thought that a woman could occupy the pulpit and stand before a congregation of men is incomprehensible. People with those worldview values just cannot accept the fact that a woman, during her period, could be used by God to speak God's Word. This would be beyond their wildest view of what is appropriate.

I interviewed Appiah Kwarteng from Ghana concerning such views and he helped me understand some of the issues that are involved. Appiah grew up in a polygamist home. Whenever his mother had her period she would never be involved in preparing food for her husband because she would have caused him to be ritually unclean. Being ritually unclean had far-reaching implications since he was the priest of the family and the one that needed

to maintain ritual purity so he could have a clean channel to the ancestors. It was believed that to break this taboo would result in calamity coming on the family, clan, or community. So in Ghana, especially among the older generation, the idea that a woman could assume a pastoral role would be very difficult for many to accept. However, among those who are younger, the taboo may be known, but it is not feared as much, and among the third or youngest generation many are not even aware that there is a problem. This again illustrates that cultures change and what is unacceptable now may be acceptable later.

This concept of ritual purity is also alive in the Russian Orthodox Church and is practiced widely by its members. The general attitudes connected with ritual purity may also play a role in how people look at the issue of women's ordination in lands where the Orthodox Church has a strong influence.

When I entered a convent of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR) in France, I was introduced to the restrictions imposed on a nun when she has her period. Although she was allowed to go to church and pray, she was not to go to communion; she could not kiss the icons or touch the *antidoron*, she could not help bake prosphoras or handle them, nor could she help clean the church; she could not even light the *hmpada* or icon-lamp that hung before the icons in her own cell.⁷

Within the Russian Orthodox Church regulations dealing with ritual impurity vary from parish to parish and depend a lot on the local priest. However, the general practice allows women to attend church during menstruation but forbids them from receiving Holy Communion, kissing icons or crosses, touching prosphora or the antidoron, or drinking holy water. In parishes outside Russia most women are asked to abstain from partaking of the communion when they are ritually impure.⁸

The above examples help us realize that in some areas dominated by the Russian Orthodox Church, in some parts of the world, and in many tribal societies the relationship between ritual purity and women officiating during religious services elicits strong opinions and still creates barriers that if disregarded could place the church in an unfavorable light in the community.

Gender Separation

In many cultures gender separation is still practiced as a social control mechanism that helps maintain purity between men and women. If this social control mechanism is disregarded, there can be unforeseen ramifications that develop in other areas of the culture.

For example, in 2000 a vibrant Seventh-day Adventist congregation was started in Burkina Faso through an interesting chain of events. An Evangelical pastor had been listening regularly to Adventist World Radio (AWR). He became convinced about the new truths he was learning so he invited some

⁷Vassa Larin, "What is 'Ritual Im/purity' and Why?" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 52, no. 3-4 (2008): 275.

⁸Ibid., 275.

members of his congregation to also listen to AWR. They did and were also convinced. They withdrew from their church although they knew nothing about the Adventist Church in their country. As they continued to listen to AWR, they learned that the Adventist Church had its headquarters in the capital city, Ouagadougou, so the pastor traveled there to learn what he could about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I (Boubakar) was asked by the mission president to study the 27 Fundamental Doctrines with him, which we did over a three-day period before the pastor went back home. After about a month, the man and some of his members came again during which time the mission president and I went to spend several days with them. After further study, some of them were baptized including their pastor. Because of the pastor's influence in the region, several people began attending church. The mission president helped raise funds in Canada to build a primary school and dig two wells for the new congregation.

Because of the traditional customs in the area where this new church was located, women and men did not sit together during church services and women never preached. One day a missionary visited the church and scolded the members saying it was uncivilized and too primitive to continue with such practices in an Adventist Church. He encouraged them to do things as it was done in "the world church." Women and men started sitting together and women were allowed to address the congregation. Unfortunately, the local people in the area felt that families sitting together and the mixing of genders in public were indecent and immoral practices. As a result, several of the men gradually stopped attending church. The growth of new members dried up, and since it was a patriarchal society, many of the town's men prevented their wives and children from attending the church. A beautiful church building still stands there but with less than a dozen regular worshippers.

This again illustrates the fact that if strong cultural taboos are broken abruptly, people in that cultural setting may view Christianity as foreign, as against valued cultural beliefs and practices, and as something that would keep many from exploring the claims of Christ.

A Culture's Loci of Authority

The appointment of Julia Pierson in March 2013 by President Barack Obama as the first woman to lead the Secret Service is an unprecedented event in the history of that male-dominated agency that was started in 1865, although she has since resigned that position. According to *The New York Times* of March 26, 2013 only 10 percent of the 3,500 special agents are women. This fact confirms Erik Olin Wright's claim that workplace authority is still unequally distributed in most of the countries of the world today. He asserts that "in the United States the probability of a man in the labor force occupying an 'upper' or 'top' management position is 1.8 times greater than the probability of a woman occupying such a position, whereas in Sweden, the probability for men is 4.2 times greater than for women."⁹ What is interesting in Wright's

⁹Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis* (Cambridge :

research is that his findings are counter-intuitive. Although gender relations are egalitarian in many respects in these Western countries, there is still a gender gap in favor of men in workplace authority.

It is this form of gender gap in workplace authority that constitutes another obstacle that keeps many in our world from easily accepting women in ministry. In many traditional societies authority flows from God to the man to his wife and then on down to the children. This was a pattern in the Old Testament with the patriarchal societies and a system that continues to be true for many groups in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

It is true that with education women are working in more and more areas that previously were denied to them. Even in some of the most male dominated societies there have been women prime ministers and presidents and there are a growing number of women parliamentarians. However, even in these exceptional cases the majority of the population would feel that the locus of authority still resides with the men in society. In many of those cultures women are not looked down on, but are just assumed to fill different roles.

A culture's locus of authority presents another obstacle in some parts of the world for women to be recognized as religious leaders in a community. This is another area that is changing and we anticipate that twenty or thirty years from now even more cultures will allow for a far greater variety of options for women.

A Way Forward

This short article has mentioned that God has chosen to work through human culture, that people in various cultures interpret biblical principles in different ways, and that a culture's concept of what is acceptable or unacceptable changes over time. We also briefly discussed the fact that issues of purity and ritual cleanliness in some cultures block women during their menses from participating in some religious practices. Some cultures still practice gender separation and in many cultures the locus of authority is male dominated.

In most Western nations the cultures do not attach any cultural value to concepts of ritual purity and cleanliness in connection with a woman's period, nor do they practice any form of gender separation, or see authority located predominately in the male gender. Thus, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is faced with the very real dilemma that if it promotes the ordination of women for the worldwide Adventist Church it will create stumbling blocks for many, whereas if they do not allow for women called of God to not only serve but also to be ordained, many in other parts of the world will feel that their cultural situation is not appreciated or understood.

We believe that the precedence in how to handle this situation has already been established and provides a workable solution to the issue of gender neutral ordination. At the General Conference Session in 1975 it was decided to allow women to be ordained as local elders in cultures where that practice

was acceptable and welcomed. We believe that each union conference¹⁰ should be allowed to also decide this culturally sensitive issue since they know best the feelings and practices of their areas.

God's missionary passion to save the world calls into question all human prejudice and preconceived ideas about human cultures. There are many cultural practices that impact people in ways that do not allow them to be full participants in all aspects of society. However, God is patient, taking time to allow the gospel principles to permeate each culture. And since the gospel cannot be heard in the abstract apart from a cultural context, any endeavor made by the church on behalf of God must not only conform to sound biblical and theological principles but also take into account cultural understandings. Since the church's ministry always takes place in a particular context, such ministry must also be relevant to people within their particular cultures.¹¹ While firmly maintaining biblical integrity, the church in its mission and ministry must also be resourceful and flexible in adjusting its methods and procedures to its ministry context. Just as God is mindful of the cultural context of those receiving his messages, so must the people who lead the church. Therefore, allowing union conferences a choice in this matter of women's ordination seems to provide a way forward that protects those who are against the practice for cultural reasons while allowing it in those areas of the world where there are no cultural barriers.

¹⁰The worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church is governed by a General Conference which is divided into fifteen divisions. Each world division is divided into a number of union conferences. The union conferences are comprised of local conferences, which administer the local churches.

¹¹Hiebert, *Anthropological Insight for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 55.

**TENTMAKING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:
THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLI-
CATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY
ADVENTIST MISSIONS**

KELVIN ONONGHA
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Evangelization of the gospel in the twenty-first century is fraught with great challenges. Conditions around the world demand creative and innovative approaches to sharing the gospel message where conventional methods seem to be coming up short with results. In the West the forces of secularism, postmodernism, and post-postmodernism hold sway, while in the global south globalization and nationalism are posing their own threats. The picture is not altogether gloomy, however, for these very situations provide opportunities for creative strategies of spreading the gospel. For instance, in the 10/40 window, that geographical nexus where three major world religions, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, are the dominant faith traditions of billions of earth's population, wonderful opportunities are emerging for witnessing.

Although these regions have traditionally been considered “resistant” to the gospel, and regarded as limited access zones—because governmental restrictions prohibit those seeking entry in order to proselytize—recent developments indicate that a strategy for reaching these people groups that is reportedly effective is through the medium of tentmaking. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church tentmaking missions appear to be treated with ambivalence. This paper shall examine the import that tentmaking has to Adventist mission, as well as the theological and missiological implications associated with its praxis.

Although the concept of tentmaking has been around for many centuries, its application as an approach for witnessing has in the last few decades received greater emphasis. With a growing list of publications in journals and books, including conferences and training workshops, the influence and knowledge of tentmaking has blossomed in significance. There is unanimity that this terminology was derived from the missionary practice of the Apostle Paul as he spread the gospel message in the course of his missionary journeys around the major cities of Rome. Moreover, it is believed that this practice, adopted and popularized by Paul as a mode of evangelization, actually has its roots in the Old Testament. Included in the list of pioneer tentmakers are patriarchs such as Abraham and Isaac.

Presently, many facets of tentmaking practice are in existence and have grown in significance. These can be discussed under three related categories: workplace witnessing, expatriate evangelism, and business as missions (BAM). Each of these categories depicts integration of Christian faith into the business or marketplace where believers are found. The consequence of this is a holistic expression of Christian faith, which permeates every aspect of life.

Workplace witnessing occurs when Christians seek to apply biblical principles as the foundation upon which their businesses will be established. In other words rather than recognize the great divide between sacred and common, as has been the established norm, these Christians believe that there should exist integration of faith and work. Discussing this trend over a decade ago, *Fortune Magazine* published an article written by Marc Gunther entitled, "Bringing Spirituality into the Workplace" (July 9, 2001). While the article featured other non-Christian faiths, it served to underscore the unabashed manner in which religion was discussed in avenues where such practices were previously considered anathema.

A note of caution needs to be given at this point: workplace witnessing should neither entail "spiritual harassment," where one's faith will be forcibly imposed on others, nor should paid work hours be misappropriated for the purpose of witnessing. On the contrary, Christian believers are expected to be diligent at work, excel in their duties, and shine as epitomes of commitment and service. These qualities, in addition to their compassion, humility, service, honesty, and dependability, should serve to place them advantageously where they would find opportunity to witness of their faith, even as their lives attract and affect those of their work counterparts.

One of the fastest growing job markets at the moment is in the area of international jobs. Several websites have been set up, and numerous books published to assist one in search of work opportunities in exotic regions around the world, which in many cases promise better remuneration to expatriate staff. Among such is *Monsterjobs.com*. These jobs are usually located in the countries of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, where the governments are seeking to narrow the technology gap, while at the same time seeking to better the living conditions of their people. It needs to be said however, that this market is getting narrower and more specialized by the day. This comes as a result of the desire of these host countries to see their own nationals employed, and in due course cut down on the differential salaries paid to expatriates.

Work opportunities abroad have provided a niche for committed Christian professionals to ply their professions abroad, and witness about their faith. Although no precise figures may be obtained regarding the number of tentmakers involved in this form of witnessing, due to attendant risks and the danger of compromising their general welfare, estimates have them in the thousands, especially in limited access countries around the world. While the mission of tentmakers is often shrouded with secrecy and anonymity, it should be understood that several Muslim nations are not necessarily oblivious of their presence and activities. Notwithstanding the fact that these governments may be resentful of proselytizing, they are mindful, however, that committed Christians are law abiding, diligent, and add value to their host societies. Consequently, it ends up a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefit, so long as the activities of the tentmakers are never considered obnoxious.

Another growing trend in tentmaking missions is often referred to as business as missions (BAM). Springing up all over countries dominated by Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, these businesses established by Christian entrepreneurs have mission and vision strategies that are founded upon values and principles derived from the Word of God. Factors that have encouraged location of businesses abroad include cheap labor costs, tax breaks, and governmental encouragement. Although every business needs to be able to make a profit to break even, such businesses owned and operated by Christian proprietors have another more important objective. That is, exerting an influence in the community as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, with the goal of leading employees and associates to a saving relationship with the Lord.

Because these businesses provide employment, yield tax returns to the government, promote local production, and often have export potentials, such schemes are usually welcome by governments around the world. All the same, these businesses operated along Christian values also pose great challenges to their operators who have to learn fast how to chart those murky waters with dangerous shoals, in which worldview conflicts have sunk many expensive projects.

Tentmaking in Antiquity

In ancient times, as now, an individual's trade constituted an integral part of their identity. The other facet of one's identity was also their faith. These two qualities went wherever the person sojourned, and were inseparable components of them. For this reason, some attribute the designation tentmaker to patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job. Wherever they went, their witness and work testified about them. Others that may be added to this category include Joseph and Daniel. However, it is from the Apostle Paul that the appellation finds its first usage (Acts 18:3). Paul did not work alone. A number of his associates also functioned as tentmakers, including Priscilla and Aquila, Luke the gospel writer, and even Philemon the slave master.

Paul: Prototype Tentmaker

Without a doubt no one has contributed more to the concept of tentmaking than the Apostle Paul. He was the extraordinary tentmaker. His life and ministry serve as a model for everyone engaging in this special ministry, and therefore is worthy of closer consideration. From several passages that reveal the work ethic and rationale behind his mission strategy, several lessons can be pieced together.

Have a Trade

The Scriptures reveal that Paul learned a trade (from the Greek word *techné*),¹ which served as his primary affinity to the couple Aquila and Priscilla, who

¹Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts* (Grand

became partners together with him in ministry (Acts 18:3). The tentmaker's trade, skill, or art provides an entering wedge to a world that otherwise would have been closed to the gospel, thus becoming a vehicle for communicating the Word of God.² The choice of this trade is believed to have been a conscious and calculated "missionary and survival strategy" on Paul's part.³ Some scholars believe that Paul learned this trade from his father, who may have plied the same profession. However, there is disputation regarding whether Paul did actually work with leather, goat's hair, or cloth. What is important to note is that he must have been a skilled worker for the records from Scripture indicate that he practiced his profession unto his incarceration, profitably. In today's world there is plenty of room for the tentmaker who is highly skilled and very personable. Although there are certain jobs which are highly paying in the international job market such as medicine, computing, engineering, nursing, and electronics, some will contend that tentmakers with all kinds of skills are needed everywhere. Presently, there is great demand for teachers of English, French, and German as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). For instance, in certain Persian Gulf countries Filipino house-helpers are functioning as tentmakers, serving their proprietors diligently, while at the same time seeking opportunity to bear witness for the gospel.

Earn A Living

It can be inferred from Scripture that Paul must have been efficient and successful as a tentmaker otherwise he would soon have run out of business. Some find it perturbing that an Apostle of Paul's stature would deem it necessary to work when he could have had all his physical needs met by the members, but it is clear that this was a matter of preference for the Apostle, and something he chose to brag about (1 Cor 9:15-16).

What is noteworthy is the fact that this same Paul was a strong and vocal advocate for this means of support of full-time ministry (1 Cor 9). However, although he had no serious qualms against receiving financial support from churches (as he did from the Philippian Church), it is believed that Paul's reason for demurring was because he wished to differentiate himself from the teachers and philosophers of his day. Such itinerant philosophers and religious charlatans in the Greco-Roman world were known to live upon the wages earned,⁴ and in some cases exploited their clients. Paul's decision to support himself by working with his hands was not a unique situation in his time, however, for many rabbis were also known to have supported

Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 578.

²Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 650.

³Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for The Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 90.

⁴David G. Peterson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 573.

themselves by the trades they had learned.⁵ Three criteria have been suggested for Paul choosing a career in tentmaking. These are quietness, portability, and universality.⁶ As Jerome O'Connor explains, "The work had to be silent enough for him to preach while he labored. The tools had to weigh little or nothing. The skill had to be needed in towns and villages, on the roads, and on sea."⁷ Note also that the nature of Paul's trade allowed him to move base at short notice and relocate.

Exemplar at Work

In his final admonition to the elders of the church before his departure to Rome, Paul provides an insight to his work habits that can serve as a benchmark for all tentmakers and Christians: he "worked night and day" (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9). This is not to suppose that he was a workaholic, although it cannot be disputed that he was doubtlessly a consummate preacher. From the statement it can be inferred that with Paul there was no dichotomy or discrete compartmentalization of his life—his work was his ministry, and his ministry was his work. This total integration of work and faith serves as a paradigm for all tentmakers and Christians in contemporary times.

Paul's trade seemed perfect for his bi-vocational career as a preacher-tentmaker. While he made his tents, Paul could also be imagined teaching his audience, or clients present, who waited to collect their custom designed tents. He obviously had no need to change into a fresh set of apparel, or change location so that he could witness to an assembled audience. In the same manner, Christians and tentmakers alike do not need to wait until work hours are over or when they leave the workplace before they can witness to their faith. Even while performing diligent, impeccable labor for their employers, believers can give powerful and unrelenting witness.

Purposeful Witness

An often-overlooked aspect of Paul's trade and witness were his clientele. Scholars believe that it was sometime about the reign of king David that the Israelites stopped dwelling in tents and began living in constructed houses. Also, ruin, relics, and archaeological finds make it clear that houses and mason work were quite common in the world in which Paul lived. So who were his clients, and what were the tents used for? It is well known that Paul's clients were generally travellers who made use of the tents as their dwellings when they journeyed.⁸ The other category of persons who patronized tentmakers was the wealthy class, who used the tents for covering during celebrations. Other uses for the tents were as awnings in the shops, at the beaches, for

⁵Kistemaker, *NT Commentary*, 649.

⁶Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 192.

⁷*Ibid.*, 192-193.

⁸*Ibid.*

overflow crowds at occasions, and also during the Isthmian games.⁹ There was constant need of shelter for both temporary residents and merchants during peak seasons such as religious activities, athletic games, and political events, which provided plenty of opportunities for the service of tentmakers like Apostle Paul.¹⁰

An often overlooked and rarely discussed fact is that for the first three years after his conversion Paul spent time in Arabia. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor believes that it was there in Damascus, after his return from Arabia that he learned the art of tentmaking.¹¹ Although this fact has been disputed by those who believe that Paul learned the tentmaking trade from his father, it is also possible that among his clientele were caravan traders from Arabia. Such persons would have been valuable prospects for bearing the gospel message to their homelands, the way the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip did. Perhaps this could be seen as Paul modeling the counsel he later gave to his younger ministerial assistant Timothy (2 Tim 2:2).

Urban Ministry

New Testament scholars have noted that Paul's ministry revolved around the major cities of the Roman Empire. From one city to another the Apostle bore his tentmaking trade, teaching, toiling and establishing house churches in all the major metropolises of Europe. His urban missionary strategy carried him to places such as Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Psidian Antioch.¹² Like his Master and Savior, Paul went to where the masses gathered; quite clearly the missions of Jesus and Paul were in the marketplace. The cities offered Paul better possibilities for preaching the gospel, better opportunities for plying his trade, and better chances of meeting foreign travelers.¹³

Also, as was the case in those times, so it is even today, the metropolis and the seats of government are the centers of influence around the world. Whatever trends and fashions hold sway there will eventually trickle down to the towns and villages. What Capernaum was to the ministry of Christ, so was Antioch to Paul's ministry. In like manner, following the examples of Christ and Paul, the church must give priority attention to urban missions especially in the 10/40 window, but globally as well. Studies indicate that never has urban drift occurred in such magnitude in human history such as is today witnessed around the world.

In the study conducted by the Transport and Urban Development Department of the World Bank, it was reported that there are 3,943 cities in the world with populations in excess of 100,000. Also, the study projected

⁹Ibid., 193.

¹⁰David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters, and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 103.

¹¹Ibid., 192.

¹²Witherington III, *The Paul Quest*, 115.

¹³Capes, Reeves, and Richards, *Rediscovering Paul*, 103.

that by 2030 the population of the cities in the developing world would have doubled from 2 billion to 4 billion, while in the Western world it was expected to increase by 11% within the same period.¹⁴ All this goes to show why the church today needs to pay more attention to urban missions, just as did Apostle Paul.

Sufficiency and Benevolence

Many New Testament scholars are in agreement that Paul had a self-supporting ministry due to his industry. The other side of the picture is that his ministry was not just enough to support himself alone but was also sufficient to support some of his associates in mission.¹⁵ Instead of seeking for patronage as a client from the group among whom he was witnessing, Paul rather sought after partnership in the gospel enterprise choosing to work with his own hands.¹⁶ The Apostle also practiced what he preached by being benevolent showing that it indeed was more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). He showed practical concern for the weak through his benevolence,¹⁷ in an age when no one cared for the destitute, the weak, and the poor.¹⁸

Paul's self-supporting ministry should serve as a model today in the establishment of self-sufficient churches. Although it is known that the majority of his converts were at best artisans or lower in class (1 Cor 1:26),¹⁹ Paul was an advocate of the work ethic for which Protestants have become known (2 Thess 3:10-13). It is also noteworthy that although he could have through his work attained a degree of financial security, the Apostle's constant movement from one mission location to another did not permit this. This is simply because, for Paul, work was merely a means to support his ministry and provide assistance to others, and was not about profit for profit's sake. Tentmakers therefore, as they engage in their businesses, need to have the kingdom focus which characterized the ministry of Paul, so that they do not get ensnared by wealth. Conversely, tentmakers and mission agencies should work in a manner to create self-supporting, self-reliant, and self-propagating congregations where they serve.

¹⁴Shlomo Angel, Stephen C. Sheppard, and Daniel L. Civco, "The Dynamics of Global Urban Expansion" (Washington, DC: Transport and Urban Development Department, World Bank, 2005), 1.

¹⁵Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Paul Taught* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 22; Thomas E. Phillips, *Paul, His Letters and Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 115.

¹⁶Witherington III, 128-129.

¹⁷Peterson, *The Pillar NT Commentary*, 573.

¹⁸Kistemaker, *NT Commentary*, 738.

¹⁹Witherington III, *Paul's Quest*, 128.

Team Ministries

One popular leadership and business concept that has granted success to various corporations is the idea of team ministry. The advantage of organizations working as teams has been shown to produce better results than when the leadership structure is otherwise. This was a practice fully displayed in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Throughout his missionary journeys Paul associated with partners in ministry such as Barnabas, Silas, Priscilla and Aquila, among many others. Although known for his forthrightness, Paul seemed quite comfortable working with partners. He fell out at one time with Barnabas over the insistence that John Mark accompany them in their next missionary journey (Acts 15:35-38), rebuked Peter openly for what he felt was hypocrisy (Gal 2:10-15), nevertheless, his friendship with the tentmaker couple Aquila and Priscilla is notable (Acts 18) as with Timothy, Silas, and others.

Team ministry among tentmakers plays a crucial role in the success of the mission. The minimum size of any team should comprise two persons. This was the model established by Christ (Matt 10; Luke 10), and evident also in Paul's ministry. However, when necessary, the size of the group may be larger, so long as it does not produce unnecessary friction or divisions. While this may not appear as a major issue, it is reported that a significant amount of time is often spent redressing squabbles among tentmakers than is spent in the actual mission of evangelizing.²⁰ Also, because tentmaking seems to attract a personality type quite akin to lone rangers and the strong-willed, this is an issue that is worthy of consideration. The advantages that exist in having partners in ministry abound. Besides the scriptural counsel that adjoins that two is better than one (Eccl 3:9-10), and a cord of three strands is not easily broken (Eccl 4:12), tentmakers also need someone to whom they will be accountable. A partner lends both spiritual support and accountability.

Examining the tentmaking model Paul presents in his missions does indeed present lessons for contemporary mission practice. As the Adventist Church engages in this mission strategy that is proving imperative for this age, it will be beneficial to consider a number of theological and missiological portents this has for the church.

Theological Implications

One of the effects of the Enlightenment on human history was the distinction between the public and the private spheres, between the "sacred" and the "secular."²¹ This worldview concept carried over into the realm of work implied that there were certain kinds of work that were sacred, such as the functions of the clergy, while other types of work were labeled secular. Such an understanding did not exist before this modern age of Enlightenment.

²⁰Global Opportunities Tentmaker Training, Fort Myers, Florida, November, 2012.

²¹Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 153.

Before this time, people considered their work a vocation (from an old French or Latin word, *vocare*, which meant “to call”), and their labor, a service to God. Support for this view is evident in the Old Testament and is clearly portrayed when God informs Moses that the sacred work of building His sanctuary had been given to two craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex 31:1-11). Rather than the dichotomized life common today, tentmaking leads us to reconsider the more holistic worldview of the biblical times and regard our labor as unto the Lord (Col 3:23).

Continuity of this worldview concept is also evident in the New Testament. Paul urges even slaves to let their service to their masters be as unto the Lord (1 Tim 6:2). For the Christian, therefore, work must be seen as service to the Lord, in which the glory shall be given unto him (Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet 2:18-22).

A second implication that the function and ministry of tentmakers presents to our theology is the role of laity in ministry. If, as the New Testament proclaims, all have a place in proclaiming the gospel of salvation, and all are called to discover and deploy their spiritual gifts in service of the Lord, then should tentmakers not be regarded as missionaries, with a special function in this contemporary age? Advocating this viewpoint, Milfred Minatrea states:

Since every believer is to bear witness, is sent to evidence the veracity of the gospel message, every believer is on mission. Injustice is done to the term missionary when it is reserved only for professional or vocational personnel who cross oceans or other geographical boundaries in their assignment. Missionaries are the ones who are sent, and for the New Testament church that includes every believer.²²

However, a note of caution is sounded against advocates of the “every member a missionary” group. While it may be true that all are gifted to minister, it has been wisely said that, “We should not minimize the challenges involved in cross-cultural ministry, which not only depend on the empowered sending of God but also require specialized training and the supportive prayers of the church.”²³ Presently, the larger proportion of people engaged in tentmaking are laypersons, and the tentmaking movement seems wholly directed, and coordinated, by non-clergy. This situation calls to question the role of ministers in this vital aspect of missions that is developing into a movement of God in this age. The absence of clergy in this burgeoning development may further underscore the redundancy and disconnect of present-day ministerial praxis. However, without the participation of ministers, and the undergirding of sound theology, this movement could easily wind up adrift.

The third theological challenge that tentmaking presents to the church is seen in the shocking attrition rate of American pastors in ministry. In a

²²Milfred Minatrea, *Shaped By God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2004), 80-81.

²³Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 237.

study conducted by Duke University it was reported that 85% of seminary graduates leave within five years of entering the ministry, while 90% of all pastors do not remain in ministry until retirement.²⁴ The study blames ill preparation for dealing with real-life situations in ministry, an inadequacy attributed to the relevance of the ministerial formation.²⁵

Although related statistics for the Adventist Church are not available, this revelation still demands due attention. Beyond North America, laity in other regions have been known to comment on the fact that ministers seem to be out of touch with the realities of the lives of members. Seminaries have been accused of taking a posture that “giving information concerning the Bible and Christian theology are the most important things in our faith.”²⁶

Recently, at a proposal review in one of our seminaries, it was discovered that none of the dissertations presented by the theology students in the PhD program had any practical mission benefit. In defense of this situation one student retorted that this was not a concern that his paper sought to address. Increasingly, it is appearing that in our seminaries relevance is sacrificed on the altar of scholastics.

Fourthly, while on one hand ministerial dropout is an issue in pastoral ministry in certain contexts, on the other hand, in many regions around the world seminaries are producing more graduates than the church can provide employment. Consequently, a number of unemployed persons are those who have acquired ministerial training and for whom no employment opportunity may appear on their horizons. Perhaps if a bi-vocational career pathway were emphasized in the seminaries, few would be unemployed since they could find opportunity to deploy their spiritual giftedness even when they were not on the church’s payroll. Ministerial students who come to the seminary with competencies and backgrounds in other professions should be encouraged to see how to integrate the two careers in order to maximally be of service to their Lord rather than to see both career pathways as mutually exclusive.

A fifth challenge that tentmaking presents theologically is the age-old controversy over what exactly is the essence of the gospel. The question to be answered is how much does one need to know in order to be saved? Friendship evangelism and the art of sharing a personal testimony play a crucial role in tentmaker witnessing. Through this simple witness many have been led to give their lives to the Lord. Bible scholars have also noted the significant number of times Apostle Paul repeated the story of his conversion in his ministry. So what then is the basic, or core essence of the gospel, and how important is the knowledge of the major theological controversies in history in ministerial formation, as some are demanding? A note of caution is needed though, we need to remember that theology is an indispensable tool

²⁴Kristin Stewart, “Keeping Your Pastor: An Emerging Challenge,” *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Science*, 13, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 112.

²⁵Ibid., 120.

²⁶Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 329.

in ministerial formation, the challenge to seminaries and theologians is how to maintain a balance of being rooted in the Word and remaining connected with the everyday world. This also leads to the question of the importance of narrative theology in this age. Often regarded as a beneficial method of communicating the gospel in primal contexts, some scholars believe that a return to this pattern employed by Christ and the Apostles will prove very successful even among post-moderns in this generation. The most profound truths unless communicated in engaging gospel stories may remain simply theoretical and unaffactive.

Finally, the practice of tentmaking should lead to a reexamination of our theology of work, if one does indeed exist. The church has done an excellent job regarding a theology of the Sabbath; it is time to focus on a theology for the other six days. In doing this it will be necessary to recognize that because work was a mandate given before the fall, therefore an integration of faith in work should be considered exigent. Evangelicals with their Marketplace Ministries, and Catholics with their long history of publications from University of Notre Dame Press including the lay publication, *Initiatives*,²⁷ are ahead in this endeavor, which serves to empower membership for holistic missions. It is time for Adventists to awake.

Missiological Implications

Besides the theological implications that tentmaking presents to the Adventist Church, there are also missiological considerations. Implementation of tentmaking by the church as a viable missiological strategy will demand re-evaluation and recalibration of certain functions and practices in the church.

One of the primary things the church may need to consider is the development of a curriculum for the training of tentmakers. This specialized training should in some way or another be introduced to students at the seminary and possibly incorporated into the curriculum for the formation of ministers. Seminary graduates need to be introduced to practical aspects of missions, and given the opportunity to both experience and be taught how to train others in effective approaches to mission.

Secondly, the development of tentmaking missions demands better collaborative networks. These collaborative networks should exist between laity and clergy, between theologians and missiologists, between classroom and frontline missionaries, and between the various existing missionary agencies of the church. The present state of affairs is a rather diffuse and uncoordinated missionary program that does not reflect common focus and mutual accountability. Independent mission agencies serve wonderful purposes, help fulfill the mission program of the church, and have great appeal. However, the New Testament shows that while the Holy Spirit directed in diverse and innovative strategies, a central agency was recognized as responsible for mission accreditation and approbation—the local church of

²⁷Armand Larive, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 164.

Antioch in Paul's day (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28).²⁸ Rather than allow each agency or organization to do its own thing, reflecting life in the days of the Judges (Judg 17:6; 21:25), effort should be made to provide direction, orientation, affirmation, and appreciation for the ministries and programs of all existing mission agencies in the church.

Another collaboration that needs to happen is between the business departments of our institutions and the seminaries. Presently, a profusion of literature exists on the subject of business as missions.²⁹ This integrated approach to work has resulted in the creation of several businesses around the world, especially in limited access countries that are not only profitable, but also mission-oriented. If Adventist business schools do not integrate this module, business as mission, into our curricula, then there will not exist any uniqueness or distinction in our programs that should provide a rationale for our existence.

Thirdly, the church will need to take a fresh look at its funding structures if more effective mission is to be accomplished. Tentmaking provides a more cost effective approach to church planting not only in limited access regions but also in urban centers. Because of the growth and spread of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches around the world, their influence and existence cannot be ignored. An incontrovertible fact is that those who established most of these congregations can be considered tentmakers.³⁰ While new congregants may not possess full doctrinal maturity, they can be discipled after a congregation has been established by a layperson. Also, the laity has established numerous church plants, within, and without the church, as even the various celebrations of the Festival of the Laity in the Adventist Church affirm. This trend calls for a revisit of the funding programs for missions in the church. Increasingly voices are being raised as to the amount spent by the church simply to maintain its structures and institutions evident in the calls for restructuring of the church's administrative institutions at all levels. It has been observed that "when the activities of a church focus inward, the church has exchanged its mission for maintenance."³¹ The question the Adventist Church needs to ask itself is, "How much of what we do is missional and how much is maintenance?" Perhaps the time has come when we should ask ourselves what kind of church the Adventist Church is: a conventional church—with a maintenance orientation; a survival church—glorying in the past and afraid of change; a terminal church—showing signs of death;³² or a truly we are a missional church—where "every member is encouraged to

²⁸Ott et al., *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 208.

²⁹See the list of additional resources below.

³⁰A typical example is Sunday Adelaja, founder of the Embassy of the Kingdom of God, one of the largest churches in Eastern Europe. Also, a majority of the diaspora Pentecostal Churches established by migrants in Europe and America have been by bi-vocational ministers.

³¹Minatrea, *Shaped By God's Heart*, xvi.

³²*Ibid.*, 174-175.

hear and pursue God's direction as an authentic disciple on mission in the revolutionary agenda of the kingdom of God."³³

Fourthly, although there are those who believe in the dictum, "No money, no mission," there is increasing evidence that Western methods of doing missions, with large structures and great budgets, may have detrimental effects on the sustenance of local mission.³⁴ The success of tentmaking and church planting programs involving lay-people establishing house churches should lead the church to reconsider its funding patterns. Dependence on our finances may be robbing the Holy Spirit of His prerogative and power in fuelling and fulfilling the *missio Dei*.³⁵

Another missiological challenge is how to harness the great benefits of business as missions (BAM)—an essential dimension of tentmaking—for the advantage of the church. Perhaps, the appropriate agency in the church that could be employed in fulfilling this goal would be Adventist Laymen's Services International (ASI). This organization has been successful in attracting mission-driven donors and supporters of the church for projects and programs which have been a great blessing. However, a great deal more could be accomplished with closer collaboration between mission professionals and academics, the leadership of this body, and the Adventist Missions department. Such a partnership can only serve to dismantle the divisive schemes of the devil and advance the course of God's mission in great strides. ASI possesses the potential to launch and activate an Adventist version of BAM, but it needs the stimulus, vision, and strategic framework which mission professionals can provide. ASI, composed of committed Adventist laity, may play a more crucial role in Adventist missions and may work more energetically to establish international chapters and networks.

Finally, a knotty issue that should be addressed is the issue of control. How much should the church be involved in the work of independent ministries? Should there be a coordination of the programs and activities so that it is more intentional and directional than previously? These questions really do not have easy answers due to the fact that the study of mission practice reveals that innovation, change, and growth rarely come from the center but from the fringes. On the flip side, the absence of coordination and collaboration could result in incoherence, duplication, and loss of focus.

³³Ibid., 130.

³⁴See Jonathan Bonk, *Mission and Money: Affluence As a Western Missionary Problem*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

³⁵See LeRoy E. Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1949), 131.

Conclusion

Tentmaking is undoubtedly a valuable mission tool that the Adventist Church can employ as it seeks to carry the gospel around the world in readiness for the Lord's return. However, it raises a host of issues, theological and missiological, that answers are needed for. As the church navigates the currents of twenty-first-century missions, a re-evaluation and revitalization of its programs, policies, theology, and missiology will be necessary if the church is to stay relevant, balanced, and purposeful.

THE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S LOVE: THE OPTIMISTIC, THEOLOGICAL THEODICY OF ELLEN G. WHITE

WOODROW W. WHIDDEN, II
Andrews University

Introduction

When one begins to read through the voluminous writings of Ellen G. White (1827–1915), it is evident that she was not a systematic theologian. She is more accurately classified as an occasional or “narrative” expositor of theological themes. But simply because she was not a systematic writer, does not mean that she lacked a “center” or a key organizing theme.

The Central Organizing Theme

The various major themes in her theological development emerged from her Biblical expositions, historical narrations, and claims to visionary revelations from God. In these expositions she sought to explain the problem of evil (theodicy)¹ that was provoked by the challenges that Lucifer (the biblical Satan, or the Devil) brought against God's governance of his created universe, all with a special focus on the way he has dealt with his “personal” created beings (angels, relational beings on other worlds, and humans).²

The initial phase of Lucifer's rebellion began in heaven as he unleashed the charge that God was unfair to require created beings to obey his law. This provoked a ready response from the second person of the Godhead (Christ) who sought to dissuade Lucifer to drop his charges and cease his budding rebellion. But when such efforts came to naught, Lucifer was cast out from

¹Ellen White's efforts to construct an explanation for the problem of evil has anticipated more recent efforts in the mid- to late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to do the same. Among the mid-twentieth-century efforts was C. S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* (London: MacMillan, 1946). But possibly the most notable recent efforts in this direction have been spear-headed by Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001) and Richard Rice, *Suffering and the Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014). For a concise description of these more recent works by Rice and Boyd, see Richard Rice, “An enemy hath done this: Cosmic conflict theodicy,” *Ministry* (March 2015): 6-9.

²Commenting on Christ's expiring cry at Calvary, Ellen White says: “To the angels and unfallen worlds the cry, ‘It is finished,’ had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory” (*The Desire of Ages* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898, 1940], 758).

heaven, along with one-third of the angels. And thus it is this narrative that has come to be variously referred to as “The Great Controversy,” the “Cosmic Controversy,” or the “Conflict of the Ages” theme. Such terminology is reflected in the title of one of her best known books, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (1888, Revised 1911),³ and the overall title of the series in which it appeared, the “The Conflict of the Ages Series.”⁴

The larger plot ultimately unfolds from the narrative of God’s efforts to prove, through Christ’s patient demonstrations of God’s love, that Lucifer’s claims were false. God could have immediately destroyed Lucifer and his sympathizers. But such a response would have led the unfallen beings of the universe to serve God out of craven fear, rather than from a connected line of evidence that would patiently set forth persuasive, loving demonstrations of the justice of destroying Lucifer and his loyalists.

We will have more to say regarding the substantive core of God’s sustained response to Lucifer’s fall in the context of Christ’s incarnate, hand-to-hand battle with Satan. But before we do so, we need to trace the broader theological influences and doctrinal themes which shaped the thought of Ellen White as she developed her key integrating theme. And finally, we will attempt to show how each key theological theme and doctrine has provided the theological substance that has emerged during the various occasions which have enabled God’s love to be demonstrated. And finally this series of loving demonstrations will unfold in such a way that God will then be fully vindicated as he has, in Christ, progressively confronted the problem of evil fomented by Satan’s revolt.

³This theme began to unfold in the late 1840’s (see *Early Writings* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882, 1945], 133ff.) and *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915], 161, 162), but then it took on a more concerted developmental form following her famous Lovett’s Grove, Ohio vision in 1858. The key chapters where this theme has been given its clearest and most concise expositions are the following: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the chapter entitled “Why Was Sin Permitted?”, 33-43; *The Desire of Ages*, the chapter entitled “It Is Finished,” 758-764; *The Great Controversy*, the chapters “God’s Law Immutable,” 433-450, “The Origin of Evil,” 492-504; and “The Controversy Ended,” 662-678.

⁴This series contains (in logical, narrative order, not the chronological order of their production by Ellen G. White) the following volumes: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890): narrates the Conflict from the fall of Lucifer to the time of King David; *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1916): was published posthumously and narrates the story of Israel from the time of Solomon to the end of the OT; *The Desire of Ages* (1898): narrates the life of Christ; *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911): provides an overview of New Testament history and writings from the time of Christ’s ascension through the book of Revelation; and the aforementioned *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888, 1911): traces the conflict from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 until the time of the heavenly New Earth of Revelation 20-22.

Theological and Ideological Influences

The following trends and movements emerged as the predominant shaping ideological/theological contributors to White's thought. We will commence with the more general background factors of the longer Christian theological tradition and then close out this section with a resume of key themes and doctrines which she utilized to shape her cosmic metanarrative.⁵

The Larger Context of Christian Theology

From the first five centuries of Christian theological discourse, Ellen White would ultimately appropriate the larger contours of the Trinitarian perspective on the Godhead. This factor will receive more focused attention later on, especially in relationship to her efforts to become more Christo-centric and grace oriented in her Adventist theological context. And with her efforts to be more Christ and grace oriented, she will ultimately come to strongly affirm the influence of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century and its four great "Sola" themes—*Sola Scriptura*,⁶ *Sola Fide*,⁷ *Sola Gratiae*,⁸ and *Sola Christi*.⁹

But while she was heavily indebted to these sixteenth-century Magisterial Reformation themes, she did not affirm these Reformers' strongly predestinarian, irresistible grace predilections which emerged from the powerful influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Protestant Reformers. She would, instead, drink deeply from the fountains of evangelical Arminianism which was vouchsafed to her through her early-nineteenth-century Wesleyan/Methodist heritage.¹⁰ This perspective featured a strong dose of "responsible

⁵What follows in the next sections is mainly drawn from George Knight's *A Search For Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 17-81.

⁶Among Ellen White's strongest affirmations of the Bible and its authority are in *The Great Controversy*, 593-602 and *Selected Messages, Book One*, 15-23.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 300-400 lists numerous selections that give a clear and forceful testimony to justification by faith alone in the imputed, reckoned merits of Christ.

⁸*Ibid.*, also speak forcefully to the grace of God which calls, convicts, converts, justifies, sanctifies, and ultimately glorifies believers.

⁹The acknowledged literary masterwork of Ellen White is *The Desire of Ages* which is suffused with the theme of the all sufficiency of Christ to save sinners from sin—from the "guttermost to the uttermost" (a phrase drawn from audio tapes of Desmond Ford's classroom lectures).

¹⁰For her most positive affirmation of John Wesley and his theology, see her chapter in *The Great Controversy* entitled "Later English Reformers," 245-264. In this chapter is the following, succinct expression of her view as to what constitutes the right relationship between justifying and sanctifying grace: Wesley, following his much noted heart-warming experience at Aldersgate in London (1738), would continue "his strict and self-denying life, not now as the *ground*, but the *result* of faith; not the *root*, but the *fruit* of holiness. . . . Wesley's life was devoted to the preaching of the great truths

grace” perspectives that reflected a potent emphasis on “free grace,” especially in her embrace of “prevenient grace” which God employs to creatively and redemptively draw sinners to Christ.¹¹ Such categories are more popularly known as Wesleyan “free will,” especially when contrasted with the more deterministic themes of the Reformed/Calvinistic tradition in England and New England.

The other key feature emanating from her Wesleyan heritage was its strong emphasis on sanctifying and perfecting grace.¹² When this emphasis was more carefully integrated with the strong accentuation of the heart-felt individual and social concern of Puritanism in personal experience, it would create a potent blend of intense Christian doctrinal convictions and piety.

Yet Ellen White would also become the beneficiary of two other manifestations of nineteenth-century American Revivalism: Restorationist Primitivism and Millerite Adventism.¹³ These last two confluences would feature a strong emphasis on the restoration a self-conscious Biblicism, pre-millennial eschatology (being strongly opposed to the reigning social and political optimism of post-millennial eschatology) and apocalyptic prophetic interpretation. Inherent in the latter themes was a strong perspective which viewed the world as being enveloped in a Miltonian (John Milton) cosmic conflict between the supernatural forces of Christ and the powers of darkness inspired by Satan and his malevolent minions.¹⁴

Among the remaining key factors which rounded out the key lineaments of Ellen White’s conceptual world, were her steady affirmations of anthropological holism (known for its rejection of Greek pagan dualism), with its embrace of conditional immortality and soul-sleep,¹⁵ the rejection of the idea of an ever-burning hell (known technically as annihilationism), and seventh-day Sabbatarianism. This latter factor seemed to be inherently accompanied by a strong emphasis on the eternal authority of the Ten Commandments and steady opposition to any themes that smacked of

which he had received—justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ,” 256.

¹¹One of the clearest examples of her articulation of “prevenient grace” (though she never used these exact theological terms) is found in *Selected Messages, Book One*, pp. 389-392.

¹²For a somewhat detailed tracing of this theme, see Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation: A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), especially pp. 119 ff.

¹³On the themes of Primitivism and Millerism in the life and thought of Ellen White and Adventism, see George Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, 30-32 and 38ff.

¹⁴For a good sampling that traces the roots of her views on prophetic interpretation, see *The Great Controversy*, 299-408.

¹⁵For a clear exposition of her views on the conditional immortality of the soul and hell, see *The Great Controversy*, 531-562.

antinomian tendencies in spiritual formation.¹⁶ Thus, when all of these suggestive factors were integrated within the setting of a detailed exposition of the millennium of Revelation 20,¹⁷ they thus provided the essential ingredients which helped to portray the varied scenes and themes which provided the essential backgrounds and grist for the portrayal of the Cosmic Controversy scenario.

In order to grasp the integrative power of Ellen White's Cosmic Controversy theme, we must get a steadier handle on her essential Christian identity. And with this perspective in hand, this meta-narrative theme can then display its full explanatory/God-vindicating power.

The "Christian" Identity of Ellen White

As has been previously noted, the distinctly "Adventist" core of Ellen White's theology emerged out of her embrace of the fervent eschatology of Millerism. But as positive as all the previous doctrinal developments appeared to be to her, some very disturbing and fascinating misdirections had infected these "truth"-confessing, prophetically-informed Seventh-day Adventists! Somehow, Christ had lost his place as the centerpiece of their collective doctrinal focus! And it is in the context of this strange turn of events, that Ellen White commenced her most distinctive and decisive theological contribution to Seventh-day Adventist theology and piety.

This contribution can best be collectively characterized as "The Uplift or Focus on Christ" campaign.¹⁸ Beginning in the late 1870s, Ellen White, along with her husband, James White, launched a sustained attempt to redirect Adventism's faith focus towards Christ, His divine and human natures, and the dynamic outpouring of his free grace, which is now being mediated through his intercessions as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Though staggered by the premature death of her talented and supportive husband in 1881, Ellen White was determined to pursue these important doctrinal and spiritual adjustments and the hoped for seasons of revival and evangelistic/mission advance.

While space does not permit a detailed account of the crucial doctrinal developments associated with the "Uplift Christ" movement, the major dynamics of this campaign played out within the larger orbit of the conflicted events and aftermath of the historic 1888 Seventh-day Adventist General Conference session held in Minneapolis, MN (USA). And it was in the controversial aftermath of this important series of events, especially during the notable accomplishments of the nine years Ellen White spent in Australia (from 1891 to 1900), that she developed her most decisive and enduring theological legacy. It was during this stressful epoch that she most forcefully

¹⁶Ibid., 423-450.

¹⁷Ibid., 653-678.

¹⁸This campaign has been narrated by Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 69-148.

articulated the themes of “Christ and His Righteousness,” or the notable revival of the doctrines and experience of “Righteousness by Faith.”

The Key Themes of the “Uplift Christ” Movement

The main result of this renewed focus on the person and work of Christ would be her extensive writings that clarified the right relationship between justifying (forgiving) and sanctifying (transformative) grace. This was articulated in a manner that sought to maintain the eternal authority of the Ten Commandments and the always evident sanctification themes. But there also emerged a much greater accent on the biblical doctrine of justification by grace, through “faith alone.” Ellen White thus felt inspired to infuse a strongly grace-laced doctrinal and spiritual element into Adventism’s proclamation of its more distinctive doctrines.

Clarifications of the key themes of salvation by faith would emerge as a synergistic complement to another crucial theme—a steady unfolding of Trinitarian clarity for an Arian and semi-Arian infested SDA rank-in-file (both ministerial and lay). These emphases proved to be a Christianizing antidote for the persisting ravages of legalism and spiritual declension. Thus this emerging Trinitarian clarity functioned as a complementary, enriching force for her more intentional focus on Christ and the dynamics of personal salvation. And a brief review of this history will yield interpretive perspective on how the more unique Adventist doctrines and the recovery of basic “Christian” teachings would be effectively integrated within the larger narrative of the “Cosmic” or “Great Controversy” theme.

Trinitarian Developments and Salvation By Faith

Jerry Moon has laid out the evidence for the development of Ellen White’s understanding of the Godhead. He suggests that it is important to distinguish between Ellen White’s earlier “personal beliefs” and “what she received through her visions.”¹⁹ While her earlier comments on the Godhead could be characterized as “ambiguous,” capable of either a Trinitarian or non-Trinitarian interpretation, there was clearly evident a steady tendency to embrace the essentials of “a biblical view of the Trinity.”²⁰

By 1869 she bluntly declared that Christ “was equal with God”²¹ and in 1872 she made the forthright claim that Christ was not created.²² This earlier

¹⁹Jerry Moon, in Woodrow W. Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His plan of Salvation and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 205.

²⁰Ibid., 206.

²¹*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume Two (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 200.

²²*Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1872.

period of her ministry was capped off by her first designation of Christ as the “eternal Son.”²³

But it was in the midst of the great revival of devotional and theological focus on Christ (especially from 1888 onward), that further Trinitarian affirmations (and clarifications) were set forth. She claimed that Christ is “one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose²⁴ and “one in power and authority.”²⁵ His deity was not derived from the Father,²⁶ and the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead.²⁷

But the most decisive affirmations came in the 1898 publication of her most revered book, *The Desire of Ages*, and its statements that “In Christ is life, original, un-borrowed, and underived”²⁸ and that the Holy Spirit is the “Third Person of the Godhead.”²⁹ And finally this progressive parade of Trinitarian witness was summarily encapsulated in the following 1901 and 1905 declarations: The Godhead was referred to as the three “eternal heavenly dignitaries,” the “three highest powers in heaven,” the “three living persons of the heavenly trio” and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in nature, character, and purpose, yet distinct in their persons.³⁰

What, however, was most striking in this developmental trend is that the clearest Trinitarian testimony came in the context of her campaign to uplift and focus upon the eternal person of Christ and the saving power of his atoning sacrifice and intercessions. Therefore, if there had been no unfolding Trinitarian clarity, there most likely would have been no stirring revival of the great theme of Christ and His righteousness.

Thus it is that these complementary themes provided the framework for her understanding that Christ is a Savior who (1) justifies by faith alone (a powerful recovery of the Protestant emphasis on *sola fide* and *sola Christi*) and (2) also effectively converts and sanctifies the penitent, responsive sinner. Such teachings clearly reflected a persistent integration of “salvation by faith alone” themes with the holiness, transformational themes of her Wesleyan heritage.

Therefore it seemed quite inevitable that Ellen White, with no apologies to the semi-Arians in her own tradition (the ones most afflicted with legalistic tendencies), forthrightly made an unmistakable connection between a

²³Ibid., Aug. 8, 1878.

²⁴*The Great Controversy* [1888], 493.

²⁵Ibid., 495.

²⁶*Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 36.

²⁷*Special Testimonies*, Series A (1897) and B (1905) (n.p., 1906), 37.

²⁸*The Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 530.

²⁹Ibid., 671.

³⁰Manuscript 145, 1901; *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7 [1905], pp. 51, 62, 63; *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 422. These statements from 1901 and 1905 have been re-published in the compilation, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 614-617.

biblically informed doctrine of personal salvation and a clear affirmation of the full deity of Christ: "If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is vain to argue the point with them. . . . None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man's redemption."³¹

Therefore, it seems more than coincidental that the developments in her salvation thought roughly coincided with her unfolding views on the deity of Christ and the Trinity. As already pointed out, by the late 1870s and early 1880s she had become more intense in her expositions of the key themes of salvation, with the most notable manifestations appearing during the 1883 Battle Creek General Conference. Thus what began as a swelling stream in 1883 became a floodtide of publications in the aftermath of the previously mentioned Minneapolis, MN conference of 1888. In fact, roughly forty percent of all that she ever had to say on the subject of justification was published during the four years after 1888.

Furthermore, though she had always taught justification in terms of forgiveness, the emphasis after 1888 featured a strong accent on justification as the imputation (legal accounting) of the merits of Christ to repenting sinners. This theme became particularly emphatic as she began to correlate the experience of justification with Christ's intercessory work in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. A striking expression of this was that Christ's merits make up for the "unavoidable deficiencies" of true believers.³²

While there would always be a continuing emphasis on transforming, perfecting grace, such emphases did not compromise her clear teaching that justification is the work of Christ who reckons, or imputes his merits to the legal records of penitent, responsive believers. Clearly, the 1890s witnessed the climax of the "Uplift Christ" campaign.

Human Depravity

The final general "Christian" doctrinal emphasis of Ellen White related to her views on the sinfulness of human nature. And it was such views that provided a foundational complement to the salvation emphasis so essential to the "Uplift Christ" campaign.

Her views on "sin," "depravity," "corruption," and "guilt" were more in the Augustinian than the Pelagian tradition.³³ She defined sin as acts of transgression against God and a condition of "depravity" which involves

³¹*The Great Controversy* [1888] (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1888), 524.

³²*Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 3:196.

³³Pelagian refers to emphases on natural human goodness. For a convenient introduction to White's views on sin, see Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen G. White on the Humanity of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 18-24. For a developmental study of Adventism and "Original Sin," see Edwin H. Zachrisson, "Seventh-day Adventists and Original Sin: A Study of the Early Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of the Effects of Adam's Sin on His Posterity" (PhD dissertation: Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1984).

humans in “inherent” sinful “propensities,” “inclinations,” and “tendencies” to sin. While Ellen White was clear that all humans inherit the condition of sinful depravity from Adam, she was mainly concerned with how they can overcome their guilt and besetting sins through the saving grace of God.

But the most telling contribution of Ellen White’s doctrine of sin emerged with her teaching that human sinfulness, including how the effects of the sinful “corrupt channels” of penitent “true believers,” make even their best, grace-empowered efforts to be meritoriously unacceptable. In other words, unless the obedient actions of “true believers” are legally “purified by” the blood of Christ (that he is “moment by moment” ministering for them in the heavenly sanctuary), there is no genuine assurance of salvation.³⁴ Thus it seems justified to conclude that this idea of sinful nature nullifying any justifying merit for the believer’s acts of obedience was a telling, even inevitable doctrinal development of the focus on Christ and his righteousness.

Therefore, with Ellen White’s focus on the divine/human Christ, his redemptive grace and her ongoing support for the unique Adventist doctrines, all would then be carefully integrated within the framework of her “Great Controversy,” or “Cosmic Controversy” theme. And with this development, the full maturity of Ellen White’s theology unfolded as an “optimistic theological theodicy.” Thus what follows represents a demonstration of how her “Cosmic Controversy” theodicy unfolded as a significant, doctrinally integrated narrative of divine self-vindication.

The Matured Dynamics of the “Cosmic Conflict” Theme

As was previously pointed out, the title of the book *The Great Controversy* suggests that Ellen White clearly accepted the biblical account that Christ is the pre-existent, divine Son of God and that the devil and his angels are real (not mythical) supernatural beings who have fallen from their exalted status as loyal heavenly beings. Moreover, the most telling development of her narrations of the “Cosmic Conflict” focused on the fortunes of God’s essential nature of “love.” These maturing expositions (especially from 1890 onward) commence with the emphatic statement that “God is love” (the first three words of *Patriarchs and Prophets*), and conclude with the declaration that “from the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love” (the very last words of the book *The Great Controversy*,³⁵ the final book of the five volume “Conflict of the Ages” series).

Yet, more fundamentally, the theological core of her entire exposition of the “Cosmic Conflict” (as theodicy) is encapsulated in her portrayals of Christ’s life and atoning death and their significance for the ultimate resolution of the long-running “Conflict.” Thus the very heart of the “Great

³⁴*Selected Messages* (1958), 1:344.

³⁵*The Great Controversy*, 678.

Controversy” theme reaches full conceptual maturity in her book *The Desire of Ages* (1898) and its chapter entitled “It is Finished.”³⁶

The Contested Principles in the “Cosmic Conflict”

In the opening of the controversy, before the creation of the world, Lucifer charged God with being unjust in requiring obedience to his law from all intelligent, relational beings. On the surface, this sounds a bit simplistic. But undergirding Satan’s charge were foundational principles of decisive importance.

According to Ellen White, Satan claimed that the tensions between the mercy and justice of God’s love were so great that God the Father could not be the moral governor of the universe. And in this diabolical challenge lurks the genesis of Lucifer’s rebellion and his startling claim to supplant God as the rightful ruler of the worlds. In this narrative, Lucifer was thus fully emerging as the devil and Satan!

Beginning with the charge that it was impossible for all intelligent, free-will beings to perfectly keep God’s law, the drama intensified. The gist of Lucifer’s challenge was that God’s law should be abolished and it was his refusal to accept the authority of the law that caused him to be cast out of heaven. His expulsion was then followed by the special creation of this world and a literal Adam and Eve. And when they “fell” for Satan’s deceptions, he then claimed vindication and sought to usurp God’s dominion over his creation.

Satan, however, not only claimed that the law should be annulled (that is, mercy should completely nullify the justice of God—especially the requirements of His law), he also brought forward another claim: Since God’s justice stipulated that the wages of sin is death, the loving Creator could not forgive Adam and Eve and still be a God of justice (thus justice should completely nullify mercy). In support for his claim that God could not forgive Adam and Eve, he added a further caveat: since God did not forgive him and the other fallen angels, neither should He forgive Adam and Eve. So what was God to do in this demon hatched predicament?

The Godhead’s solution was to send Christ to the earth to become the divine/human Redeemer who would generate and demonstrate the graced provisions which can reconcile lost humanity to God (atone for sin) through Christ’s perfect manifestation of justice and mercy. In answering the charge that obedience to God’s holy law was impossible, Christ, as a genuine human being, without any advantages being drawn on by him from his inherently divine powers, demonstrated perfect obedience to the law. Thus the incarnate life of Christ vindicated God’s justice in requiring perfect, active obedience to his law of love.

Then, based on the justice of his perfect obedience, Christ, with the sins of the human race imputed or reckoned to him, perfectly met the claims of God’s justice that the wages of sin is eternal death. And he did this through

³⁶*The Desire of Ages*, 758-764. See especially 761-764.

his vicarious self-sacrifice (he died in the place of sinful humans). So Christ, as the sinless substitute, bore the just penalty for sin in order to fully satisfy the demands of God's retributive justice. And in doing this he manifested a merciful love that has enabled the Godhead to perfectly forgive repentant humans for their sin(s) without sacrificing divine justice (both the demands for perfect, active obedience to his law and the demands of executionary justice). Since the wages of sin is death, Christ thus passively obeyed the will of his Father by bearing the penalty of the broken law as a just satisfaction to the claims of divine, retributive justice.

It is then that Ellen White claimed that God, in Christ, manifested divine justice that was fully congruent with Godly mercy:

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. . . . But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. . . . By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.³⁷

After Christ's resurrection, Satan then presented his final challenge: he claimed that God's mercy was so manifestly revealed in Christ's death for lost sinners that Godly mercy has done away with God's law. Thus Satan had effectively come full circle in his arguments—he had returned, in principle, to his original charge that “mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law.”³⁸ Ellen White then suggested a succinct response to Satan's repeat maneuver:

Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.³⁹

Thus we have the detailed dynamics of the “Cosmic Controversy” between Christ and Satan. And it is within the framework of this cosmic meta-narrative that the rest of Ellen White's theology unfolds. In other words, Christ not only had made atoning provision for the salvation of lost humanity, but his work also provided the decisive demonstration that will ultimately vindicate the Godhead in every phase of its response to the emergence of the evil inherent in Satan's cosmic rebellion.

³⁷Ibid., 762.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 762, 763.

Love Overcomes Evil

With her presentation of the clarifying implications of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ for the “Great Controversy” in hand, what remains to be seen is how this fully matured theme opens the way for a more thorough integration with and explication of the other key doctrines in Ellen White’s attempt to demonstrate the vindication of God’s loving governance. Therefore, what follows is a preliminary demonstration (drawing on Ellen White’s ideas) as to how God’s love is vindicated in the face of Satan’s propaganda campaign and its baleful fruitage.

This integrative demonstration commences in the context of her most central “Christian” and “unique Adventist” doctrines.

The Doctrine of God as Love

The most fundamental of all Christian doctrines addresses the nature of God. And Ellen White, drawing on her Wesleyan/Arminian theological roots, clearly held that God was Trinitarian, with the three persons of the Godhead having co-eternally pre-existed as beings who have been existing and working together in mutually submissive, overflowing, creative and redemptive love. And with this accent on creative and redemptive love, immediately the Adventist Sabbath doctrine comes to mind as the weekly memorial to God’s creative and saving actions. Clearly, the God who creates and redeems humans in love has sought a freely chosen relationship with them. And thus at the very heart of this relational love (the social Trinity), both divine and human, is the concept of freedom of choice. Only a context of free choice, inherent in the Wesleyan view of divine love, could create a context that could birth a “Cosmic Controversy” theodicy.

By way of stark contrast, the deterministic categories of Augustine of Hippo’s thought, as reflected in Magisterial Protestantism (especially Calvinism), have largely rejected any concept of freely given human response to God’s offer of saving power. And thus it comes as no surprise that the most fierce opposition to Methodist/Wesleyan free grace⁴⁰ and Ellen White’s “Great Controversy” meta-narrative has always arisen from the Augustinian/Reformed tradition. Therefore, God as a loving Trinity is absolutely essential to any concept which presupposes the acceptance or rejection of God’s loving offer of redemption. To put it simply—no grace-granted free choice, no “Great Controversy” scenario!

The Doctrine of Sin

On the issue of sin, there was significant agreement between the Augustinian/Reformed thinkers and the Protestant free-choice teachers (the Wesleyan/Arminians). Both agreed that sinful depravity was so deeply seated in human

⁴⁰For a more recent portrayal of this seemingly ongoing, irreconcilable fracture between the Reformed/Calvinistic and the Wesleyan/Arminian Traditions, see Roger Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

nature that only God's grace could heal it.⁴¹ Therefore, when humans sinned, their natures were corrupted, even to the point that they could not initiate a saving relationship with God. But James Arminius, many Anglicans (from the sixteenth century on), John Wesley, and their admirers (including Ellen White) claimed that God's love reached out to recreate human freedom so that a genuinely free response became possible. This "freed will" concept has been the very opposite of the Augustinian/Calvinist meta-narrative which has consistently claimed that God's saving love is irresistibly bestowed on the "elect" who have been pre-determined by the inscrutable will of God alone.⁴²

Thus for Ellen White, God was conceived to be lovingly persuasive, not irresistibly powerful in determining the make-up of the "elect." Saving faith is created when grace-influenced sinners are enabled (not forced) to freely embrace God's saving offer. Sin is thus persuasively counteracted in love, not deterministically eradicated. And these ideas bring us to the very dynamics of saving grace.

Sin and Free Salvation by Faith

For Wesley and Ellen White, salvation was understood to be a delicate balance between forgiving and transforming grace. Thus those who are enabled to freely respond to God's convincing and converting grace will become the beneficiaries of not only Christ's forgiveness, but also his power to change attitudes and character patterns. Those whom God forgives are also the ones that He co-operatively converts and continually transforms. Without forgiveness, there can be no transformation of character and acceptance of forgiveness will be inevitably and surely accompanied by a co-operant process of character change (sanctification).

This latter concept is absolutely essential to Ellen White's highly elaborated, Bible-based doctrine of end-time judgments according to works, especially the pre-advent investigative judgment and the subsequent millennial judgments of the lost. If the "root" of salvation is faith, the "fruit" of salvation will be a life which features a consistent pattern of evident obedience to God's revealed will. And the "fruit" of faith (or no faith) will be on full display as reflected in the celestial records during all phases of final judgment.

And once more Sabbath keeping, as a revelation of true faith, will play an important role in the final testing crisis of earth's history. According to Ellen White, the Sabbath will provide the great test in the final "seal of God" versus the "mark of the beast" crisis foretold in Rev 13 and 14. Those who receive the "seal of God" will keep the Sabbath, even in the face of a universal death decree (Rev 13:15).⁴³

⁴¹For a succinct and readable exposition of Wesley's doctrine of sin and its close similitude with Reformed understandings, see Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 19-46.

⁴²Ibid., 47-68.

⁴³*The Great Controversy*, 563-612

Thus the issue will come down to the concept that the Sabbath commandment is the only requirement of God's law that can be kept by "faith alone"! And this conclusion is based on the idea that the only reason to keep the Sabbath is based on the settled belief that God is the source of life (Creator of life on earth) and of everlasting life (Re-Creator for eternal existence in the everlasting kingdom of heaven).

Furthermore, in the coming great and final testing crisis, if God is to be truly trusted as the Giver of everlasting life, then the faithful will not worry about the remnants of life in time since God is intent on life in eternity for his sealed, loyal end-time believers. It just makes no sense to keep the particularly stipulated seventh-day Sabbath if it does not reveal a faith in God as Creator and Savior. Faith in God as both Creator and Savior has always formed the basis of trust in God's revealed commands. The supreme test will therefore finally come down to this: Whom do you trust—yourself (or some other creature) or the gracious Creator/Redeemer?

Therefore the revelation of true faith on the earth will be reflected as the final evidence of testing, saving faith during the investigative judgment in heaven. And when every case is revealed, then the pre-advent judgment phase ends and the judgments of execution commence.⁴⁴

In the totality of their sweep, these detailed histories (recorded in heaven) will provide public evidence of unmistakable patterns of responsive obedience (or sin) that will witness to the character of each person's faith experience. And in these revelations, both in the judgments of the professed followers of Christ (pre-advent) and lost sinners (during and at the end of the millennium), God's judicial decisions will be on public display in order to fully vindicate his judicial fairness before all of the relational intelligences of the universe.

Once more, while the saved are justified by faith alone and the lost will be damned by no faith, the faith of all persons will never be "alone" or isolated from the inevitable fruit of their respective character patterns. Such is the evidential grist of the divine, vindicating judgments of investigation and review.

Some further comments on Ellen White's developed judgment sequence teachings will prove helpful in clarifying how her judgment theology has contributed to the integration of her salvation thought with her eschatological teachings. But before turning to those important clarifications, there is one other key doctrine that supplies a critically important presupposition for the logic of the sequence of these various phases of final, vindicating judgment.

Final Judgment, Conditional Immortality, and "Soul-Sleep"

This mostly peculiar Adventist doctrine of "conditionalism" (the non-immortality of the soul) offers key implications for the timing of God's final judgments. And this has mainly to do with the teaching about the unconscious

⁴⁴Ibid., 479-491.

state of the soul in death and the utter annihilation of the lost at the time of the final executionary judgments of God. The rationale goes like this:

Christians have long been divided (especially since the sixteenth century Reformation) as to when the final judgment will take place—at the moment of death or at the end of the age? Luther, in his opposition to the doctrine of purgatory, upheld “soul sleep,” thereby claiming that there would be no second chances for completing the salvation process after death and before the judgments of the “last day.”⁴⁵ Thus no created being will go to their ultimate reward (heaven or hell) immediately at death (thus if they did go, such would logically assume that each soul is judged at the moment of death and thus immediately proceeds to either heaven or hell).

Ellen White clearly opted for a version of Luther's basic position and accepted it as one of Adventism's “peculiar, or “distinctive” doctrines. And thus judgment for both the dead and the living is effectively postponed until just before the second coming when all will have their ultimate fate definitively decided (thus after the second coming, nobody's salvation status changes). Now this concept also vitally affects the timing and finality of hell, which will be clarified after further explanatory comments as to the reasons for and the timing of the three phases of the “last day” judgments of God. Therefore, without the doctrine of death as a deep, but temporary state of “sleepy” unconsciousness, there will be no last day judgments of review (once more, why would there be such an event if each person had already been instantly judged and eternally rewarded at the moment of death?).

The Three Phases of Final Judgment

Drawing on the “peculiarly” unique Adventist doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary and the prophetic sequences of Dan 7–9, the first phase of final judgment is heavenly and pre-advent. It will thus be immediately followed by the second coming when God consummates the revelation of His love for the redeemed. The second phase is heavenly, post-advent and unfolds during the millennium. And the third will be primarily revelatory and takes place at the end of the millennium on the earth, just before the final execution of the lost in the “Lake of Fire” (hell) and the re-creation of the earth (the “earth made new”—cf. Rev 21) as the administrative center of the everlasting “Kingdom of God.”

As previously suggested, each of these three phases of judgment features investigations and revelations of evidence that are then punctuated by judgments of execution that had been determined in the three judgment phases of revelatory investigation. Thus the whole process can be summarized as follows:

The pre-advent judgment takes place in heaven and concludes just before the second coming when the righteous dead are resurrected, the living saints are translated without tasting death, and all are caught up to be with God

⁴⁵For more on Luther and “soul sleep,” see L. E. Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol II (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1965), 64–87.

in heaven for the one thousand years. But for the living rejecters of God's grace, the second coming will be a preliminary judgment of deadly execution as they will be destroyed by the "brightness" of Christ's appearing and will be entombed, with the rest of the dead on earth for one thousand years. At this same time, Satan and his angels are bound to the desolated earth for the duration of the millennium, left to contemplate their ultimate fate, a destiny that will be executed on them at the end of the millennium.⁴⁶

The end of the millennium will then feature the final "Great White Throne" judgment of execution for the lost. But this final execution will only take place after the cases of the lost have been carefully reviewed by the redeemed (along with the unfallen beings of the universe) during the heavenly millennium. It will be during this millennial judgment that God will carefully reveal to the redeemed the detailed histories of the choices and action of the lost before their imminent final execution (damnation) in the "Lake of Fire." But there is one more judgment scene at the end of the millennium which takes place just before the "Lake of Fire" engulfs the condemned of all ages.

After the "camp of the Saints" (the New Jerusalem) descends from heaven to the earth, and the wicked dead are raised, a "Great White Throne" convocation occurs where the lost (angelic and human) are arraigned before God's enthroned presence to see a panoramic, revelatory review of their faithless lives passing before them in great detail. And with this sobering revelation, even the lost will then finally and fully admit that God is true, just, and righteous in consigning them to the "Lake of Fire" and its retributive, annihilating judgments.

Referring to the providential purposes of this detailed sequence of last judgments, especially those of cosmic investigation (pre-advent, millennial, and at the end of the millennium), Ellen White has this to say:

The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds He has created. . . . With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord, declare: "Just and true are thy ways, Thou King of Saints."⁴⁷

Hell, the Final Act of Vindicating Justice and Mercy!

But what about the justice of hell as an act of annihilation, rather than a process of endless torment? Here is where, ironically enough, the death of Christ on the cross and the "Great Controversy" theme converge to reveal their balanced, logical revelation of God's justice and mercy. Ponder the following sequential rationale inherent in Ellen White's views.

⁴⁶For Ellen White's key exposition on the millennium, see *The Great Controversy*, 653-661.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 670, 671.

She claimed that the Bible teaches a preliminary, fiery destruction of the living wicked at the second coming of Christ. But the final “Lake of Fire” hell, the time when all the persistently rebellious angels and humans will be eternally annihilated, comes at the end of the millennium. Furthermore, this destructive power purifies the earth of not only sin and sinners, but also purges away all the scarring effects of sin as a fitting preparation for the re-creation of the “earth made new” as the eternal abode of the redeemed. So where is divine love in all of these judgments of executionary wrath?

First of all, the most basic ideas of human justice seem to be ignored in the doctrine of the endless, conscious torment of the lost. For Ellen White, from her teen years on, this thought was completely unacceptable. Simple biblically revealed justice, for her understanding, points to the “wages of sin” being an eternal death, not an eternal dying of endless suffering—both physical and mental. Furthermore, hell as annihilation is not only just, but it is also merciful in the sense that if God allowed the unrepentant sinners to live on, their lives would be a miserable blot on a universe now ruled by unselfish love. All that the lost have ever persistently sought for was the gratifications of self-love and its evil fruit. Thus their evil influence would inflict a “hellish” misery on the redeemed and the unfallen beings of the universe.

Furthermore, even if God allowed the lost to hang around the edges of heaven, the place would be a hellish torment for them. Holiness and its righteous atmosphere has always been a turn-off for persistent sinners. Therefore, it only made sense to Ellen White that they would be forever put out of their self-inflicted misery and prevented from spreading their misery to others. Additionally, even if not exposed to the holy ones, they would still find only misery in endless self-indulgence.

But ultimately an ever-burning hell just makes no sense in the light of Christ’s death on Calvary. If the “wages of sin is death” and by death is meant eternal conscious torment in some place called hell, how could Jesus bear such a penalty on the cross and then be resurrected to intercede, judge, and rule the everlasting kingdom of grace? If an ever burning hell is true, then Christ could only rule from his prison of agonies in hell. Thus it is only logically self-evident that if the wages of sin is eternal torment, then Christ did not satisfy the demands of God’s retributive justice. But the Gospels clearly report that the death of Christ on the cross, as the just and merciful sin-bearer, came to a relatively quick end. Thus divine justice was completely satisfied by the infinite quality of Christ’s substitutionary suffering, not some endless quantity of the wreaking of torturous vengeance.

Therefore, when the “Great Controversy” is finally settled with the complete vindication of God, Ellen White claims that the thoughts of the redeemed will once more come full circle to a vision of the merciful manifestation of love in “the great sacrifice made by the Father and the Son in man’s behalf.”⁴⁸ “The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified, they will behold Christ crucified. . . . That the Maker of all the worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies

⁴⁸Ibid.

should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. . . .” Therefore “the mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. . . . Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice and power. . . .”

And finally, “it will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. . . . The result of the Saviour’s conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity.”⁴⁹

Such is the sum and substance of the “Optimistic Theological Theodicy” of Ellen G. White.

⁴⁹Ibid., 651, 652.

BOOK REVIEWS

Allison Jr, Dale. C. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013. xlix + 790 pp. Hardcover, \$130.00.

Professor Allison's treatment of the text of James is possibly the most extensive, exegetical, and theological treatment of this document in a century. The total work is just short of 800 pages. Counting pages does not tell the whole story. The selected bibliography takes up forty-nine pages of fine print. The footnotes, more often than not, take up more than half the page and are much smaller print than the main text. His introduction ends at p. 109! To say that this tome is extensive is an understatement. And yet he apologizes for contemporary contributions that he inadvertently overlooked, admitting that it is impossible to keep track of all the publications that appear each year (x).

The uniqueness of Allison's contribution to Jacobean studies is his argument for the date, setting, and composition of the epistle. He lays out the pros and cons for an early and late date, and contends that the gaping holes in our knowledge allow for a strong argument either way. He posits, and his entire commentary is built on this assumption, that James is a second-century pseudepigraphon composed in the literal diaspora. He argues that James's real audience is being addressed indirectly. James intends them to "overhear" what he is addressing to the fictional audience. The real audience is a second-century Jewish-Christian community who still attended the synagogue and "wished to maintain irenic relations with those who did not share their belief that Jesus was the Messiah" (43). The original intent of the letter was to persuade sympathetic readers that "the differences between James' version of Judaism and other forms was not so great" (44). Allison hypothesizes that the letter could be thus considered as an "Apology."

The position of the commentary is that James is pseudepigraphal like the intertestamental book of Enoch. Like Enoch, which was written in the second-century B.C.E. but purported to be written by Enoch who lived before the Flood of Gen 6, so James was written in the second-century C.E., with a Sitz im Leben of the incipient Christian church before there was a clear distinction between Jews and Christians. Allison makes a strong argument that the intent of the author of this pseudepigraphon was to facilitate the dialogue between the Jews and Christians in the second century who were unhappy with the theology of the emerging church as exemplified in the Pauline writings. Allison views James as relevant for the interreligious dialogue not only between Christians and Jews today, but even between Christians and Buddhists (108).

Although I am not convinced that the work is pseudepigraphal, I agree with Allison's proposal of the situation of the epistle as he perceives the author intended it to be. It is not set in the later Christian Gentile-dominated church with its fully developed christology and soteriology. The one place that poses a significant problem is in 2:1. In an excursus on pp. 382-384 (in very fine print) he makes a strong case for omitting the phrase "our Lord Jesus."

It is the one phrase that makes the epistle overtly Christian with a highly developed christology as found in the later writings of the first century and onwards. I have argued elsewhere, however, that if we would view the genitive as subjective (“faith of our Lord Jesus”) rather than objective (“faith in our Lord Jesus”), we would eliminate the christological-sociological quandary that is faced by those of us who see the epistle’s setting in as early a period as we are wont to view it.

The “History of Interpretation and Reception” at the beginning of each section is exhaustive and most helpful. Professor Allison is careful to include all the major works (including sermons of major church fathers). Readers will find this survey and summary most helpful. Of exceptional value is his survey and summary of the debate over the “faith-works” passage in 2:14-26. I must, however, fault Allison for failing to see this pericope in the context of the entire chapter as well of 1:27. Much more space is devoted to the question of its relation to Paul than to the passage’s social context. It is important to note that because James is seen as a pseudepigraphon, the author of the commentary dismisses any attempt to “divine the socio-economic circumstances of James and his readers” (668).

Allison’s dismissal of the social world and the socioeconomic question is a major weakness of the work. But I question how careful and thorough he has been in his research and presentation of the position of other interpreters of James. I found in numerous instances my position was misrepresented. For example, on p. 193, contra Allison’s reading of my position, the rich are persons within James’s community. James is not addressing members versus nonmembers. In order to comfort the suffering poor, he condemns the rich. Both are part of the community (a point Allison agrees with on p. 206). Even more serious is when he conveniently has me condemning all rich (p. 642), rather than pointing out that James, in James’ own setting, condemns all the rich whom he saw as oppressive. And finally, he totally and erroneously misquotes me on p. 644. In my work I argue (following L. A. Schokel) that the poor should be patient and not violently fight the rich, because God himself will resist them. Allison has me saying that the poor should resist the rich. I point out these examples, not to be defensive, but to raise the question as to how much care Allison has taken in working with his sources.

Despite the problems I have with positions of this work, no student of James worth his or her salt can ignore this massive and insightful work. It is a must-have in every New Testament scholar’s library.

Walla Walla University
College Place, Washington

PEDRITO MAYNARD-REID

Bergmann, Michael, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea, eds. *Divine Evil: The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011. 337 pp. Paperback, \$43.00.

“*Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*,” coedited by Michael Bergmann, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea, consists of a compilation

of essays presented at a conference hosted by the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame in 2009. The title of the Conference was “My Ways Are Not Your Ways: The Character of the God of the Hebrew Bible,” and it explored philosophical and biblical issues related to theodicy. The emphasis was placed on troubling passages in the Hebrew Bible which have allowed for polarized opinions: to some, God is portrayed as wrathful, punitive, intolerant, jealous, misogynist, homophobic, promoting slavery, unjust, etc., while to others God is portrayed as wholly good, compassionate, merciful, just, and morally perfect. The exclusive focus on the Old Testament functions as a connection point between the three major Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Also, as an interdisciplinary project, *Divine Evil* provides an opportunity for conversation among philosophers and philosophers of religion, as well as biblical scholars.

Although every one of the authors has a unique perspective on the moral character of the God of Abraham, the reader will surely consider it worthwhile to be exposed to all of them.

The book begins with an “Introduction” in which summarized background information is offered, as well as suggestions for areas for future study. The “Introduction” is followed by three parts which contain ten essays (chapters), each accompanied by a shorter critical response made by another scholar, and a final response made by the original author. The first part, “Philosophical Perspectives: Problems Presented,” presents objections to the moral character of God. The second part, “Philosophical Perspectives: Solutions Proposed,” presents various responses from theistic philosophers to the issues discussed in the first part. The third part, “Theological Perspectives,” provides additional responses from biblical scholars.

Some of the chapters will be highlighted here. For example, in “Does God Love Us?” Louise Antony compares Adam and Eve’s story with a fairytale and concludes that God not only behaves as an abusive father, but anyone who identifies as his child is displaying the psychology of an abused child. On the other hand, in “The Problem of Evil and the History of Peoples: Think Amalek,” Eleonore Stump describes a possible world in which the Hebrew Scriptures’ difficult passages (the slaughter of the Amalekites in this case) could be considered as literal happenings and yet rightly understood from the perspective of the main presuppositions of Christianity. This, Stump believes, allows for the coexistence of both the validity of the text as it is narrated and the loving character of God (this is Stump’s account for a Christian worldview). In “Canon and Conquest: The Character of the God of the Bible,” Christopher Seitz argues that Biblical texts can only make sense in the context of the whole canon (he urges a canonical study). Under that premise, according to Seitz, God is not portrayed apologetically as if he were searching for justification, but instead depicts himself as he is.

The “Concluding Remarks” provide the reader with a very short compilation of the main ideas presented throughout the chapters and an admission of pending challenges.

As it can be expected, the wide-ranging nature of this work leads the reader to several different directions under the umbrella of theodicy. In an attempt to summarize the main concepts presented, I would say that on the part of the “critics” there is a recurrence of an old and well-known question: “If God is perfectly good and omnipotent, why do the Old Testament narratives describe him differently (as evil)?” From their point of view, this question leads to illogical and irreconcilable answers. On the other hand, some recurrent concepts contained in the “defenders” arguments are: moral progress (God’s ethical adaptation to a people that needed step-by-step restoration), divine-command theory (strong divine command), skeptical theism (human cognitive limitations in discerning God’s reasoning), and the vulnerability of God (anthropomorphism), among other references to interpretative methodologies.

Many of the arguments given in the book—implicitly or explicitly—seem to be dealing with the dilemma of whether to read the text at face value or under other types of interpretative options. That is, critical importance seems to be given to the interpretation mode or methodology. Along these lines, several of the essays touch upon the status of the Old Testament as divinely inspired Scripture as well as the meaning and application of inspiration.

This book’s nature is highly academic and would most likely present a serious challenge for everyday readers of the Old Testament. In fact, the book demands that the reader be familiar with issues concerning theodicy, inspiration, hermeneutics, biblical studies, and philosophy at a scholarly level. This dynamic is reflected in Louise Antony’s question: “Why would a benevolent God ‘reveal’ himself in so obscure a way that one needs a PhD to understand him?” (56) Although her point is well taken, it is also often evident to the everyday Bible-believing reader that the questions under discussion might have no easy answers. Thus, even the nonacademic reader will typically be required to partake in an extra effort in order to navigate the realm of theodicy.

Despite the implicit limitations in regards to the complexity of the matters under discussion, such a diverse compilation of philosophical critiques, analysis of biblical passages, and suggested theodicies is an excellent medium to familiarize oneself with the variables and complexities involved in matters of theodicy within the Old Testament.

The unique and varied perspectives exposed by the different authors in regards to the moral character of God surely provide a space for dialogue and inquiry, and for exploratory answers to the concerns of a thoughtful reader.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

IRIANN IRIZARRY

Cameli, Louis J., *Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality: New Paths to Understanding*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2012 171 pp. Paper, \$12.63

How can the Roman Catholic Church minister effectively to members with same-sex attractions and yet maintain its traditional teaching concerning homosexual behavior? This seems to be the heart of the issue that Louis

Cameli addresses in this book. The questions he uses to frame this issue are: “Is the sexuality of homosexually inclined persons a blessing or a curse? Does it lead a person to God or away from God? Can a homosexual person be a good Catholic?” (back cover). His answers may surprise some. The author seeks to answer these questions by starting, not with homosexuality, but with the human sexuality that is common to all persons. Out of that context, his goal is to describe how a person with same-sex attractions can be a member of the Catholic Church on equal footing with other members, without feeling ostracized or being treated as an outcast.

Louis Carmeli was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in 1969, and has served that tradition as a parish priest and as a professor of theology and other roles at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary.

I must mention up front that I am not a Roman Catholic. So I am looking at Cameli’s work from the outside. He clearly is writing for a Roman Catholic audience. Yet, it seems that other Christians may find help in understanding this issue from his writing, as other denominations are wrestling with similar issues. In my review of his work, I do not attempt to defend or deny Roman Catholic teaching. But I believe that as Christians we can learn from each other as we “look over the shoulder” to see how others are approaching difficult issues.

Cameli structures the book very logically, and it is easy to follow his line of thinking. The basis for his argument is Catholic tradition and the Bible, informed by studies in anthropology (he uses the term *theological anthropology*). In chapter 1 he addresses the basic issue of a person’s source of truth. If the postmodern approach of self as the definer of truth is adopted, then a person who is homosexual might define him or herself with that self-understanding, and no one has the right to assail that self-definition. But if truth is revealed from outside oneself (from God), then our self-definition must conform to the objective revealed truth. The latter epistemological approach is the basis for Cameli’s argument. From this foundation, he posits that sexuality is a gift from God that we are to care for as stewards, not as owners. This approach refutes the idea that it is my body, therefore I can do what I want with it. Rather, as stewards, we are responsible to a higher moral authority to express our sexuality in ways that are appropriate and healthy for ourselves and for other people. The chapter deals with other moral and ethical issues, including treatment of gays and lesbians as “the enemy.” The Catholic Church does not take this stance, says the author, but seeks to love and accept persons with same-sex attraction without condoning improper behavior. The rest of the book expands on this idea in great detail.

Cameli then presents a long discussion on spirituality and sexuality (chapter 4). He posits the need to “recover an integral and non-dualist understanding of the body” as found in the Apostle Paul’s writings (34). A person’s body is not “detached from the encounter with God as the mystery of our lives” (35). Human sexuality, spirituality, and the work of the Spirit of God are all interconnected as the believer experiences the presence of God

in the Christian life. Three examples of this are presented for consideration: the experience of transverberation as reported by Teresa of Avila, Ezekiel and his description of covenantal fidelity, and the liturgy of the Easter Vigil. Cameli sees all three as indicating a deep connection between human sexuality, spirituality, and the Spirit's work. His conclusion from this is that there are "three movements of great significance": "a movement to connect, to claim and be claimed, and to give life" (45). These three (connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life) are the basis for the author's parameters for proper sexual intimacy in a believer's life. He also defines these three as the common ground for experiencing sexuality, "whether one is male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, genitally active or abstinent. . . . All of us experience a movement to connect with others, to claim and be claimed, and to give or generate life" (50, 51).

Therefore, all Catholics must be guided by these movements when deciding whether to be "genitally active" as they live out their sexuality. All persons are to live out their sexuality, but only some are permitted to engage in sexual intercourse. Those who must abstain include unmarried men and women, two persons of the same sex, and married couples using artificial contraception. Later, he also proscribes masturbation, pornography, prostitution, and "various paraphilias" (61). So, homosexuals are not being singled out when the church prohibits their practice of sexual intimacy; rather, they are one of a number of groups that fall into the same category. This then allows the church to accept and ministry to those with same-sex attractions and yet maintain behavior standards. There are ways (which are described in chapter 7) for homosexuals and others who are called to celibacy to still express their sexuality through connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life, but these ways do not involve sexual intercourse.

Chapter 8 compares gay identity with Christian identity, and Cameli argues here that the gay identity must not be the central organizing principle of the same-sex attracted believer. Rather, the identity as a child of God in Christ must inform and shape all aspects of the life, included the sexual aspects. The believer is a Roman Catholic who has these attractions, rather than a gay person who is attempting to fit into the Church.

The next chapter (chapter 9) focuses on how Roman Catholics should relate to a pluralistic society, particularly in relation to sexual issues. The author proposes four steps: protect the rights of members to practice their faith, engage in an honest dialog with the culture about what is right and wrong, witness for the revealed truth about these issues, and focus on the "internal formation of believers" (114), helping them to have a "cultural-critical mindset" (115), learning to evaluate the assumptions and values of the culture, rather than accepting them uncritically.

Chapter 10 addresses how the church should minister to young people in the area of sexuality. It should help them understand that same-sex attraction may be a fleeting phase, and they should not lock in their identity too quickly. It is wise to wait and see if it dissipates. Cameli also deals with the social and psychological issues involved with a young person "coming out" as gay. The

church should be a safe and helpful place for youth to process the evolution of their sexual identity.

The last chapter focuses on homosexuals in the priesthood. The author wrestles with some very sensitive issues for the Roman Catholic Church, including the percentage of priests who are attracted to other men, and the molestation of male adolescents by priests. After citing Cozzens's 2000 study and other research, which indicate that there is a higher proportion of men in the Catholic priesthood with same-sex attraction than in the general population, Cameli suggests that this may be more an issue of "incomplete formation of sexual identity" than settled gay identity (130). These priests "have not successfully passed through adolescence" (130). The question then becomes, should men with same-sex attractions be ordained to the priesthood? Cameli cites several church documents to conclude that a man should not be ordained to the priesthood if he is practicing homosexuality, if he has "deep-seated homosexual tendencies," or if he supports the "gay culture" (135). Cameli then describes four ways to identify "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" in a more objective manner.

In the conclusion, Cameli states clearly how the church can include homosexuals in its fellowship. "It is both possible and desirable for persons with same-sex attractions to be at home in a Church which is both prophetic in its consistent proclamation of truth and loving in its universal outreach to all people no matter what their condition or life circumstance" (140).

By stressing the similarity we all have sexually (connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life), and by helping members to express that sexuality appropriately, Cameli sets forth an approach for ministering to homosexuals in a loving and accepting way, without stigmatizing them as perverts or outcasts.

As I evaluate Cameli's arguments, I want to reiterate that I am a non-Catholic looking in on an internal discussion within that communion. I want to applaud the author for addressing a very sensitive and difficult issue in a very gentle and professional manner. It is also commendable that he is seeking to include those with same-sex attractions in the church in a way that is positive and relational, without crossing the line of condoning behavior that is prohibited by the Bible and church teaching. There are, of course, some Christians outside the Roman faith who would not see homosexual intimate behavior as prohibited, and they will disagree with his approach, while other Christians will find his ideas interesting and may well be able to take pieces of his approach and adapt them to their own.

This attempt to ensconce homosexuality into a broader understanding of sexuality is commendable. Homosexuals are basically no different than other people, and as such they are limited in physical expression, as are priests, unmarried heterosexuals, etc. The same restrictions apply to everyone: no sex outside of the marriage between a man and a woman. And as with all people (who are all affected by the sinful world we live in, and who have struggles in various areas of life), the church needs to figure out how to accept and minister to persons with same-sex attractions in a healthy way. As

an evangelical Christian, these are ideas that I can embrace, though adapting them to my particular context.

Having said this, there is one aspect of Cameli's thinking that I would press him on. Returning to the three dynamics of human sexuality (connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life), I notice that Cameli, as I would expect from a Roman Catholic theologian, interprets the giving of life dynamic of human sexuality to exclude as legitimate sexual intimacy behavior that cannot produce life, such as the use of artificial contraception and homosexual sexual behavior. There are other behaviors, however, that he does not address. For example, he does not explicitly exclude sex between a postmenopausal woman and her husband, or a woman who through disease, injury, or surgery, can no longer produce children. Would he counsel married couples in this situation to abstain from sex? Can sterile men be intimate with their wives? And what about oral sex in the marriage bed? This is a weakness in his argument, and is the area where some Christian who agree with his conclusions might struggle to accept his reasoning.

Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality is well worth reading, for both Catholics and other Christians who are involved in this aspect of pastoral ministry. Cameli sees homosexuals, not as evil persons, but as people who are tempted to express their sexuality in inappropriate ways. The church's role is not to condemn, but to love, accept, teach, and help them live by Christian principles, which bring genuine happiness and real satisfaction.

Andrews University

DAVID PENNO

Kalimi, Isaac, and Seth Richardson, eds. *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, 71. Leiden: Brill, 2014. xii + 548 pp. Hardcover, \$234.00.

It is generally agreed that Sennacherib's third western campaign, which included his invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.E., is the best documented event in the history of Israel and Judah in the first temple period, and the historical details of the event have been well studied. Nevertheless, some gaps remain in our knowledge, since, as Cogan observed, "a consensus concerning the course of events in 701 B.C.E., the year of Sennacherib's campaign, has yet to be achieved" (51). However, readers who pick up this book in the hope of reading a definitive discussion of these historical events may be disappointed, since the book does not focus on the history itself, but contains a collection of essays that explore matters of historiography and reception history. Historiography focuses on the methodology of how to understand historical data, and reception history deals with how a historical event or figure was perceived and transmitted through the ages.

The book is divided into three sections. The first consists of four studies that focus on the early sources. Kalimi, a respected authority on the book of Chronicles, compares the Chronicler's account of the event with that of his sources. Cogan, an expert in biblical and Ancient Near Eastern history, analyzes the text of the Rassam Cylinder and attempts to define

the limits of our knowledge of the events by pointing out the agreements and disagreements between the cuneiform sources and the biblical material. Ussishkin, a renowned biblical archeologist, surveys the archeological evidence related to Sennacherib's siege of Lachish and Jerusalem. Pope, a historian and archeologist with expertise in ancient Egypt, summarizes the extant textual evidence and seven different interpretations of the foreign policy intentions of Egypt's twenty-fifth dynasty, concluding that the Nubian Pharaohs were not interested in territorial gain, but instead wanted to protect the trade of luxury goods, such as cedar and copper, which supported their political influence and standing in Egypt.

The second section consists of three studies that focus on Assyrian historical background. Frahm, an expert in Assyrian and Babylonian history, explores the psychohistory of Sennacherib, with special focus on his family history. Fales, a scholar of the Ancient Near East with expertise in the Neo-Assyrian period, studies the political and military strategy behind Sennacherib's western invasion. Dubovsky, a biblical scholar whose dissertation dealt with Hezekiah and Assyrian intelligence, analyzes Sennacherib's invasion in view of what is known concerning Assyrian intelligence techniques.

The third section contains five studies that deal with the interpretation and transformation of the story of Sennacherib's invasion in later (i.e., post-Hebrew Bible) literature. Holm, an expert in Aramaic and early Judaism, discusses the references to Sennacherib in Aramaic texts. Oegema, a biblical scholar, discusses the reception history of Sennacherib's campaign in texts from the fifth to the first centuries B.C.E. Ulmer, an expert in Midrash and Rabbinic studies, surveys the references to Sennacherib in Midrashic and related texts. Verheyden, a New Testament scholar with a wide range of expertise, surveys the references to Sennacherib in early Christian literature. Richardson, a historian with expertise in the Old Babylonian period, explores the question of why Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem had such appeal and durability in late antiquity.

In passing, I could not avoid noticing that the book is dedicated to the memory of a former teacher of mine, Professor David Weisberg. I cherish the memory of his insightful teaching and his kind demeanor.

The articles are well researched and extremely insightful, as would be expected from scholars who are so well equipped to discuss the topics covered by their respective contributions. Given the fact that the topic of reception history has been less researched, the studies in the third section seem to be the most ground-breaking. That is, they address the least studied topics related to Sennacherib's invasion. However, for the very same reason, I expect that there will be more disagreements with various conclusions presented in the first and second sections dealing with historiography. For example, Pope's disagreements with various scholars, such as Kitchen, James, Wilkinson, Aubin, and others, will probably get some responses. For a second example, Cogan, after a brilliant analysis of the Rassam Cylinder, adds an appendix where he argues against the theory of two invasions by Sennacherib (contra Grayson and Shea). In my opinion, the two invasion theory is the

best theory to date that reconciles the biblical evidence with the extra-biblical sources, but it should be recognized as only a theory—and one that also requires the assumption of some scribal errors in the biblical text—and it may eventually be proven wrong (I will discuss it in more detail in my forthcoming commentary on 2 Kings). Cogan should, however, be commended for focusing on historical arguments against the theory, rather than simply dismissing it on the basis that some “biblicists” (73) like it. In the end, Cogan is correct that a complete consensus has yet to be achieved. Nevertheless, the fact that not everyone will agree does not detract from the value of this book. It is an important contribution to the study of Sennacherib’s third western campaign and its reception history.

Oakwood University
Huntsville, Alabama

TARSEE LI

Lamb, David A. *Text, Context and the Johannine Community. A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings*. London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014. 231 pp. Hardcover, £59,99.

The author David A. Lamb is a Church of England vicar, a tutor for ministerial training, and an honorary research fellow at the University of Manchester, UK. This book is a summary of the findings of his doctoral dissertation. With the help of sociolinguistics, his aim is to explore a relationship between the written text of Johannine writings and their social situation. With this research Lamb wants to understand how scholars have come from the Johannine texts to the thesis of a sectarian Johannine community behind the text. Contrary to the prevailing view, his conclusion is that the social situation that the text of Johannine writings presupposes does not support a sectarian Johannine community separated from the mainstream Christianity.

Since R. Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983) there has not been such a penetrating study emphasizing literary aspects of the text and the need to move away from the diachronic to a synchronic approach. With his synchronic approach Lamb emphasizes the text in its final form and calls for reading it as it now stands. Lamb argues against the fragmentary nature of the fourth Gospel and at the same time against the Johannine community hypothesis in which and for which this Gospel was supposedly composed.

After the introduction, Lamb starts in chapter two with the works of Raymond Brown (1966 and 1970), whose research established the Johannine community hypothesis as a generally accepted starting point for historical-critical research on the Johannine writings. Lamb’s main concern is to find out how Brown moves from the text to a social context. His conclusion is that Brown’s hypothesis about the Johannine community rests on a number of presuppositions, and not on clear textual evidences.

In chapter three Lamb introduces his own terms and concepts from the field of sociolinguistics, which he later uses in his own research of the Johannine texts. He emphasizes register analysis of the Johannine texts,

which he believes will offer some insights into the context of the situation of the original readers. He believes that “the Johannine writings would be strange forms of text if they betrayed nothing of their social context, and one benefit of the application of register analysis is that it provides a way of looking at such writings that highlights their character as social and functional documents” (205).

With chapter four Lamb analyzes works of recent sociological commentators such as Meeks, Malina, Petersen, Neyrey, Rohrbaugh, Esler, and others. It turns out that they start with two basic assumptions: 1) There is a community behind Johannine writings. 2) That community is separated from the wider society. They concentrate on the concept of anti-language, which sets the Johannine community up as a small sectarian group separated from mainstream Christianity. Lamb doubts that there is a real anti-language in the Johannine writings. He says that “these scholars have not in fact started with the text and then moved via register theory to a context. Rather, the context of a situation, that of a narrow sectarian group, was already there as part of their paradigm: all that needed to be done was to fit John’s (anti) language to that paradigm.” (199)

So in chapter five Lamb presents his own sociolinguistic research, concentrating on the register-theory analysis of the Johannine texts for the purpose of discovering the details of the social context to which the texts were primarily directed. He deals with narrative passages and focuses specifically “in the case of the Gospel of John, on the so-called narrative asides as those passages most likely to shed light on the context of the situation of the author and intended readership, and in particular those asides where the narrator’s role in relation to the text and/or the reader is highlighted” (146-147). His conclusion is that the text does not give evidence of a close contact between the author and his readers, which implies that the Gospel of John was not written for a close-knit community of which the author was a part. Thus, this gospel has a more general purpose, to bring outsiders to faith, and narrative asides with their explanations to the readers are means to that purpose.

In chapter six Lamb summarizes his conclusions, stating that his register analysis does not support a sectarian group behind the Johannine writings. In Lamb’s own words: “the author had little or no personal knowledge of his intended readers and it certainly does not support the idea of a closed community as its audience. It seems much more probable that a broad readership with some knowledge of Jesus’ ministry was anticipated” (204). Thus, the purpose of the Gospel of John is reaching a wider audience, even though Lamb would not deny that the author belonged to some community of Christians, or even to a loose network implied by the Johannine epistles. But a thesis of a sectarian group on the margins of Christianity being behind the production of the Gospel of John is strongly denied by Lamb as a result of his sociolinguistic research.

Lamb applies a reputable methodology examining first of all the rise of the Johannine community hypothesis (ch. 2), clearly presenting his own methodology (ch. 3), examining works of others who claimed sociological

approach (ch. 4), and finally performing his own sociolinguistic research, approaching the social context of the Johannine writings via register analysis. Such an approach seems fruitful, and his conclusions (ch. 6) are sound. In Lamb's own words, "The main relevance of sociolinguistics to this study is in its analysis of how speech (spoken and written) varies according to situation and the contribution of a theory of register in helping to establish the context of a particular text" (60). Established context speaks strongly against the Johannine community hypothesis as adopted and promoted by today's mainstream scholarship.

With this conclusion his voice in the current scholarship needs to be heard. Long-held assumptions and resulting hypotheses will need to be reconsidered. Johannine writings do not need to be seen any more as sectarian writings produced by a group located on the margins of mainstream Christianity, but need to be fitted into the mainstream picture of the New Testament. Thus, if properly heard by the scholarly community, Lamb's work has a potential to change and redirect current scholarship on Johannine writings. If his work is taken seriously, that could indeed mean the death of the Johannine community hypothesis.

Adriatic Union College
Maruševac, Croatia

IGOR LORENCIN

Lederach, J. P. *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2014. 191 pp. Paperback, \$14.99.

This revised and updated edition, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, was first published by Herald Press in 1999 under the title, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Lederach writes of conflict and reconciliation out of 30 years of experience as a peace negotiator in many of the major hotspots of war and strife in the span of our planet. He clearly acknowledges the Anabaptist pacifist influence of his Mennonite religious heritage on his work and philosophy as a conflict mediator. He serves as "professor of international peacebuilding and director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame [. . .] and is the founding director of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia" (191).

Lederach cites the work of James Laue (1979) and Ronald Krayhill (1980) as the primary and most influential sources for his work. The book contains an extensive resource section that includes tools, books, biographies, films, etc., that may contribute to the reader's understanding and application of concepts presented, but there is no formal bibliography outside of this resource section.

The book effectively weaves the author's experience and testimony, academic understanding, and actual narratives of conflict intervention and efforts at reconciliation into a finished fabric of literature that held my attention throughout. The introduction of his purpose for writing the book brought forth the expectation of discovering the spiritual foundations of

peacemaking. The practical goal was presented as an effort to “see how the challenges of [his] work” connected with the “faith dimensions that motivate and sustain [him]” (15). His statement of task links to his purpose by again bringing the spiritual into conversation with the practical: “We face the challenge of aligning ourselves with the central vision of God’s reconciling presence and work throughout human history” (16).

Lederach builds his spiritual foundation for peacemaking on the footing provided by John 3:16 wherein God sacrificed his Son as a means of reconciling fallen humanity to him. He takes this as a primary principle of peacemaking. God models peacemaking in his willingness to give himself in seeking reconciliation with his enemies. In this model we see God doing more than simply talking about reconciliation but actually taking concrete steps to make it happen. This model suggests that we experience the “changed present reality by living according to a vision of the future” (26). Nicodemus was living a changed present reality as he heard the words of the Messiah who was himself a fulfillment of a better future.

Stories are used to illustrate the biblical principles of peacemaking—Esau and Jacob provide a rich context that informs us of the root causes and the ever-present reality that conflict lurks within us. The desire to ascend and dominate enormously damaged this family even as it damaged the human race as we inherited the tendency from the fallen Lucifer (Is 14:13-14). In the narrative of Rebecca, Jacob, Esau and Isaac, we see the role of family systems in the conflicts that require reconciliation (dealt with in the work of Cosgrove and Hatfield [1994]). Based on this story, the author introduces a powerful reality inherent in reconciliation—one must turn toward the enemy, not away, in order for it to happen. The story concludes with reconciliation as a journey wherein three necessary encounters must take place: with self, with the other, and with God.

The life and ministry of Jesus reveals the “reconciling arts” he practiced in his communion with mankind. Lederach reverses the three necessary encounters described in the narrative of Esau and Jacob in unpacking the issue of the practice of “presence” with God-neighbor-self (48). The reconciling arts demonstrated by Jesus “require” a commitment to see the face of God in others, to feel the world from their perspective, and to place ourselves not in control of but *alongside* the human experience and condition” (56).

Lederach suggests that creation itself reflects conflict by design in the diversity of creation and the human race specifically. He emphasizes that conflict is not sin. Rather it is a normal process of resolving differences of perception and opinion. It is how we approach conflict that reveals the presence or absence of sin.

Reconcile is well-written and demonstrates a balance of ethos, logos, and pathos that sets it apart from even the best “how-to” texts on conflict intervention and management. Lederach’s use of narrative illustrated by his own rich experience as a peace builder establishes credibility at a high level. The message is clear, and most promises made in the introduction were honored—he established a solid biblical basis for the foundations he laid for

the reader seeking to know the Christian basis for reconciling conflict. The most powerful expression was the pathos accomplished through personal and biblical narratives. He drew me into the suffering and the pain of conflict at a level I do not often experience. His values, beliefs, and understandings were implicit in the stories and drew me imaginatively into the life and ministry of which he writes.

My criticism has to do with what was omitted. The introduction implied a promise to study several biblical narratives, but in reality (likely due to editorial and publishing limitations) only one Old Testament narrative was analyzed in detail while New Testament narratives were painted in rather broad strokes. I wished for more and believe that the book might have been richer with additional narratives and analysis similar to the one dealing with Esau and Jacob.

I recommend this book to all who would have a deeper understanding of the work of peacemaking and reconciliation. I believe this volume, in company with methodology books such as Furlong's (2005) or Cosgrove's and Hatfield's (1994) contribution to conflict and the systems that support it, would provide an effective knowledge base for educating a congregation or corporate religious community in the art of peacemaking and reconciliation.

Andrews University

STANLEY PATTERSON

Poirier, Timothy L., ed. Roland Karlman, annotator. *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations, 1845-1859*. Volume 1. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014. 935 pp. + 11 pp. Bibliography + 2 pp. List of Correspondents + 38 pp. General Index. Hardcover, \$44.99.

Significant literary and historical figures have published editions of their unpublished writings. I have scores of them in my personal library. This volume is the first of a projected series of volumes that hopefully will help to provide the literary and historical context for Ellen G. White's unpublished writings. As such, this is a watershed moment in Ellen White studies and the most significant contribution to Ellen White studies by the Ellen G. White Estate in over three decades (since the 1982 prophetic guidance workshop). At the same time, two new other major reference works on her life and ministry: *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013) and *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet* eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York,: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014) showcase that Ellen White studies have reached a critical mass, and perhaps even a tipping point, in which scholars both within and outside Adventism are increasingly recognizing the significance of her life and including her within the rich tapestry of American religious history.

Perhaps no better person is in a position to edit this new series than Timothy L. Poirier, the archivist and vice-director of the Ellen G. White Estate. Since his youth he has carefully studied her life and writings and overseen the White Estate archives, allowing access to specialists in the field

for more than three decades. The volume is complemented with a host of other people who helped with this herculean task: Most significant is Roland Karlman, a veteran Adventist minister and scholar, who directed the Ellen G. White Estate Research Center at Newbold College for many years. The next volume of the series is already in production and is being annotated by Stanley D. Hickerson, a lifelong collector, genealogist, and storyteller of Adventist history.

The volume contains a welcome assortment of helpful introductory articles: a biographical summary of Ellen G. White's life (13-25), a chronology of key dates (26-28), and an essay by Poirier on the literary relationship between her published and unpublished works (29-31). He notes that by about 1895 Ellen G. White received instruction to "gather up the fragments, let nothing be lost" (Letter 161, Dec. 20, 1900) with regard to her unpublished writings. As a result, the White Estate has approximately 3,000 letters and 5,000 manuscripts that aggregate to approximately 50,000 pages (29). Within this literary genre, it is significant that typewriters (calligraphs) were not used by her literary assistants until 1885. The amount of unpublished writings increases significantly after 1885, with the earliest handwritten letter extant dating to 1847 (with both a transcription and photographs of the incomplete document available, 124-132). Thus before the 1880s, unless the recipient saved the letter, there are few handwritten documents still extant (less than 20 still exist). Poirier explains: "As they [the unpublished writings] typically contain no instruction for the church generally, they have largely remained unpublished in book form up to this time, except as cited in biographical or historical works" (30).

Of the introductory essays, the one by Alberto R. Timm (associate director of the White Estate) on "Interpreting Ellen G. White's Letters and Manuscripts" (32-40) is an extremely crucial interpretative piece. While her books "tend to deal with universal principles . . . when one moves from these books into Ellen White's personal correspondence, the reader encounters particulars of time and place that are foreign to the world we live in today" (32). He observes the broad nature of her writings. He argues for the whole inspiration of the prophetic messenger, and argues against "degrees of inspiration." He argues for the inspiration of inspired, personal letters, in a way that is similar to the Pauline letters to Philemon, Timothy, and Titus. At the same time he cautions that she obviously addresses many "common" subjects with no expectation that the recipients should think she received divine instruction regarding them" (33). Thus "it is more the nature of the subject addressed than the literary category of the writing that should guide us on the matter of inspiration and authority. The challenge is that it is not always easy to identify when she dealt with common matters from a noninspired perspective and when she addressed them in an inspired way." The only trustworthy way to accomplish this, he argues, would be to have another prophet make such a distinction, and since none of the prophets did so, such a distinction "is not critical for accepting and understanding the essence of Ellen White's prophetic messages" (34). Such inspiration,

whether exhibited in Ellen White's published or unpublished writings, is of a trustworthy nature. Such a messenger therefore is not infallible (Timm references "orthographical or grammatical mistakes" and "other kinds of language imperfections") but in primary substance is correct. Obviously a priority was given to her published writings during her lifetime. Similar to many other Adventist historians, Timm argues for the importance of context (35-36) as well as the historical, grammatical, and thematic hermeneutical levels of interpretation (37-38). He urges against interpretative extremes: on a continuum between the "traditionalist" versus the "culturalistic" approaches. A balanced approach ultimately will recognize "the inspired message" that does not allow "literary and hermeneutical technicalities to take the place of personal commitment to the inspired message" (39).

Another extremely helpful essay by Merlin D. Burt concerns "The 'Shut Door' and Ellen White's Visions" (41-61), the object of one of the most perennial criticisms used against the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White. Since this volume deals with the early prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White, such an interpretative essay is extremely useful. In doing so he challenges interpretative positions put forth by recent scholars in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet* who see her view of the shut door as a convenient excuse for revisionism. Instead, he argues that there is a difference from the views of Samuel Snow and Joseph Turner, who argued that the close of probation had occurred, versus other Millerites such as O.R.L. Crosier, Emily Clemons, and Ellen White, who "believed that Jesus had begun a final extended atonement as high priest on October 22, 1844." Some within this latter and more moderate category came to be known as the "Bridegroom Adventists." Such a more moderate stance "suggested a continuation of probation" (56). What was at stake theologically increased with the adoption of the seventh-day Sabbath and the role of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. By 1848 to 1849 "Sabbatarian Adventists began to emphasize the open door into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, and the term *shut door* was redefined to mean something very different from a shut door of probation. It came to represent the validity of the 1844 experience that Sabbatarian Adventism had embraced." As for Ellen White, "the tenor of her statements and those closely connected with her suggests that for a time she continued to believe that evangelistic work for the unconverted world had ended. Her visions did not require this understanding, however, and theologically led to a more open view" (57). By 1852 the issue of the shut door was resolved. Thus, Ellen White's "first visions pursued a theological path away from previous misconceptions received from William Miller." Burt observes that revelation and inspiration do not "automatically confer infallibility of understanding to inspired messengers." At the same time, the message is communicated in a "trustworthy and accurate manner" (58).

Also helpful is an overview, presumably by Roland Karlman, that highlights the "annotation and editorial methodology" (62-65). Historians will want to pay particularly close attention to this essay. A sampling was done that confirmed, for the editors, that "transcripts made by her secretaries under

her direction and [...] those made after her death” are therefore reliable. They used a method of “expanded transcription” in order to improve readability, with corrected spelling, punctuation, etc. It was decided against “an entirely new transcription” due to “prohibitive cost.” For historians this places the whole project into question, because the White Estate plans in 2014 to electronically release on its website all of her unpublished writings (as they have transcribed it). The lack of a critical textual edition essentially means that one of the most valuable aspects of such a critical edition of Ellen White’s unpublished writings remains undone, and will necessitate that serious scholars of Ellen White’s unpublished writings do research with the original manuscripts. Since the Ellen G. White Estate Branch Offices and Research Centers retain on file these same transcriptions, it will further necessitate that all serious researchers will need to go to the White Estate headquarters at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This in turn raises a whole host of questions, including what role the White Estate, especially its Branch Offices and Research Centers, will play in the future. Certainly they will have a much more interpretative and promotional value within the denominational hierarchy. Furthermore, it also raises the question: When there are variations, which version will become the authoritative version? Part of the reason I question the reliability is that over a decade ago I discovered five previously unknown Ellen G. White letters in the Smith/Bovee Collection (#146) in the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University. Those letters were subsequently included within the corpus of the unpublished writings database. My initial description, including areas that were unclear, was smoothed over. Some of the terms and words were changed. While this did not have any significant theological implications, for the serious researcher, some of the original terminology, especially her specification of clothes and other items relevant to her personal life, remain of significant interest. Thus, this anticipates a question raised by Ron Graybill three decades ago, about which edition of transcriptions of her unpublished writings would therefore remain the authoritative one for studying her life. By default, while the historical apparatus is helpful for providing the immediate historical context, the volume falls short of what could have been a much greater contribution. The White Estate Board should have perhaps considered, in addition to hiring one full-time annotator, incorporating many more Adventist historians outside of the White Estate who could critically examine and contribute to the project. This would help to alleviate the objection of cost while at the same time speeding up the project. Since the first volume took well over a decade to produce, and only covers a small fraction of her unpublished writings, unless the level of production increases, at the current pace the project will take over two centuries to finish.

After this come a “List of Illustrations” (66), a “Chronological Index” (67-76), a “Numerical Index” (77-83), and the actual unpublished letters and manuscripts (85-775). Of particular note is the first time that portions of Ellen G. White’s 1859 diary have been published in their entirety (579-661). A particularly nice feature is the collection of photographic images of

actual pages of her diary (cf. 600-601) and the earliest original handwritten letter (129-132). The best feature of the volume is the rich historical context that identifies various persons and the context relating to various historical circumstances in each of these letters and manuscripts. This is furthermore enhanced with a collection of “Biographical Sketches” (779-913) that augments what was done in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013). This volume has several additional biographical entries that make it a worthwhile reference tool. Of course, this raises the question of whether future volumes will have a similar biographical section or only pertinent additions related to each volume.

At the end are two appendices. The first covers the unauthenticated visions attributed to Ellen White (914-916), and the second, an essay by Merlin D. Burt on “Ellen G. White and Religious Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Experience” (917-935). In this latter essay Burt contrasts Ellen White with the wide variety of fanatics present after the Great Disappointment including “spiritualizing, extreme literalizing, extreme sanctification, and mesmerism” (934). “She was opposed by the fanatics themselves as well as by the broader Adventist leaders for associating with those of a fanatical disposition” (ibid.). Although her experience “frequently included expressions of religious enthusiasm,” they were much more restrained within the context of “shouting and prostration” and transitioned after 1850 away from undue excitement. “Ellen White’s fully developed teachings on the subject of charismatic-like experiences,” he goes on, “instructs believers that while they should be open to the Holy Spirit working in surprising ways, they should not *seek* or *rely* upon physical and emotional exercises. She repeatedly pointed to the Word of God as the solid foundation of the Christian’s experience, and to conformity to its teachings as the safest evidence of the Spirit’s presence” (935).

Finally, at the end are a helpful bibliography of works cited (936-946), a list of correspondents (947-948), and a general index (949-986). It is also helpful to note that inside the front and back covers are maps of New England and the American Midwest that highlight places important to Ellen G. White’s world. All of these help to enhance this reference tool.

The publication of this volume, in light of the recent publication of *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* and *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, raise some basic interpretative issues. The Israel Dammon incident, a key interpretive lens for viewing Ellen White’s life and ministry according to this latter volume, is only briefly referenced (127-128) with a footnote to James R. Nix’s paper on the topic. The publication of this volume, in light of the importance placed on this episode by recent historians, at the very least should have warranted a much more extensive discussion of the Dammon trial in this volume. At the same time, while the volume is rich in historical apparatus in identifying persons, places, and any issues that pertain to theology, it is surprisingly weak in historical contextualization. While the Oxford volume begins with an essay comparing Ellen G. White with Queen Victoria, the notion of Victorian culture is not even mentioned at all in this annotated volume. Likewise, the notion of the “cult of domesticity,” which

defined the roles of men and women during antebellum America, is likewise also apparently overlooked. Another example is that the volume mentions that Ellen White frequently mentions the term “Glory” at the beginning of her visions (14), a revivalist phrase that was commonly used during the Second Great Awakening. Stronger ties between religious revivalism and its influence upon Ellen White’s life and thought could have been drawn. The volume covers material during the critical period of time leading up to the American Civil War, but the issue of race relations is not mentioned. Why not? If Ellen G. White and other early Sabbatarian Adventists were such ardent abolitionists, then why did this not filter into her unpublished writings? History is more than simply identifying facts (the work of a chronicler); a historian also interprets. While it is very clear from this volume, at least for the White Estate, that her prophetic authority is understandably the central issue, there are many other social, economic, and cultural interests that could enrich this volume. This window into the world outside of Adventism could shed rich interpretative light into her life and thought. The lack of this historical milieu is therefore perhaps the greatest weakness of the volume. Despite such weaknesses, including a handful of typos, this volume will be a rich treasure for scholars of Ellen White. A careful reading of these unpublished writings, especially her 1859 diary, will give rich insight into the more personal aspects of life as a prophet.

Adventist International Institute
of Advanced Studies
Silang, Cavite, Philippines

MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

Rice, Richard. *Suffering and the Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 170 pp. Paperback, \$18.

Richard Rice is professor of religion at Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California. He is the author of several books, including *God’s Foreknowledge and Man’s Free Will* and *Reason and the Contours of Faith*.

Although much has been written on the topic of theodicy, Rice’s contribution is original and stimulating in that it offers a modest yet insightful overview of several of the major theodicies, along with a proposal for a *practical theodicy*. While the cover, length, and style of the book are reader-friendly, this does not by any means reduce Rice’s work to light reading. Instead, the book shows the work of an experienced philosopher and teacher who has well learned the art of simplifying complex matters without subtracting from their depth and meaning. In this sense, Rice is sharing with the reader the result of years of synthesizing.

Further, I find the author to be well balanced in his use of sources, both academic and popular. Against an avalanche of existing theodicy-related resources, he manages to make reference to key sources from philosophy, theology, and contemporary history.

His main argument could be fairly summarized by the following quote: “Even if nothing makes perfect sense of suffering, and our attempts to fit it within a rational package never fully succeed, we can still respond to suffering resourcefully.” (164) This line of thought is successfully developed in the book and is made increasingly clear throughout its nine chapters.

The first chapter consists of an introduction in which he states the universality of suffering and the importance of the task at hand. The introduction is followed by seven chapters, each dealing with a different response to suffering or theodicy: Perfect Plan Theodicy, The Free Will Defense, Soul Making Theodicy, Cosmic Conflict Theodicy, Openness of God Theodicy, Finite God Theodicy, and finally, Protest Theodicies. Every chapter offers a description rich in practical examples and stories, a philosophical-theological background, and an objective evaluation of each theodicy. The last chapter serves simultaneously as a proposal for a *practical theodicy*, the author’s personal account on his response to suffering, and a brief conclusion.

Despite the indubitable value of Rice’s overview of the major theodicies, I believe his *practical theodicy* to be his major contribution. Defined as a theodicy mosaic or *bricolage*, this theodicy allows for tension and diversity, taking into account philosophical, religious, and personal convictions altogether in a combination of ideas and experience. It also allows for consideration of valuable elements pertaining to the various existing theodicies. In addition, Rice soberly admits the implausibility of a *practical theodicy* that takes the form of a one-size-fits-all logically perfect scheme. His proposal for a theodicy does not offer all the answers, yet encourages its adherents to *somehow* position themselves in regards to suffering.

In that sense, there must be a warning to the reader: if looking for spoon-fed or pre-packaged solutions to suffering, this book will not fulfill your expectations. On the contrary, Rice’s work carries within itself a strong call for personal reflection and concrete individual action. It does not *merely* offer ready-made philosophical critiques and ambitious hypothetical scenarios, but it also constantly challenges the reader’s perspective. It demands active analysis and participation, and a willingness to embark in an ever deeper and greater—sometimes tentative and mysterious—search for meaning in the midst of suffering.

Another asset of Rice’s *practical theodicy* is that it does not only focus on the self, but also on the other. He encourages the reader to find a way through suffering, not as a mere introverted intellectual exercise, but in order to *somehow* relate to other sufferers. In this regard, he gives practical advice for engaging in an other sufferer’s experience and thus joining them in a journey of empathy, acceptance, and care.

Because of its all-inclusive nature, this book is appropriate for every reader who can relate to suffering in one way or another. In that sense the author manages to show that intellectual challenges which relate to suffering are not only for intellectuals. Nevertheless, the scholar—whether philosopher

or theologian—and the health professional, who often engages with suffering individuals, will find this reading particularly helpful.

In a fusion between good scholarship and practical usefulness, Rice succeeds to show that while suffering might not always make perfect sense, one can respond to it resourcefully. If only that, I believe his book achieves much.

Berriend Springs, Michigan

IRIANN IRIZARRY

Seifrid, Mark A. *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. 535 pp. Hardcover, \$50.00.

This is volume number fifteen of the *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* series. In his new commentary on 2 Corinthians, Mark A. Seifrid, Mildred and Ernest Hogan Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary, presents Paul as the unimpressive minister of an infinitely powerful gospel. In the scholarly world of New Testament, Seifrid is best known for his thorough and judicious treatment of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, on which he is a competent expert. He brings exceptional erudition, exegetical accuracy, and theological reflection to the interpretation of this commentary on 2 Corinthians, considered by some scholars as one of the most controversial and difficult of Paul's letters.

In their preface to Seifrid's volume, the series editors outline the intent of the series as a project designed for serious pastors and teachers of the Bible. *The Pillar Commentaries* seek above all to make clear the text of Scripture as we have it. The scholars writing these volumes interact with the most significant informed contemporary debate but avoid getting caught up in undue technical detail. In accord with the series format, the commentary proper is preceded by a brief introduction, which is followed by four entries; and the rest of the volume is divided into three main sections that cover the whole letter: I) The opening of the letter: the call to fellowship (1:1–2:17); II) the body of the letter: apostolic mission (3:1–7:16); III) closing of the letter: the call to simplicity (8:1–13:14). The author of this commentary offers a unified reading of 2 Corinthians, which has frequently been regarded as a composite of excerpts and fragments (xxix). The contrast between 2 Cor 1–7 and 2 Cor 10–13 is more apparent than real. The notion that a letter that was instrumental in cementing the bond between the congregation at Corinth and Paul would be subject to a cut-and-paste operation, even at a later time, is difficult to imagine. The burden of proof clearly lies upon any hypothesis of a compilation letter.

The message of 2 Corinthians lies in its paradox: Paul is forced to legitimize his own apostolic ministry as superior to other, "super-apostle" claimants, but instead of drawing on impressive physical presence or rhetorical flair, he appeals to his own hardship and frailty. He is the suffering apostle of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Seifrid interprets Paul's thanksgiving to God, who "in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession" in 2 Cor 2:14, as Paul's participation in the suffering and shame of the crucified Christ. Paul

is “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus” (2 Cor 4:10-11). In his own life, and even in his boasting, he boasts in the midst of weakness and in the power of Christ expressed through him (2 Cor 12:9-10).

The life of Paul is also the life of the believer, Seifrid argues, for the apostolic experience is the Christian experience “written large” and in “large-screen display.” Paul not only begs us to understand his apostolic purpose but invites us to participate in the life of Christ in suffering just as he does. Salvation itself is the expression of God’s power working through human weakness, and the entirety of the Christian life is not only the proclamation of the way of the cross, but the personal experience of it.

For Seifrid, the nature of both Paul’s apostolic ministry and our experience as believers is counterintuitive: it is not judged by the outward appearance or by postures of power; it is legitimized by trials and built on an eschatological hope yet to be fully realized. Suffering and hope are unquestionably bound together for Paul (2 Cor 4:17). As we have seen, Seifrid interprets 2 Corinthians in a distinctly evangelical and fully unified manner, unlike the majority of scholarship on the letter. In his discussion of “Theological Issues,” he normally selects one or two topics that pertain in a special way to the chapter/section under consideration. His selection and brief explanations are excellent, helping students see the wide-range theological influence of 2 Corinthians.

Many interpreters argue that 2 Corinthians is a compilation of separate letters—the apparent shift in tone between chapters 1–7 and chapters 10–13 may indicate two different letters, and other possible insertions suggest as many as five disparate fragments. Seifrid dismisses these arguments and reads the letter as a unified whole, resisting the common maximalist “mirror-reading” of the Corinthian background and the precise theology of his opponents. His interaction with 2 Corinthians is thoroughly exegetical, deeply theological, and often pastoral in tone. He refreshingly avoids getting caught up in overly technical intramural debates between competing scholars, but focuses heavily on the text itself and its implications for the lives of believers. He also searches for Paul’s message once more and communicates it to our time. In discussing the letter closing (13:11-14), Seifrid observes that no two letters of Paul are alike, and the final three elements of the letter correspond to the variable patterns that appear elsewhere. Paul normally includes exhortations in the conclusion of his letters, almost always discernibly directed to the particular circumstances and problems within the congregation he addresses.

The end matter includes a bibliography and five indices. The relatively brief bibliography (xv-xxi) introduces the reader to a good selection of the important scholarly literature on 2 Corinthians in English, German, and French. In sum, Mark Seifrid takes a different approach to the commentary’s assignment: rather than cataloging and evaluating the judgment of modern scholars, he chooses to concentrate on his own interpretation of 2 Corinthians, its theology, and its importance for fundamental issues of interpretations. While we do not need to agree with all of Seifrid’s theological views and interpretations, he has produced an impressively thorough commentary,

which offers both judicious comment and useful documentation. This is an outstanding addition to an excellent commentary series. It deserves to be ranked among the leading commentaries on 2 Corinthians.

Silver Spring, Maryland

PANAYOTIS COUTSOUMPOS

Strayer, Brian E. J. N. *Loughborough: The Last of the Adventist Pioneers*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014. 494 pp. + 14 pp. Index. Hardcover, \$29.99.

This new volume is the latest installment in the Adventist Biography series edited by George R. Knight with this particular volume written by Brian E. Strayer, professor of history at Andrews University, who has taught Adventist history among other courses for over four decades. It is fitting that such a consummate historian should write about the first Adventist historian, even if such a statement in reference to Loughborough should be qualified as the first “chronicler” of Adventist history. What is significant, for better or worse, is that Loughborough’s providential perspective of God’s leading in Seventh-day Adventist history has significantly shaped Adventist historiography.

This particular volume is substantially longer than previous volumes in the series and has the most footnotes (1,265) in the series, too. As such it is a benchmark of meticulous research. Strayer carefully wades through Loughborough’s published writings as well as unpublished diaries and correspondence, along with additional contextual materials from various local historical societies and genealogical databases. The historical landscape he paints is one that is refreshing and gives both greater clarity to Loughborough, but also includes plenty of historical context, especially the social, political, and economic milieu that in comparison is largely missing in earlier volumes in the series. In doing so Strayer comes up with a number of interesting discoveries, not the least of which is the significance of Loughborough’s surname: Loughborough believed that he came from an upper class English background, but historical evidence points to lower-class Irish roots (21-27). By the time he went to Great Britain in 1878, he was one of only 15 people bearing his name in the British isles with the majority who would leave by 1900 (236).

Strayer highlights the well-known fact that Loughborough, with regard to historical facts, made frequent historical blunders (cf. 119-120, footnote 21; 405, footnote 10). Despite this, Strayer highlights some broader contributions of his life that appear to have been largely overlooked. For example, he argues that “no Adventist minister in the nineteenth century (with the possible exception of James White) accomplished as much to promote good music in the church as J. N. Loughborough” (199, see also 31-32, 36). This included the “uphill battle to install pump organs in Adventist Churches to help members sing harmoniously and rhythmically” (200, see also 218). Another notable contribution was his recipe for communion bread, and how he encouraged Adventists to use unfermented grape juice (18; 217; 402; 407, footnote 10; 490). Loughborough was a skilled organizer and builder, and made significant

contributions to the architecture of early Adventist “meetinghouses” (a term he relinquished after 1875 when he transitioned to the term “churches” [213]). Hence the New England style of architecture is reflected among early California churches (198). Another notable contribution was his proposal for church giving, beginning with the 1859 proposal of Systematic Benevolence, and later the 1878 proposal of tithing. Both were intimately tied to economic depressions (105; 126; 138, footnote 12). From church organization to creative evangelistic techniques, there is no doubt that Loughborough exerted his influence.

A significant theme of Loughborough’s life was his admiration and respect for the prophetic gift as manifested in the life of Ellen G. White, including times when he accepted her stern rebukes. She played a pivotal role in his becoming an Adventist minister (69-71). Some of these early rebukes (cf. 90-91, 95, 127-129) showcased a pattern that developed of acceptance and humble (sometimes public) confession (180-181, 269-270, 297-298). She in turn considered some of his dreams as from God (161, 174-175), and furthermore “loved to hear Loughborough preach and debate the Adventist message” (115). One such sermon that she heard on the Laodicean message made a profound impact on her life (Ibid.). Later, when others criticized his missionary work in England, she staunchly defended his accomplishments (284). In his writings Loughborough highlighted the pivotal role of Ellen G. White’s prophetic ministry within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although he claimed to have seen her in vision between 40 to 50 times, it was his personal interaction with the prophetic gift that convinced him that she genuinely received the prophetic gift from God (71). At times such claims supplanted historical accuracy, such as his befuddled claim that her last public vision was at the 1884 Portland camp meeting (291). Loughborough “was a firm believer in the divine inspiration of Ellen G. White, even when (perhaps especially when) she rebuked him in her testimonies” (171).

Perhaps the best part of the book is the intimate portrait of what Loughborough was like as an ordinary person. One discovers, for example, that his favorite fruit was apples (282), and that he loved to visit historic sites and museums (240, 251, 274, 282). His understanding of vegetarianism was quite flexible until he became a full vegetarian in 1886, a developmental pattern very similar to Ellen G. White as well as many other early Adventist health reformers (146-147, 250, 296). Loughborough was married three times, but it was his third wife, Annie, who Strayer believes was his favorite (228). At one point he speculates that marks in his diary may have indicated tokens of affection, perhaps even indications of sex, which seems a bit of a rare departure since this appears at best to be an educated guess (184, 227-228). His personal hygiene changed through his life. In his early years he bathed once a month, a practice that increased to weekly baths by the 1870s (206). He believed in limited sex (embracing the concept of vitalism or the depletion of vital force), as well as no shaving (157, 303). Loughborough was a “lifelong learner” who read widely even if he only had an eighth grade education (30, 92, 114).

On another level Strayer highlights the personal relationships that mattered so deeply to Loughborough. He was ordained most likely in January of 1853 (83) and re-baptized by M. E. Cornell in 1855 (89). The list of ministers he baptized or participated in their ordination service reads like a “who’s who” list of early Adventism. He converted J. H. Waggoner (84), J. G. Matteson, Moses Hull, and G. I. Butler (103), Nathan Fuller (108), and was influential to Abram LaRue (179). Stalwart families such as the Lindsays, Lamsons, and Amadons accepted the Adventist message as a result of his labor (85). Ironically, Loughborough had to discipline M. E. Cornell as they worked together in California due to his attachment to another woman (185-188). Some of these relationships became strained when some, such as Nathan Fuller and Moses Hull, later apostatized.

One area where Adventist historians will have to revise their narrative of Adventist history due to this volume is by noting that the 1866 Pilot Grove, Iowa, camp meeting “deserves to be considered as the church’s first ‘general camp meeting’” (167, footnote 79; see also 97, footnote 30). While people both then and now have generally considered the 1868 camp meeting in Wright, Michigan, as the denomination’s first “official” camp meeting (with due deference to a slightly earlier camp meeting held in Canada that same year), what this demonstrates is a more fluid transition from the monthly and quarterly meetings from the 1860s as Adventist organization developed. Thus Loughborough should be credited with “convening the first SDA camp meeting” (158-160, 490).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this particular volume is Strayer’s astute treatment of Loughborough’s historiography. He observes that Loughborough was aware of two competing views of Adventist history (108) that included challenges related to Ellen G. White’s prophetic ministry from Miles Grant (183) and D. M. Canright (201). What is clear is that by 1884 he developed a pattern of sharing recollections of God’s providential leadings in Seventh-day Adventist history (289). The two most valuable chapters of the book are chapter 15 on “Reinterpreting the Past” (326-344) and chapter 19 on “Preaching the Past” (391-407). Loughborough “consulted a wide array of primary source material” including interviewing various pioneers including Ellen G. White, but his “most significant source” was himself (392). Thus “no one was more qualified to write about the Adventist past than he” (393). More important than the lack of correcting factual errors, between his two monographs on Adventist history published in 1892 and 1905, was the fact that “he makes not a single critical remark about their leaders, publications, or activities. Bypassing any mention of fanaticism, setbacks, or unwise decisions, he focuses instead on the positive aspects that support his ‘rise and progress’ theme” (393-394). A leading hallmark of this style was the use of statistics to show the steady progress of Adventism around the world (213). Such an uncritical reading of the Adventist past led to “the apologetic style of writing Adventist history.” Thus, above all else, “J. N. Loughborough deserves to be remembered as the preeminent chronicler of Adventist history” (492).

Strayer provides a compelling and detailed narrative of the life of “one of our church’s outstanding pioneers” for a variety of reasons (493). He was a leading promoter of books in Adventist publications (303), a leading fundraiser (203), and evangelist. As a mentor he played a significant role in training younger ministers. At the same time, he had a proclivity toward legalism (136). Although he demonstrated “to a greater extent than his contemporaries . . . visiting with individuals of different races and ethnic grounds (116, 226), he also shared a common prejudice toward Native Americans (249-250). He could also be a “blue-ribbon gossip” (306, footnote 15) who overworked himself so much that at times he fainted while preaching (216-217). This nuanced portrait, highlighting both strengths as well as flaws, provides a much more honest and thus scholarly biography of this significant Adventist pioneer.

If this biography has a flaw, it is that the book at times seems repetitious, and due to its length it may be unwieldy for those unfamiliar with Adventist history. As an example, while it is clear that Loughborough “never met a word he couldn’t misspell,” perhaps it is not quite necessary to highlight this fact so many times (cf. 114, 171, 184-185, 230, etc.). It furthermore seemed awkward to discuss James White’s counsels to Loughborough after discussing James White’s death (274, 280). Despite these minor quibbles, *J. N. Loughborough: The Last of the Adventist Pioneers* is a valuable scholarly contribution to Adventist historiography.

Adventist International Institute
of Advanced Studies
Silang, Cavite, Philippines

MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

Vance, Donald A., George Athas, and Yael Avrahami. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: A Reader’s Edition*. Bilingual edition. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015. 1800 pp. Flexible Leather, \$79.95.

It is the unfortunate fate of the majority of theology students that while having studied diligently to pass the Hebrew and Greek exams at the beginning of their studies, they have forgotten most of it at the moment they graduate from seminary. Thus the time-consuming investment and the mental discipline that has brought the student to a reasonably good level of reading and translating Hebrew and Greek is lost in a short time. Different causes lead to this situation. In the end, however, it all boils down to the fact that the biblical languages, once learned, are not used often enough to keep the language skills alive and let them mature. The introduction to the BHS Reader’s edition put it this way: “All that hard work spent in learning the language is seemingly wasted. Again, it is reading—and lots of it—that solves this problem.”

Consequently, with the loss of Biblical language skills the quality of the minister’s sermon is severely compromised as the preacher can no longer access the source text with competence and thus gain independence from traditions of interpretation.

The main purpose of the Reader's Edition of the Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia is to break this vicious cycle. It tries to do so by lowering the potential frustration that often interferes with reading the Hebrew Bible.

The two major factors hindering a pleasant reading experience for the theologian who has successfully completed the Hebrew and Greek languages courses are (a) vocabulary that appears infrequently and (b) difficult morphological forms.

While many seminaries require from their Hebrew students to learn all words that appear more than 50 times (725 words), the *BHS Reader's Edition* offers glosses for all words that appear less than 70 times in an apparatus that is positioned at the bottom of each page. The offered glosses are based on HALOT. Only the meaning active in the specific textual position is given.

In order to tackle the morphological challenge, the apparatus contains the full parsing of all verbs with pronominal suffixes as well as all weak verbs. For very common irregular forms like לָאָמַר or the Qal forms of לָקַח (built analogous to i-nun) exemptions are made.

If morphological information were to be given in a classical way, e.g. וְנָתַן (Gen 40:11):

1sgC, Qal, imperfectum consecutivum, וְנָתַן, to give

it would exceed by hundreds of pages the scope of what is normally to be considered a book.

Therefore, a system has to be adopted that condenses morphological information into codes that make sense and can be learned quickly. The BHS Reader's Edition decided to base their parsing codes on the system offered in William Sanford La Sor Library. *Handbook of Biblical Hebrew: An Inductive Approach Based on the Hebrew Text of Esther*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.)

Since this Hebrew textbook is not a very popular Hebrew textbook, its parsing system will be unfamiliar to most biblical Hebrew language students. This is problematic for two reasons: (a) not only is it necessary to learn unfamiliar parsing codes in order to decipher the morphological analysis, (b) the terminology used for the morphological analysis itself is not based upon the classical terminology found in most textbooks and grammars (e.g., perfect, imperfect; qal, nifal, etc.) nor on modern linguistic terminology (e.g., qatal, yiqtol; qal, nifal, etc.) found in modern Biblical Hebrew grammars and databases. The following two examples illustrate this: (a) the *BHS Reader's Edition* chose as designation for the commonly known Hebrew verbal stem "qal" the German term "Grundstamm"; (b) the term "prefix conjugation" is used for what is referred to as "imperfect" tense in classical grammars or "yiqtol" form in modern grammars.

In our above example of וְנָתַן the morphological coding according to the *BHS Reader's Edition* becomes

1cs, Grundstamm, prefix conjugation, וְנָתַן, to give

The coding of this morphological analysis results in

Gr24

“G” stands for Grundstamm, “r” stands for “waw retentive” (classical terminology: “waw consecutivum”), “2” stands for prefix conjugation (classical terminology: “imperfect”) and “4” stands for 1cs.

The number for the person-number-gender information is derived from the sequence of the paradigmatic forms of verbs displayed in many grammars and textbooks: 3sgM=0, 3sgF=1, 2sgM=2, 2sgF=3, 1sgC=4.

The benefit of the coding system is that it allows for very short entries that contain a lot of information. The challenge is that most users will have to involve two translation processes: First, translating codes into Sor’s morphological terminology, and, second, translating Sor’s terminology into either classical or modern terminology. This challenge is not helped by the fact that the number “0” is not consistently used for the first position of paradigmatic forms. While 3sgM received the code 0, the suffix conjugation [classical terminology: “perfect”] receives the code 1. One would expect the suffix conjugation to be labeled with the number 0, since it appears as the first “tense”/“aspect”/“domain” marker in most paradigmatic sequences. Thus, instead of the code 10 (1=perfect; 0=3sgM), one would expect 00 instead (0=perfect; 0=3sgM).

Some of the codes applied are ambiguous. Although this can probably not be avoided, it makes learning the decoding more difficult. As an example, “c” can stand for both “construct state” and for “common.” When “c” follows a number, it has the meaning “common,” but when it follows the letters “s” (singular) or “p” (plural), it has the meaning “construct state.”

After these critical remarks about the morphological codes I must note that after having read a couple of chapters in Genesis, I was able to decipher the codes with a pleasant speed.

Once the reader has learned the system of analysis, she is prepared to enjoy the reading experience that is made available. Interruptive and time-consuming searches in dictionaries or grammars are no longer necessary. In fact, quite a bit of the apparatus space could have been saved if the editors would have decided to provide less information. In my opinion, it is not necessary to provide morphological information of unambiguous weak verbs. With all the information granted, the knowledge of the regular verb paradigm provides sufficient morphological know-how for reading the *BHS Reader’s Edition*. This is good news for everybody who wants to start practicing reading Hebrew after the completion of a basic Hebrew course. It is, however, not necessarily good news for everybody who has mastered the knowledge of the weak verbs in an intermediate Hebrew course and would like to hold a *BHS* in hands that has fewer pages (1765) and weighs less. It would have been sufficient to add morphological information where verbal forms are either ambiguous in their function or are not displaying their expected paradigmatic form (e.g., $\Psi\dot{\aleph}$ in Gen 19:9 should have had the form $\Psi\dot{\aleph}$).

The reader experience is not only made pleasant with the apparatus containing lexical and morphological information. The beautiful SBL font and the chosen font size invite the eyes to relax while moving from word to word. The good reading experience is made complete through an excellent

paper quality that makes turning pages easy and allows for making written notes without bothering too much about inking through the page.

As a Reader's Edition, this BHS version is not be regarded as a critical edition. The apparatus serves the reading experience and not the philological experience. The apparatus will, however, list *ketiv/qere* variants and orthographic problems. Also the differences between BHS and the Codex Leningradensis are mentioned in the apparatus.

While it is more than acceptable for this specific BHS edition to have an apparatus that serves majorly the reading experience, the editors could have made their text-critical information more coherent with the text-critical input of the critical BHS edition. As an example, Gen 19:8 contains the awkward phrase לְאִנְשֵׁי הָאֵל. The critical apparatus suggests to read (*lege*) אֵלִי instead of הָאֵל. The suggestion is backed up by the reference to the Samaritanian Pentateuch. In addition, the critical apparatus informs the reader that traditional texts (Sebir) suggest the defective writing האל should have been corrected into the plene writing האלה. The latter suggestion is, however, not supported by the editors of the critical edition (Sebir!). In contrast, the *Reader's Edition* informs in its apparatus that אל is a "by-form of אלה" and appears to follow Sebir. While it is understandable that the plene writing is suggested, אל cannot be regarded as a by-form of אלה. Rather, one should have followed the critical apparatus by suggesting "read defective אל like plene אלה for אל."

As an unexpected but very nice bonus to the reading experience, the Masora Finalis as well as other Masoretic summaries such as the Torah summary are not left out in the lexical and morphological analysis. The reader gets the full assisted reading experience of the *BHS*, also for the Masoretic addenda.

After mastering the challenges that come with the used morphological nomenclature, the *BHS Reader's Edition* fulfills what it promises: a pleasant reading experience of the Hebrew text. When an introductory course in Hebrew was successfully completed, and when one has learned 560 of the most frequently appearing words (70 times and more), this *BHS* edition will break the vicious circle that most theology students face. Since I received the *Reader's Edition*, I have almost daily read the *BHS* and enjoyed a smooth reading experience.

Let me conclude this review with one final thought. One might wonder how far it makes sense to print a *Reader's Edition* in a digital age where Bible Software and Bible apps make it easy to look up any word or morphological information with one or two clicks. As a power user of Bible software I must justify this print edition for several reasons: First, the fact that this edition defines a minimum knowledge (all regularly built morphological forms, all words with a frequency of 70+ times) necessary for reading stimulates the reader to master Hebrew rather than shortcut the learning by means of mouse clicks. Whenever lexical or morphological information is missing in the apparatus, the reader knows that there is some homework waiting. Second, my reading has been considerably faster than when reading the *BHS* in my Logos or Accordance app or computer program. Clicking or touching

on words not known interrupts the reading experience more substantially than moving one's eyes quickly to the apparatus and back. Third, annotating one's Hebrew Bible with pen or pencil allows for a more efficient ownership of the Biblical Hebrew language and the Hebrew Bible. Fourth, for Hebrew professors and language instructors the *BHS Reader's Edition* allows for new ways of testing the skills of Hebrew students. Final examinations can be set up in which no dictionary or grammar is allowed. In case of too much information being given in the apparatus, information can be removed easily in the process of text-copying.

In conclusion, the *BHS Reader's Edition* is a must for everybody who studied Hebrew for a purpose other than spoiling costly time and mental energies. The challenges that come with this edition can be overcome after some praxis. *The BHS Reader's Edition* is able to break the curse that hangs over every Hebrew course into a blessing: Learning Hebrew for the purpose of actually reading Hebrew and studying the Hebrew Bible in a more substantial way.

Andrews University

OLIVER GLANZ

Wilson, Brian C. *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 2014. 258 pp. Hardcover, \$35.00.

Brian C. Wilson is professor of American religious history and former chair of the Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University. Prior to the volume reviewed here, Wilson has authored and edited several books, including: *Christianity* (Prentice Hall & Routledge, 1999), *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today* (Brill, 2001), and *Yankees in Michigan* (Michigan State University, 2008). In addition to these titles, Wilson has also shown interest in the history of Seventh-day Adventism in Battle Creek, Michigan, with two notable articles: "Seventh-Day [sic] Adventism and 19th-Century American Sectarianism" (in Michael Nassaney, ed., *An Intensive Archaeological Survey of the James and Ellen G. White House Site [20CA118], Battle Creek, Michigan*) and "The Dawn of a New Denomination: Seventh-day Adventism Comes to Michigan," (*Michigan History* 96:6 [November/December, 2012], 43-49). The present work, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living*, brings together many of Wilson's interests. It is also the first in-depth study to focus entirely on Kellogg's theological development. Therefore, it fits nicely with previous works on Kellogg, such as Richard W. Schwarz's biography, *John Harvey Kellogg, MD*.

According to Wilson, Kellogg provides "an important example of an overlooked category of theological discourse: the doctor as theologian" (Wilson, xiii). While this book does seek to correct false understandings of John Harvey Kellogg (as observed in the comic novel and later film, *The Road to Wellville*) and contextualize his early career in relation to Seventh-day Adventists and antebellum health reform (cf. Wilson, xii), Wilson's primary purpose is to explore Kellogg's influence as a doctor-theologian during the

time when health care in America was secularizing, Wilson therefore concludes, “Kellogg’s theology of ‘biologic living,’ which ‘biologized’ sin and sacralized wellness, can be seen as an attempt at a *via media* between the Adventism of his youth and the secular science of modern medicine, a kind of Adventist modernism that replaced a literal biblicism with a nonanthropomorphic theology of divine immanence” (Wilson, xiv).

Wilson makes good use of both primary and secondary sources in his work. Each chapter is sufficiently documented, allowing researchers to dig deeper into the life of John Harvey Kellogg with greater ease, if they wish. The use of several manuscript collections (and at least one private collection), located within a variety of archival centers, enhances the quality and accuracy of Wilson’s research. As this is the case, Wilson is to be commended for his valuable scholarly contribution.

The book contains six chapters that proceed, for the most part, in chronological fashion. The first chapter, “Battle Creek Beginnings,” discusses Kellogg’s genesis and youthful years in Michigan—America’s “third New England” (Wilson, 2). In this chapter, the reader will explore Battle Creek’s diverse religious culture, the impact of spiritualism within the town, the rise of Seventh-day Adventism, the character of antebellum health reform, and Ellen G. White’s growing emphasis on “the health message.”

Chapter two continues by chronicling the beginning of the Western Health Reform Institute as it developed into the Battle Creek Sanitarium. This chapter also introduces the reader to Kellogg’s definition of “Biologic Living,” which is the central focus of Wilson’s book. The second chapter concludes by documenting the tension that Kellogg had with Adventist leaders near the end of the nineteenth century.

The third chapter explicates Kellogg’s theology of Biologic Living in detail, including his emphasis on divine immanence and the tensions this caused within Adventism. In close connection, chapter four is solely devoted to Kellogg’s most controversial work—*The Living Temple*. This chapter contains useful sections on the “Pantheism Crisis,” the possible sources for Kellogg’s divine immanence theology, and the impact of *The Living Temple* within and without the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Chapter five is titled “Dr. Kellogg’s Break with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” While this chapter does discuss the events that led to Kellogg’s removal from Adventism, it also emphasizes his journey further away from Adventist ideals and theological emphasis. The chapter traces influences on Kellogg’s life from Mormons, Swedenborgians, and especially the “New Thought” advocates. As the chapter is wrapped up, Kellogg’s view of, or relationship to, Mary Baker Eddy, C. W. Post, and his younger brother, Will K. Kellogg, are also examined.

The final chapter is devoted to Kellogg’s involvement in race betterment and eugenics. This lengthy chapter outlines Kellogg’s view on the subject and brings Wilson’s thesis to a close. After chapter six a short conclusion summarizes the downfall of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and “the end” of Kellogg’s religion of Biologic Living.

Wilson's book is well written and easily captures the reader's attention. In many ways, his book unfolds as a story, making it very pleasant and informative. In addition, Wilson's book is to be complimented for a variety of reasons. First, Wilson has made a valuable contribution by providing an excellent chronicle of John Harvey Kellogg's evolving theological development. Closely connected to this, Wilson is to be commended for his success in documenting the possible sources for Kellogg's theology of divine immanence. This second accomplishment is a daunting task for any historian to try and tackle, yet Wilson handles it with wisdom and expertise.

Third, Wilson has demonstrated professional tact with unbiased judgment as he has treated sensitive issues within Kellogg's life. Kellogg is portrayed as neither a hero nor a villain, but merely as a man of his time and place. Along these same lines, Wilson also provides a fair treatment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church vis-à-vis its struggles with Kellogg. This overall balanced analysis provides a refreshing perspective.

A few other points can be mentioned briefly. First, Wilson correctly designates Kellogg's theology in *The Living Temple* as divine immanence, rather than mimicking Kellogg's contemporaries by suggesting that he was a pantheist. Other scholars have recently chosen pantheism as an apt descriptor for Kellogg's theology (cf. Denis Kaiser, "The Reception of Ellen G. White's Trinitarian Statements by Her Contemporaries, 1897-1915," *AUSS* 50 (2012): 36-38). Though Wilson never uses this designation, "a nonanthropomorphic theology of divine immanence" accurately describes Kellogg's view of God and seems to be complementary with the term "pantheism." Therefore, scholars are in relative agreement and emphasize the same essential point: Kellogg did not believe that the universe was synonymous with God, but rather that God was immanently present in all created things.

Second, the picture included on p. 33 of Wilson's book is an interesting choice. Rather than include the original photograph of the Western Health Reform Institute, the "doctored" picture is shown. This photo has an original building of the Institute removed, displays a slightly modified façade of the building still remaining, and added and removed persons (with altered attire) in front of the building, among other changes. The original photograph can be found on the Ellen G. White Estate photo database (<https://photo.egwwritings.org/>).

Third, there is no comment about the unaltered version of *The Living Temple* in Wilson's book. Before *The Miracle of Life* was published, the unsold copies of Kellogg's book had p. 27-36 and 451-452 cut out and replaced with "corrected" pages. The contents of the removed pages were naturally the most offensive to Adventists and talked about "God the Explanation of Nature," "Infinite Intelligence a Personal Being," and "The Infinite Personality," among other things. The unaltered version of *The Living Temple* (a copy is available to researchers at the Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan) highlights an interesting aspect of the Adventist response during "the Kellogg crisis" and may have been a good addition to Wilson's chapter on Kellogg's contentious tome.

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living receives my full recommendation. In my opinion, this work could make a good textbook for a variety of classes that cover topics such as medical history in America, Seventh-day Adventist history, or even historical perspectives on faith and science. Therefore, while this book focuses on the life of one man, it has applications and insights that go far beyond.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

KEVIN BURTON