The President’s Page: Tribute in Honor of Gerhard F. Hasel

E. Edward Zinke
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Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel died Thursday afternoon, August 11, in an automobile accident near Ogden, Utah. He was returning in a rented automobile to his motel where he was scheduled to participate in the annual meetings of the Biblical Research Institute Science Committee (BRISCO) when he was killed.

At the time of his death Dr. Hasel was the J. N. Andrews Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology and the Director of the Ph.D./Th.D. programs at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Many considered Dr. Hasel the foremost theologian in the church today, an opinion that I fully share. Since JATS plans a future memorial issue in honor of Dr. Hasel, I will just note that in addition to being a past President of ATS and its current vice-president for publications, Gerhard Hasel was my personal friend. Therefore, I would like to share with our readers a few of my personal thoughts about my dear friend, Gerhard, that it was my privilege to share with his family and friends at the funeral service in Berrien Springs:

On August 16th, I came off the trail into the valley floor of Yosemite National Park. This was the culmination of a seven-day cross-country pack trip with family and friends. I stepped into the arms of my wife who told me the unbelievable news that Gerhard had been killed in a car accident on the previous Thursday.

As our hike had been in such a remote area, attempts to contact me had been unsuccessful. We frantically rushed to the airport in
order to catch the last possible flight that would allow us to arrive in Berrien Springs just in time for the funeral. Through tears and disbelief that such a terrible event could possibly have happened, I used the airline napkins, the only paper I could find at hand, upon which to write a tribute to my fallen friend and colleague.

I first knew Dr. Gerhard Hasel as a professor of Issues in Old Testament Theology at Andrews University Seminary. Later, I knew him as a colleague—we served on many committees and traveled across the globe, including behind the iron curtain. Through this association, I came to know him as a close friend.

As a student, I remember Gerhard's warm greetings and friendly smiles in the Seminary hallways. He took a very serious and genuine interest in students. Upon further reflection in more mature years, I also appreciate the discipline that he inspired in his students.

Not only was Dr. Hasel very warm and personable, he was also highly intellectual in a way that stood out among numerous other capable professors. Instead of using his reasoning powers to criticize and dissect the Bible, he used the Sword of the Word as the basis for analyzing and laying bare the criticism of the critics. Even the intellect was in need of conversion to God's viewpoint. This new approach was startling, even unimaginable at first. However, upon further reflection, it became the foundation for my own study and for that of many fellow students.

What made Gerhard's career so outstanding was his commitment to God and submission to the Word of God as The Guide not only to his life, but also to his theological thinking. Gerhard placed his life in God's hands and humbly gave God the credit for any achievements.

Gerhard was a modern-day renaissance man—truly informed on a plethora of subjects. Though many are content to specialize in a specific discipline such as Old Testament or Systematic Theology, Gerhard's expertise extended to a diverse array of complimentary topics—Old Testament, New Testament, Archaeology, History of the Church, and Systematic Theology. His knowledge of my own work, completely out of his field of focus, never ceased to amaze me. Gerhard's vast knowledge coupled with an incredible memory enabled him to work at the cutting edge of a multitude of topics.
Gerhard was prodigious. At the time of his death, he had 319 scholarly articles in print with many more currently being published. In addition, he has published 19 books and several revisions. In many ways, Gerhard was the greatest theologian this church has known.

He was a well known scholar. I can remember a number of occasions when I was with him at a scholarly convention in the hallways or elevators, he was constantly stopped by professors desiring to tell him how much his text books were appreciated in the classroom. Often, everyone in the elevator would acknowledge him before we disembarked. He was also well known not only in scholarly circles outside of the church, but also by scholars, pastors, and lay people alike within the church. His extensive lectureship was appreciated in North, Central, and South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and the former Soviet Union. Gerhard was a people person with tremendous ability to network with a broad range of individuals. It is amazing to see the large number of people who have told me they had a special relationship with him.

As a result of his travels and his ability to network with many people, he know the church world very well, both its joys and problems theologically and administratively.

He was also well informed politically. Discussions on events in Russia, Bosnia, Afghanistan, or wherever, were always informative. Gerhard could fill in not only the details, but also the inner workings and the history, that which made an event what it really was, not something reduced to just bare facts.

Gerhard was an excellent administrator. As dean of the Seminary, he balanced the budget, built up the student body, strengthened the Seminary theologically, turned its emphasis in a more practical direction, and achieved ten-year accreditation for the Seminary. At the time he left the deanship of the Seminary, he had the support of over 80% of the faculty and close to 100% of the student body, an achievement that almost any administrator would envy.

Gerhard had a very strong dedication to the church. In his high school years, he took a regional test in the sciences and received the highest score. After he topped the scores for the next two levels, he found himself competing at the national level against nine other
students, together representing the brightest high school minds in all of Germany and once again received the top score. He was offered full scholarship to the university of his choice. In the emerging powerful economy of post-war Germany, his career potential could have been tremendous.

It is rare to find in one person Gerhard's combination of intellect, resourcefulness, administrative abilities, people and networking skills, political knowledge, language and communication skills and a deep dedication to God. In total light of these qualities, Gerhard could have become a major scientist or he also could have been president of one of Germany's major corporations. Instead, he dedicated his life to the study and proclamation of Seventh-day Adventist theology to the benefit of us all.

Because of the tremendous depth of his theological understanding, his creativity, and his fidelity to the Bible as the Word of God, Gerhard was often under fire, even to the extent of slander and false accusation. Yet Gerhard never spoke maliciously of his detractors. In the heat of the battle, it would have been easy to have cried martyr, but he never allowed that complex to be placed upon him.

Shortly before his death, Gerhard told me that he felt his most important contribution in life was his efforts for the Adventist Theological Society. Although not a prime figure in the founding of the society, his talents were invaluable in bringing the society to maturation. I would like to thank him personally for his contribution to the society as its past president, for putting the Journal on a strong footing, for establishing the dissertation series, the monograph series, and for his work on various symposiums dealing with revelation-inspiration, creation, and the judgment. It would take another article by itself to completely describe his contribution to the society.

Very few people bring about major changes in the history of thought. Gerhard was one of those individuals. Like a Martin Luther, or a John Calvin, he brought a renewed understanding of the centrality of the Bible to Adventist thought.

A number of years ago, Gerhard was a member of a committee meeting at Andrews that was studying questions relating to 1844 and the judgment. One morning in the apartment shared by three
committee participants, all editors from the Review, one started singing, “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow.” This didn't happen very often and the other two editors gathered around to discover the reasons for the curious occasion. When asked, the first editor responded, “Thank God for young theologians like Gerhard who can help us solve some of our long-standing theological problems.”

In one of our last conversations Gerhard asked, “Ed, when are you going to write your book on methods in theology?” If I ever have the opportunity to write this book, Gerhard, how I wish that I could tell you how much I will miss your encouragement, constructive criticism, and praise.

In closing I think it is important to mention the family side of Gerhard. At the recent memorial service Gerhard's son, Michael, recounted the attention, love and affection that their father bestowed upon him and his sisters, Marlena and Melissa. They emphasized how Gerhard was able to make time for them, in spite of his very busy schedule as a scholar and churchman. The humor and affection Gerhard displayed at home and with friends testify to how well-rounded a man he was. A special tribute should also be given to Gerhard's wife, Hilde, who so fully supported her husband while he was writing and traveling for the Lord. Hilde, Gerhard's loving wife, more than anyone else paid a great price in sacrificing time with her husband. The direct beneficiaries of her sacrifice have been countless individuals around the world who have been so blessed by Gerhard's writing and preaching.

Husband, father, teacher, scholar, statesman, pioneer, pastor, man of God, you have given us so much. God give us the grace to follow in your steps, and complete the work you have begun.
The Past President’s Address ‘94

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In keeping with the theme of this convention, “Issues of Faith and Life,” my focus in this address is two-fold. First, a response to two recently published keynote addresses; second, the issue of academic freedom in the context of confessional responsibility.

Response to Recent Challenges

George Reid (“The Theologian as Conscience for the Church,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, Vol. 4, No. 2, Autumn 93) challenged ATS to be “theological explorers,” taking “the vision of the collective and transmitting it to each struggling Christian,” to perceptively recognize the new world in which we live and work as one “in which religion is honorably imprisoned, released on weekends for those who savor it, but of little special meaning to most.” Then he challenged us to conservative theological creativity, in which the ring of biblical certainty is combined with contemporary relevance and meaning.

A short time later, Alfred McClure (“Forging an Intentional Future,” Adventist Review, January 6, 1994), challenged the Church to recognize that “people are seeking something personal and relational in a society that by its very inventiveness has created isolation,” and not to obscure “the message of Scripture with our passion for doctrinal debate, thus engaging in our own intellectual interests while we fuel the current perception that the church has nothing of significance to say about life in the real world.”
These challenges must be taken seriously. They require a response that preserves the vital connection between theology/doctrine (message) and life (mission). In order to say something significant about life in the real world, we must first be certain about what we are saying.

During the last presidential election a sign displaying, “It’s the Economy Stupid!” was hung in Clinton’s headquarters as a daily reminder of the major campaign issue. Perhaps we too could use such a reminder, “It’s The Message!”

The apostle Paul did not fashion his message to suit any particular social or age group. He preached the same message to the youth and to the elderly, to men and women, to the educated and uneducated. He didn’t take a survey, analyze “felt needs” and adapt his message. Meeting real needs took precedence over meeting felt needs. Though Paul was “all things to all men,” he did not adapt his message. Paul would preach the same message to our generation that he preached to the upwardly mobile people of his time. Human need does not determine doctrine, divine revelation does.

Neither charges of blasphemy nor legalism stopped him from preaching the incarnation and God’s Law. He didn’t stop preaching the resurrection of Christ, though many considered it impossible. Because of the perpetual tension between the biblical message and human skepticism, the Church must always be engaged in theological/doctrinal debate.

While theology is intentionally engaged in, it is not to be done in isolation, with an occasional peek at the world. Nor is it reserved for the professional theologian. The pastor preparing for preaching, the members of the Church as students of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, the Church School teacher who images truth for the vivid minds of students, and the Church administrator who translates revealed truth into ministry and mission are all engaged in the theological task.

That task is dynamic rather than static and requires openness to revealed truth, faith in that truth’s validity and cruciality, and the action such truth mandates. However, professional theologians must lead the way in moving from theological investigation producing diagnosis to the prescription needed in practical ministry. Privatization or imprisonment of the message must be avoided; it
must not be consigned to “respected irrelevance,” but made “personal and rela-
tional.”

Making Truth Meaningful. We can begin by recognizing that contemporary
listeners want to know how Bible teaching works in human lives. This does not
mean compromising or abandoning propositional truth and its analysis. It does
mean that, “What happened in church this Sabbath?” is a more meaningful ques-
tion to this generation than, “What did you learn in church this Sabbath?”

Let me illustrate. When I arrived at Andrews University in the fall of 1970 I
took a course on the doctrine of the atonement. For four weeks the professor
lectured about the messianic mission of Christ including Calvary, His resurrec-
tion, and His ascension. Then he began to speak of the heavenly ministry of
Christ as High Priest, and I was deeply disturbed. But out of that disturbance—
really a divine moment—came a new perspective of faith, a new hope, and a
new ministry.

The problem was not with the biblical vali-
dacy of the doctrine, but with its
meaning for my life. I began to pray
about that. My prayer was something like
this: “Lord if I am to believe, preach, and teach this doctrine, please make it
existential for me just like you did with Calvary.”

The miracle happened when suddenly, like lightning flashing across a dark
sky, I realized that the sanctuary doctrine means I have a living Saviour who
cares for me and exercises that care on a daily, moment by moment, basis from
the heavenly sanctuary. My faith in what Jesus did for me on Calvary found a
new dimension and a new completeness, resulting in a genuine revival and re-
newal. I am connected by faith with the present ministry of my Lord in the
heavenly sanctuary, and subjectively experience the objective truth of it.

I fear that our preaching of salvation and atonement is becomi-
ging more evangelical and less Adventist. We are not saved by the cross, but by Jesus. Cal-
vary is one aspect of the atonement being accomplished for us by Jesus. Assur-
ance of salvation comes because He died for our sin on the cross, and because
He is finishing His work as Saviour in the heavenly sanctuary. Isaiah 6:6-7 says:

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having a live coal in his hand
which he had taken with tongs from off the altar; and with it he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity and guilt are taken away, and your sin is completely atoned for and forgiven. *(The Amplified Bible)*

*The New English Bible* reads, “your iniquity is removed and your sin is wiped away.”

Sin is finally “atoned for,” “removed,” and “wiped away” when the heavenly record of it is blotted out by the blood of Christ which He took into the heavenly sanctuary. *(See Heb 9:12, 14, 25.)* When this good news is heard and believed the response is, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf” *(Heb 6:19-20).*

The sanctuary doctrine certainly has something significant to say about life in the real world of hopelessness and uncertainty! The truth of it embodies divine power to transform life. Even to transform faith. This is why God has called us to preach it to those who have not heard it before! The truth about the ministry of Christ in heaven is profitless unless it, like Calvary, is “united by faith in those who heard” *(Heb 4:2).* We can have confident faith to enter the heavenly sanctuary, because we have a High Priest who entered heaven with His own blood and pleads that blood before the Father on our behalf. His blood is the assurance we will be dealt with graciously *(Heb 10:19-25).*

My fascination with this truth continued as I looked for increased understanding and meaning for myself, and for preaching.

The Bible says: “Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water” *(Heb 10:21-22).* But how is it possible for the conscience to be made clean? This is an important existential question, because the guilty conscience is a problem of the real world searching for joy and happiness. That conscience can tell us we are guilty sinners and condemned to live hopeless, joyless, lives.

Our great need is to hear the good news that the way into the sanctuary is opened by the blood of Jesus! His credentials are our confidence. The blood He took into the sanctuary cleanses the
believer’s conscience by the removal of the sin the conscience recognizes and which condemns the sinner. The sanctuary truth proclaims that our Lord is doing a thorough job, dealing with our feelings of guilt and with the sin which produces guilt. He died for our sin “by the sacrifice of himself” on the cross (Heb 9:26).

But what about the guilt? Nothing we do can purify and cleanse the conscience. No resolutions, no promises, no rituals. It takes an act of God, an act of divine grace. Once again our Lord is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He removes the sin He died for by covering it with His blood and ultimately wiping away the record of it from the heavenly sanctuary. When that happens there is nothing to stand against us, to accuse us anymore! The conscience cannot condemn when God Himself does not.

That doesn’t mean sin is removed from memory, for God does not cause the function of human conscience to cease. It does mean that by a sovereign act of grace and atonement, sin is pardoned in the record in the only place where it could condemn in the final judgment. There could be no records for the judgment if the record of sin was expunged at one’s acceptance of Christ. But sin is forgiven or pardoned. Christ has assumed our liability as our surety.

The first time I preached this a man began to sob uncontrollably. When later I spoke to him he said, “I’ve never heard the message of my Lord’s ministry in heaven described just that way before. It’s the best good news I have ever heard!” The power of truth does work experientially in human life.

Timely Cautions. When it comes to the full atonement message, we must be careful that we don’t turn wine into water, that our methods of Bible interpretation don’t separate wheat from chaff, and then keep the chaff. Being progressive does not necessarily mean discovering something new. It can mean rediscovering that which is old and everlasting, and telling the story in new ways. Revival does not come by altering or rejecting that which gave us life in the first place, it comes by a renewed submission to, and faith in, the same message that converted us and gave us our mission.

It is the message that determines mission. If the mission is to evangelize the world and continue the reformation, then only the message that can accomplish it deserves our allegiance and our attention. Let us explore that message from the perspective of life

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in a contemporary world dominated philosophically by the goodness of man, a coming political/economic utopia, moral relativity, and radical individualism. Let us find creative ways to declare once again that man is wickedly depraved and deserves only judgment, that Christ and His kingdom are the only answers to our search for acceptance and security, that desperately-needed, transcendant, absolute values are found only in the inspired and infallible Word of God, and that Christ’s call to the obedience of faith and sacrificial living is the solution to family and social fragmentation. Let us search for creative ways to proclaim the old message that the Gospel, understood in its broadest sense—justification, sanctification, glorification—is the only message powerful enough to counter such contemporary manifestations of barbarism.

ANTS will fail as an instrument of renewal and revival, fail to be on the cutting edge of Adventist theological thought, if it perceives itself only as a place of safety, retreat, and isolation for likeminded thinkers. Defensiveness alone stifles creativity, the offensive stimulates it. We cannot leave theological/homiletical creativity in the hands of others. We must provide the concepts and supply the language to produce a revival of the message and renewal of Adventist life. We must dedicate ourselves as Adventists, and this Society as an instrument, to the shaping and renewing of the consciousness of the Church. Therefore, we cannot afford to allow conservative theology to be marginalized. Luther once observed,

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

**Academic Freedom and Confessional Responsibility**

Many members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today are uneasy and confused. They sense mixed signals being sent their way and are troubled by a loss of conviction concerning the Advent message, uncertainty concerning Adventist identity, and the adoption of open-ended values. While the Adventist faith may be world-
wide, they perceive that in some parts of the world it is only an inch deep relative to conviction and commitment. Could it be that in our concern for academic freedom we have minimized our distinctive beliefs? Has confessional responsibility taken second place, if it has a place at all, to academic freedom?

Limitations to Academic Freedom Defined. Schools established and supported by a Christian denomination are, by virtue of their mission, confessional institutions with a bias regarding revealed truth. In such schools responsibility for revealed truth defines the limits of academic freedom.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church holds that academic freedom constitutes “the guarantee that teachers and students will be able to carry on the functions of learning, research, and teaching with a minimum of restrictions” in an “atmosphere of open inquiry necessary in an academic community if learning is to be honest and thorough.”2 It also holds that teaching at any level must be done with “due regard for the character and aims of the institution which provides [the teacher] with credentials, and with concern for the spiritual and intellectual needs of students.” Furthermore, the Church recognizes that “freedoms are never absolute” but “imply commensurate responsibilities” including “limitations made necessary by the religious aims of a Christian institution.”3

The widest liberty may be appropriate for a school of religion in which all points of view, all religions, are given equal value. But it is not appropriate in a Church school which has as its fundamental reason for existence the propagation of the faith. The Church, including its educational institutions, is a community of believers, not a debating society. The beliefs of the Church are its greatest treasure; they constitute the fundamental philosophy governing academics and administration in its schools. The more certain a Church is regarding its beliefs, the more certain will be its survival and the completion of its mission.

Academic freedom, therefore, is subject to the limitations imposed by the “religious aims of a Christian institution.”4 This is not a matter of disallowing free investigation, but of subordinating that search to the doctrinal beliefs of the Church. Such limitations are not viewed as suppression of academic freedom, except by those who prefer not to take confessional responsibility seriously.
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God created us to think and to reason, and that ability cannot be limited by any human authority. However, while Christian education is to “train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought,” it was never intended to train them to be doubters, unable to make distinctions between true and false, right and wrong. Unfortunately, doubt rests too comfortably in the Church’s ranks, often in its highest halls of learning. The goal of much biblical interpretation today seems to be to prove that the Bible does not mean what it says, nor says what it means, that there can be no certain knowledge when it comes to God’s revelation of Himself. Belief has thus become relativized and privatized, and every person is a confession unto himself.

But teachers in a Church school are first accountable to the doctrinal beliefs of the Church rather than to faculty peers, administration, or professional bodies such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), or accrediting agencies. If a choice must be made between confessional responsibility and academic freedom, confessional responsibility must take precedence. The Christian teacher must never sacrifice faith to doubt. All views are not of equal value. All opinions of scholars and teachers are not of equal value. James T. Draper, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, writes:

The sanctity of academic freedom is. . . being used against conservative Christians today. We are told that the ‘fundamentalists’ are not really interested in genuine education; they are intent instead on pushing a narrow indoctrination. Furthermore, those in academia never tire of suggesting that ‘creedal interference’ from constituents may well jeopardize institutional accreditation and drive away the most competent faculty members. Again, academic freedom is a valuable concept when correctly perceived, but it is not a blank check for faculty members to teach anything they please.

Confessional Rights. Seventh-day Adventists do not distrust education and learning. This is proved by the Church’s funding of the largest parochial school system among Protestants. They distrust educators who, under the guise of academic freedom, do not uphold what the Church believes and undermine that corporate confession instead. It is the neglect, the distortion, the suppression, the “reinterpretation” of the truth as revealed in the Bible that is
feared. Those who cry the loudest for academic freedom are often the most intolerant of those who hold conservative theological views. There are always those who, under the guise of concern for academic freedom, modify, reinterpret, and even attempt to destroy the historic faith of the Church.

Any endeavor to undermine the beliefs of the Church from the inside is a form of subversion and is morally and ethically unacceptable. One who cannot conscientiously teach what the Church believes, who no longer believes what the Church confesses, is morally obligated to leave Church employment. One is not free to teach views in a confessional institution that are in contradiction to the beliefs of the Church to which the institution belongs.

One may think wrong, but does not have the right to do wrong. The responsibility of a teacher in a Church school goes far beyond that of a teacher in a secular school. For this reason God’s Word says that those “who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1). They must “teach what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

To teach what is not the beliefs of the institution served would be a wrong thing to do, and to disregard the faith of the Church is an act of lawlessness. “It would be an irresponsible use of a worker’s freedom to press a viewpoint that would endanger the unity of the church body which is as much a part of truth itself as are the formulated statements of doctrine (see Phil 1:27; Rom 15:5-6).”

Academic freedom in the service of confessional responsibility will bow to the Church’s faith, because the Church has the duty to “guard” (1 Tim 6:20) the truth that God entrusted to it from that which it considers to be harmful to its faith and mission, and to guard those whom God has entrusted to its spiritual care. Members of a Church have the right to be protected in the truth they have accepted, and the right to protest when that truth is misrepresented or adulterated. There is, after all, a differentiation to be made between the genuine and the spurious.

What should be the attitude of the Church toward views which explain away the facts of the faith? It must resist any misleading modification or destruction of its beliefs. Anyone who cannot hold to the confession of the Church has already separated from the Church. While the Church insists on the individual’s right to
believe as conscience dictates, it is not obligated to retain in its ranks dissenters from its beliefs. The Church must exercise its freedom and right to protect its beliefs and its members from what it considers to be teaching not in harmony with those beliefs.

The Lord inveighed against the Church at Pergamum because they tolerated members “who [held] to the teaching of Balaam” and “to the teaching of the Nicolaitans” (Rev 2:14-15). He held against the Church in Thyatira their toleration of “that woman Jezebel, who. . . by her teaching. . . misleads my servants. . .” (Rev 2:20). The Lord called those Churches to repent, implying that repentance involves dealing with the problem. The faithful are to “hold to what you have until I come” (Rev 2:25).

The Church is not obligated to grant the widest liberty to all opinions, to challenge no teacher or teaching. Faculty do not decide doctrinal direction in a confessional institution. The Adventist view is that the Church “reserves the right to employ only those individuals who personally believe in and are committed to upholding the doctrinal tenets of the Church as summarized in the document, `Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (1980).’”

Proper Function of Academic Freedom. Academic freedom is not an end in itself. The purpose for the Church and its teaching ministry is “for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13, RSV).

Freedom to research, to investigate, must be maintained. But that freedom does not extend to the teaching of that which is tentative, which has not been accepted as fact or truth by the body. Constituents cannot be expected to support sacrificially that which is uncertain and/or tentative. There are some ideas that are wrong, that contradict Scripture, and there are some teachers who are wrong. We must not permit the skeptics to win the arguments by letting our schools drift from uncompromising belief into loosely-held opinion. A confessional school is not a place where no one can ever be wrong, or it would be a place where no one can ever be right, which would deprive the school of its fundamental subject matter and of its integrity.

If we are not willing to establish some limits, some parameters,
to what can be taught or who can teach in our schools, the door will be flung wide for doctrinal pluralism and an ecumenical approach to the faith. No one would be able to raise objections because there would be no right or wrong views.

Academic freedom for the denominational teacher does “not include the license to express views that may injure or destroy the very community that supports and provides for him.” Such teachers jeopardize their employment in a confessional institution if they, while hiding behind academic freedom, ridicule the beliefs of the Church and undermine and destroy the faith of students.

There must always be room for differences of opinion on issues that do not involve testing truth. The right to investigate, research, and share the results with peers must be maintained. However, if there is a conflict between the teacher’s views and the confession of the Church, it is the teacher’s moral duty to be silent or to resign. If that is not voluntarily done, it becomes the moral obligation of the Church to release that teacher from employment. “Freedom for the individual grows out of his belonging to the community of Christ. No one is free in the Biblical sense who is out of relationship with God or others. Theological truth, therefore, is affirmed by community study and confirmation.”

A good teacher will encourage his students to investigate all views, providing sources for that investigation. But that in itself does not fulfill the teaching responsibility of an Adventist teacher. The Adventist teacher will go beyond such investigation and show the students where the truth lies as confessed by the Church. Confessional responsibility requires that the personal doctrinal beliefs of the teacher harmonize with those of the Church.

Adventist teachers of all disciplines have a pastoral duty toward their students, from which academic freedom does not absolve them. They do not speak only for themselves. They speak for the body of believers. Honesty and integrity decree that those who are paid to teach the Adventist faith, do so. “Let the purchaser beware” should never have to apply to the education offered in Adventist schools.

Academic freedom and confessional responsibility are not mutually exclusive. It is not a matter of having one without the other. It is a matter of the proper relationship between the two, with
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academic freedom subordinate to confessional responsibility. We must always remember that without freedom of thought and inquiry no one could ever come to the faith. Yet at the same time we must assert that without the preservation of the faith no amount of freedom of thought will bring a person to know the truth. The most stable and lasting growth in the Church occurs when confessional responsibility is primary.

Education, thinking, intelligence, intellect, investigation, in themselves are not the greatest values. Such things have been valued and employed by the most evil forces in human history. The greatest values are faith in Christ and service in His name. If all we do in our schools is teach our students to be clever, to be successful in this world, we have miserably failed. We must always appeal for the highest reaches of intellect among our scholars and students, but always in the context of strong, unshakable, convictions and beliefs. Someone has said that bigotry is the anger of those who have no convictions.

Many who have lost the faith, would passionately promote the evolution of Adventism into something that they can accept. Must those who believe most fervently give way to those who believe less fervently, and then to those who do not believe at all?

The moment Seventh-day Adventists and their educational institutions cease to stand for something definite, the cause is lost and the reason-for-existence collapses. Many great universities founded by Christian denominations, such as Harvard, Princeton, the University of Chicago, became thoroughly secular because the confession of faith was abandoned. The study of theology and religion was separated from other disciplines. Faculty productivity, in the form of publications, became increasingly important as criteria for employment, promotion, and tenure. Student behavioral standards were drastically modified or abandoned altogether, as was adherence by faculty to a statement of faith. Resistance to the trend by conservative clergymen was ridiculed.

There is only one justification for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be engaged in Christian education, and it is found in Christ’s commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

Endnotes
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 15.
9 Ibid.
Historical-Critical and Evangelical Theology

Eta Linnemann
Leer-Loga, Germany

The Foundations

Whose Theology?
The word “theology” carries a different sense in historical-critical circles than it does among evangelicals. We are accustomed to speak of Bultmann's theology, or Barth's, or Moltmann's, or Jüngel's. But which of us speak in the same sense of Spener's theology, or Wesley's, or Moody's, or Spurgeon's? Did the latter group fail to make a theological contribution? Of course not. But they did not attempt to construct their own theology. That is, they did not construct a theology containing specific, subjective divergences from God's word, divergences of which they would have to be called the authors.

It is only at the cost of considerable divergence from God's word that one becomes the author of his/her own theology. The person who loyally subordinates his thinking to God's revelation constructs no theology of this kind. That person also faces no pressure to make a name for himself. For such it is sufficient if the Lord says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Roots of Historical-critical Theology
There is nothing in historical-critical theology that has not first made its appearance in philosophy.¹ Bacon (1561-1626) and Hobbes (1588-1679), Descartes (1596-1650) and Hume (1711-1776) laid the foundations: inductive thought as the only source of knowledge; denial of revelation; monistic world view; separation of faith and reason; doubt as the foundation of knowledge. Hobbes and Hume established a thoroughgoing criticism of miracles; Spinoza (1632-
1677) had already thought along similar lines, laying the basis for biblical criticism of both Old and New Testaments. Lessing (1729-1781) invented the synoptic problem. Kant's (1724-1804) critique of reason became the basis for historical-critical thinking. Hegel (1770-1831) furnished the means for the process of demythologizing, effectively implemented a century later by Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976)—after the way was prepared already by Martin Kähler (1835-1912).

Kierkegaard (1813-1855) served as the executor of Kant's philosophy in the theological realm. The melancholy Dane reduced faith to a leap that left rationality behind. He cemented the separation of faith and reason and laid the groundwork for theology's departure from biblical moorings. It is, therefore, not surprising that late in life he wished for a reformer with the boldness to forbid Bible reading among common people, or that he harbored the opinion that Bible Societies (groups printing and distributing the Bible and its message world-wide) had caused irreparable damage. To be sure, the person who knows God's word does not let himself be blown about by every wind of doctrine that philosophy kicks up.

Kierkegaard procured for biblical criticism a broad entrance into theology by writing such criticism off as irrelevant; it could do no harm, he maintained, to a genuine faith. This view spread with disastrous effectiveness in part because Kierkegaard was a pious man who uttered many an insightful word. But it is precisely the pious among biblical critics who are most effective at winning to their cause those persons who at first—and on sound biblical grounds—oppose them.

Heidegger (1889-1976) laid the groundwork for the reduction of Christian faith to a possibility of self-understanding.

From Karl Marx—who not only condemned the Christian faith as the opium of the people but was probably also a Satanist—came Marxist wolves in the disguise of (Christian) sheep with their baleful ideologies; theology of hope, theology of revolution, theology of liberation.

Positivism, for which all God-talk is meaningless, and for which God's word itself is already dead, produced the various “God is dead” theologies. Here the connection to the Bible is no more than
a nostalgic reminiscence giving emotional appeal to a new ideology, thereby helping it sound more convincing.

*The imposing oak of historical-critical theology is not rooted in God's word but in a philosophy that is inherently hostile to God, does not recognize God's revelatory acts and words, and withholds due recognition from the One who has already appeared as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). It is quite apart from that One that philosophy has steadfastly pursued its vain quest for truth.*

**Evangelical Theology: Its Present Status**

The basic characteristic of evangelical theology is that it is rooted in God's word and relies on God's revelation as its source of knowledge. As a path, fidelity to Scripture passes through the narrow gate of conversion and repentance, a comprehensive turning to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Included in this is the conversion of the believer's thinking. This in turn brings with it the repudiation, in Jesus name, of the influence of historical-critical theology by those who have succumbed to its wiles.

Along with rootage in God's word, a second indispensable feature of evangelical theology is that the mind of the believer takes its bearings from God, the triune Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The mind is like the needle of a compass: without the presence of magnetic north, the needle swings aimlessly, helpless to resist diversions. Only the magnetic pole enables the compass to serve as a reliable guide. God is the magnetic pole for the Christian.

The mind is a whore, Luther says. There is nothing for which logical arguments cannot be adduced. (Example: Gas chambers.) We should resist beguilement through logical arguments. Our minds are swayed by logical arguments, but such arguments are value-free. They are always wrapped up in a complex of presuppositions. It is not just that questionable arguments exist: arguments themselves are questionable; that is, they must be traced back to their presuppositions. Insofar as they are logical, they may appear to be neutral, but they are most assuredly not.

That is why God's Word admonishes us: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5, NIV). Is this a denigration of our God-given intellectual capacity? No; it is simply a reminder of what our minds were never designed to be: objects in which to place our total trust.
Evangelical theology should be alert, mindful of the possible hidden presence of the historical-critical theologian in even the most pious evangelical. This hidden presence in the “flesh,” is the sinful nature. The questions is whether we heed the admonition of God: Make no room for the flesh (cf. Gal 5:13). It is also true for the conversion of one's thinking that the Christian life in an ongoing process of repentance. This does not mean wearisome agony, but rather the joyful purifying and liberating, jettisoning of deadening encumbrance.

**Pitfalls of the Historical-critical Method**

Evangelical theology should be a mighty oak, rooted in God's revelation and nourished by the guiding light of God's presence. But is this image really accurate—or is the actual situation often otherwise? Are the following factors not often in evidence, despite honest effort to avoid such pitfalls?

1. A naive, uncritical acceptance of the methods and tools of historical-critical theology, with no careful consideration of the philosophical-atheistic background that permeates and largely determines the usage of those methods and tools.

2. The wholesale acceptance of the basic assumptions of historical-critical theology, with occasional restriction of marginal character. Whoever takes up historical-critical theology's tools and fundamental assumptions, insofar as they appear acceptable, or at least not dangerous, becomes enmeshed in their presuppositions, whether he is aware of it or not. He goes astray even when he then takes a stance in direct opposition to historical-critical theology.

3. Thoroughgoing acceptance and Meinungsstatistik, the tallying up of scholarly opinion, rather than the citation of biblical truth, as a method of establishing facts and validating arguments. Ernst Lerle has called attention to the presence and hazards of this common approach. It is dangerous even when the list of authorities cited distinguish themselves to some extent by the inclusion of work by evangelical scholars. The truth of God's word is not, however, dependent on the solutions to problems that are favored by the majority.

4. Uncritical acceptance of the manner in which questions are posed by historical-critical theology. We commonly encounter attempts to give evangelical answers to historical-critical questions.
But such questions presuppose a grid that rules out all answers that do not conform to and that do not reinforce the overall outlook of historical-critical theology. Answers are not sought in God's word, but rather—for evangelicals as well as for historical-critical theologians—in the secondary literature, although the evangelical will show a certain preference for evangelical secondary literature. A distinctively evangelical manner of posing crucial questions seldom comes into view.

5. Selection of non-controversial, out-of-the-way topics for personal research, such as, biographical subjects or some other inoffensive matter. This tendency is quite understandable among doctoral candidates, avoiding conflict that could be deadly to receiving their degrees. But is it any less common among established persons? Is there, perhaps, at work here a strong desire to receive recognition as “scientific” or “critical” right alongside historical-critical colleagues?

6. Especially symptomatic is remoteness to the Bible. God's Word is hardly to be found in theological works, unless it happens to be the explicit object of investigation. God's revelation is not taken seriously as source of knowledge. Such an approach implicitly shares the understanding of Scripture common to historical-critical theology, even if the writer has no intention of taking up all off the latter's results. In intellectual labor the writer does not live on the Holy Scriptures (as Jesus did: see Matt 4:4), because he/she is still wrapped up in the separation of faith and thought, a separation that historical-critical theology picked up from philosophy. Such a scholar is really not dependent on the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, who waits to lead us into all truth, according to Jesus' own words. The truth that spiritual matters require spiritual understanding (cf. 1 Cor 2:12-16) receives no consideration; Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, appears at most as the object of theology.

To a considerable degree, unfortunately, present evangelical theology does not resemble a tree that—rooted in God's word—grows independently. It resembles rather an ivy plant which, even if rooted in God's word, ekes out a somewhat meager existence draped around the tree of historical-critical theology. It is not fully one with the tree,
but it is also never fully removed from it. It occasionally distances itself from its host, but basically maintains constant close contact.

The Implementation

Critical Claim: “Scientific Theology”

The claim. Historical-critical theology lays claim to being scientific theology. However, what does not conform to historical-critical conventions is not acknowledged as scientific; it accordingly remains disregarded and is suppressed. The blessing of “scientific” extends only to those who accept historical-critical premises and who move within the traditional framework of the disciplines.

The reality. The actual procedure, however, does not measure up to the demands for a scientific approach. Premises are not openly admitted, and their prejudicial character, by no means the result of scientific work, is suppressed. In the implementation of research, these premises are treated as established verities and passed along to students as unassailable facts and foundational knowledge. These premises include the following:

1. Research must proceed as if God does not exist. In this manner God's revelation is barred from consideration at the outset. But the manifest God will not bear being pushed to the side, even temporarily or provisionally, as if He were not there. Anyone who speaks like this does not realize what he/she is saying. As a basic principle this premise is a-theistic or, more correctly, anti-theistic. It denies God, who revealed himself and is therefore manifest. One cannot suspend trust in this God for the sake of research goals. But with this unjustified demand, historical-critical theology makes the denial of faith in the living, triune God its basic premise. Spurgeon rightly concluded that “the weed of modern theology is nothing other than unbelief that is too cowardly to own up to its name.”

2. A monistic world view, which reduces the explanation for all causation to naturalistic principles only, and gained ascendancy in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. This is made the foundation for theological thought and discourse.

3. Kant's critique of reason is respected like an unalterable decree of the Medes and Persians. I can still remember how Bultmann stated in his lectures: “We must bear in mind that we live after Kant, and that it is no longer permissible to think as
people were allowed to think prior to Kant's philosophy. Even where it is not so clearly formulated as this (which is a flat contradiction of the first Barmen thesis\textsuperscript{8}), the state of affairs that Bultmann describes is widely adhered to.

4. Every new philosophy that appears is treated as a revelation commanding respect. Without realizing it, many follow in Hegel's train by treating the philosophical constructs of an individual as the self-disclosure of the absolute Spirit. These constructs are immediately generalized: thus thinks modern man. Such generalization leads subsequently to the propagation of these individual mental games. The foundation here is not God's word but rather—following Hegel—the dubious concept of truth as conceived in humanism.

5. In historical-critical theology, "scientific work" is held to take place when a scholar sets up a hypothesis, supports it with a few arguments, and stabilizes the original hypothesis, using some additional reasons. In this manner, card houses are erected that arrogantly call themselves "scientific," but share with real science only the name.\textsuperscript{9}

In the natural sciences an hypothesis is the foundation for research. It is tested either through experiments or through methodologically formulated, wide-ranging observation. If it fails this testing, it is rejected. In so-called "scientific" theology, however, there seems to be widespread ignorance of the fact that an hypothesis—a supposition that something is so—is nothing more than an assertion. According to basic mathematical procedure, the scholar must first clarify the presupposition and then adduce the proof.

Instead, theological hypotheses that have found acceptance are treated like scientific results and circulated as facts. Certainly, experimental confirmation is not often possible in the realm of the humanities. Still, particularly when the theologian claims to do scientific work, he/she should feel obligated to adduce data that will furnish at least some broad evidential coverage of the claims. Instead, many are content to make isolated observations in support of a hypothesis, treating contrary considerations as if they simply did not exist.\textsuperscript{10} Less concern is shown for the object of research than for—largely rhetorical—interaction with other hypotheses. "Scien-
Scientific knowledge” is seen as that which has become established in the interplay of opinions and not—as one might expect—that which has withstood earnest investigation, subjecting a given hypothesis to searching light.

The result: Under close scrutiny, the result that forms the basic scaffolding for critical theology’s major disciplines turns out to be that which will, for whatever reasons, furnish the basis for a consensus.

As soon as we cease to be deterred by the consensus of established opinions and arbitrary judgments, as soon as we cease pitting hypothesis against hypothesis, but rather begin to investigate the object of the hypotheses with scientific rigor, we find that the allegedly scientific results that have become supporting pillars of historical-critical theology are untenable. Six examples of widely held but presently untenable hypotheses are as follows:

1. The carving up of the five books of Moses into various sources (the documentary hypothesis) can be passed along to students only by ignoring the findings of the last 100 years of archaeology, and by closing our eyes to the manner in which this alleged “assured result” of Old Testament theological research ever gained currency in the first place."\(^1\)

2. The alleged assured results of historical-critical study into the Exodus and the Conquest turn out to be untenable if, first of all, we make use of the wealth of material furnished by archaeological research in recent times, and second, we employ a synchronic chronology instead of trusting the fictitious Egyptian chronology of Manetho (ca. 180 B.C.). Manetho's concern in gathering his material was to win respect from the Greeks for the Egyptians. He did this in part through greatly exaggerating the length of their history."\(^2\)

3. The prophetic books, seen in their simultaneous and subsequent historical context, make critical reconstructions, which regard as genuine only a few verses in every chapter, seem ridiculous. The evidence that the prophets’ promises were fulfilled right down to the fine details was set forth long ago. It is still, however, widely disregarded.

4. Literary criticism of the New Testament (including form criticism and redaction criticism) turns out to be untenable because
precise investigation of the evidence in the synoptic gospels reveals that the alleged synoptic problem does not exist. There are no conclusive data that support theories of literary dependence among the synoptics. That fact leaves the two-source theory (and all other such theories) hanging in thin air. The literary criticism of the New Testament is in this sense finished. Form criticism, which built “the history of the synoptic tradition” on the foundation of the two-source theory, has no foundation, and redaction criticism, which constructed the theology of the evangelists from the changes they allegedly made to the written sources they had before them, turns out to be groundless.14

5. It has long since been shown through detailed study of Gnosticism that all Gnostic literature known to us did not arise until after the onset of the Christian era. In spite of this, historical-critical theology still makes use of Gnosticism as a source and origin of essential segments of the New Testament (e.g. John 1, Philippians 2:6-11). The literary evidence renders acceptance of a pre-Christian Gnosticism impossible. But this evidence is conveniently ignored by maintaining the existence of traditions that allegedly existed in pre-Christian times; these are said to have formed the basis for Gnostic treatises.

Why argue for such pre-Christian traditions? Because there is evidence for them? No; one will search in vain for such evidence. The reason is rather apt to be that otherwise the scholar could not chalk up the New Testament passages that speak of Jesus’ pre-existence to Gnosticism, nor could he/she dismiss these passages as non-binding as a result.

6. Another set of allegedly pre-Christian traditions that will not stand up to scrutiny are those relied on by theories of pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic literature. Such theories have been widespread even though historical-critical theology itself dates nearly all the Jewish apocalyptic writings to a time when the New Testament writings had already been completed. Certain parts of the Book of Enoch are dated to the first or second century B.C., and the presence of portions of Enoch among Qumran documents confirms their pre-Christian date. The portion of Enoch, however, that would be comparable to the New Testament and that is required to justify the assertion that Jesus borrowed the title “Son of Man”
from Jewish apocalyptic, is not to be found in the Qumran documents. The Similitudes or so-called parables (I [Ethiopic Apocalypse of] Enoch 37-71), which are now dated by Kautzch “before 64 B.C.,” based on the dating on the whole Book of Enoch, are now dated by Klaus Berger to “no earlier” than 4 B.C. (67:8 refers to the death of Herod) and perhaps as late as A.D. 70 (56:5—speaks only of Jerusalem's seizure by the Parthians in 40 B.C.).”

These two proof-texts, however, cannot support the burden of proof for the date of the document that Berger places on them. The proposed dates, therefore, are open to question:

a.) The first passage (67:8) speaks generally of “kings, rulers, and exalted ones” for whom the warm waters are medicinal. In this connection there is no talk of death, and certainly no word about the death of Herod. True, Herod sought the warm waters of Callirrhoe, but he was neither healed there, not did he die there.

b.) The second passage (56:5-8) does not agree with the events of 40 B.C. According to 56:7a, Jerusalem cannot be seized by the Parthians; according to 56:7b, they will begin murder among themselves; and according to 56:8b, Sheol will swallow up the sinners before the eyes of the elect—and all this will take place “in those days” according to 56:8a.

But in 40 B.C. what happened was this: The gates of Jerusalem were opened for the Parthians; they plundered it and withdrew with their booty. They began no murder among themselves, nor did any other troops involve themselves in such murder. No one was swallowed up before the eyes of the elect.

No proof has been brought forth to show that either the title “Son of Man” or the apocalyptic sections in the New Testament have been pro-conditioned by Jewish apocalyptic literature. If we abide by extant writings and do not rely on alleged traditions, then, it is the New Testament that is original, not the Jewish apocalyptic writings.

It is worth noting that a number of verdicts of so-called “modern” theology formed part of the arsenal of the most ancient foes and detractors of the Christian faith. Two examples:

1) Criticism of the Book of Daniel, and the attempt to place it in the second century B.C. rather than the sixth, go back to the
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Greek philosopher Porphyry (A.D. 233-304). His motive for this redating was to reduce the already fulfilled promises found in Daniel to *vaticinia ex eventu*—“prophecies” concocted after the events had already occurred.16

2) Lessing’s remarks on the literary dependence of the synoptic gospels are a rather precisely detailed repetition of what Celsus (ca. A.D. 178), a sworn enemy of Christianity, stated long ago. He was roundly refuted by Origen (ca. A.D. 185-254) in the following century.17

These are just two examples: This number could probably be increased through intensive study of the sources.

The “results” of historical-critical theology provided above call into question the alleged “scientific” nature of such theology. “Scientific theology” is a colossus with clay feet.

We are not, of course, maintaining that historical-critical theology, which has produced thousands of researchers over the years, has no results whatsoever to show for its labors. Certainly many useful, detailed investigations have been produced. Since, however, the most basic underlying presuppositions informing this theology are wrong, it is understandable that the individual results, among which are to be found the most sober scientific labors, are often impaired, because they are closely connected with the erroneous underlying presuppositions.

**Evangelical Theology Claim to Scientific Character**

Similar claims. The claim to exclusive validity, the claim to be scientific, which historical-critical theology makes, exerts a powerful pressure on evangelical theology to conform. Since there is widespread failure among evangelicals to see through both the doubtful presuppositions of this alleged scientific character and the questionable nature of its results, a high premium is placed on being regarded as just scientific. After all, evangelical theologians are prepared, willing, and in a position to pursue full involvement in scholarly work. However, there is no possibility for evangelicals to succeed in the enterprise, because what is recognized as “scientific” receives that recognition only from historical-critical theology, which—in spite of its numerical minority in the entirety of Christendom—occupies all the key positions and is always in a position to state, at its own discretion: “That is not scientific.”
The procedure. This breathless competition has an unfortunate outcome. Evangelicals give little consideration to the crucial questions needing distinctively evangelical answers. Instead, they are driven to give evangelical answers to historical-critical questions, as far as this is possible. Much good, sound effort is expended that, strictly speaking, has little relevance for the evangelical context, but only furnishes more stones for building up academia's ivory tower. Compelling investigations, corresponding to direct felt needs among evangelicals, are not taken up. Evangelical scholars are so much accustomed to the manner in which historical-critical theology places questions that the topics evangelicals choose to work on often do little more than echo what the historical-critical agenda has already established.

The result. The situation sketched above has an unfortunate outcome. From the historical-critical point of view, evangelical books and articles often fail to measure up to expected scientific standards (as defined by historical-critical theology.) At the same time, from an evangelical vantage point, the same writings fall short of a thoroughgoing fidelity to the Bible. Work designed to do justice to two worlds of thought is fully claimed by neither. Ought this situation to persist? Or could it be time to consider and discover alternatives to this state of affairs? 

A New Theological Beginning

Rooted in God and His Word

We should be aware that an inexhaustible source of knowledge stands at our disposal in what God has revealed. In most areas of life and knowledge we have not even begun to draw from this source. All too obediently, we have submitted to the separation between faith and knowledge that philosophy has argued for and historical-critical theology has observed for centuries. Even evangelicals have reduced the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures to that which is necessary for faith and practice. They fail to notice that in making this reduction they have made a false turn.

Service Oriented

Theological work that is loyal to the Bible has a different value than “theological science” in historical-critical theology. It does not exist “to research whatever admits of investigation”; it is rather a
service-performing activity intent on the Lord's commission to furnish help for fellow-believers. "Ivory tower" scholarship, as commonly done, and theological work that is loyal to the Bible are mutually contradictory endeavors.

In historical-critical theology the principle of "the initiated" reigns. Prior to the Second World War, only a small elite of such "initiates" functioned, in keeping with Semler's erstwhile counsel. In the 1950s and -60s a gradual increase of the ranks of the initiated developed to include more who had received academic training. We may liken these initiates to clergy who have taken holy orders.

Within the spectrum of religious initiation, there are also "lower orders." Since the late 60s, these lower orders have come to include initiation into the synoptic problem and source criticism of the Pentateuch, critical theories that are now being dished up in every deacon and lay-believer seminar. Since the 80s, at the latest, these theories have even been thrust upon school children. The principle of "the initiated," however—the differences between the initiated of various levels who talk the same language on the one hand, and those who are content to let such matters lie, on the other—still remains in effect, despite the expansion of its membership.

Theological study that is loyal to the Bible, by contrast, must never forget that all who believe in Jesus Christ our Lord are taught by God. The Holy Spirit has been poured out in our hearts and will lead us into all truth. Indeed, our Lord Jesus thanks his Father in heaven that He has hidden truth from the wise and knowledgeable, but has revealed it to infants (Matt 11:25). Woe to us when we set ourselves up as an intelligentsia who dictate to the so-called layperson what he may and may not derive from his reading of God's word.

Theology that is loyal to the Bible, as already stated, is a service-performing activity. That does not mean, however, that it should take its cues from short-term (and perhaps short-sighted) needs of the moment. The Lord gives instructions for the work that needs doing; but brotherly fellowship aids in hearing what He is saying. "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain" (Ps 127:1, NIV) holds true also for theology that is loyal to the Bible.

The brotherly service of theology that is loyal to the Bible should grow out of faith and love. "Whatever is not from faith is
The theologian who is loyal to the Bible is free, thanks to redemption in Jesus Christ, from the demand that he make a name for himself. “My Father will honor the one who serves me,” says our Lord Jesus (Jn 2:26, NIV). That is sufficient. True, we are admonished to pursue love earnestly (1 Cor 14:1), but we are not under pressure to compete with each other. The promise of James 1:5 applies to theological work, too: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (NIV). What a glorious, relaxed, and fruitful task is ours under such auspices!

Undertakes New Approaches

The way questions are posed should emerge from what is needful, not from the complex of traditions that comprise the disciplines of theology. The methods to be employed are not simply those already present in the historical-critical nexus. With the help of God-given wisdom, methods should rather—to the extent needed—be newly developed in connection with the respective tasks at hand and commensurate with the object.19

Also in need of new development—or transformation—are the forms in which the fruits of scholarly labor are transmitted. For example, the writing of commentaries.

In historical-critical theology, commentaries have the function (among other things) of bringing the recalcitrant biblical text into line with the hypotheses that the critic uses. Exegesis thereby takes on the function of explaining the data that count against the pre-decided hypotheses, or adjusting those data in the course of interpretation so that they conform to the perspective the critic has adopted. Since the exegete follows the critical belief in Tendenz (the general bias that is allegedly at work in a passage and that should, therefore, guide its exegesis), but wishes his work to be original in detail, individual explanations of the same passages in various commentaries often contradict each other. The large number of details requiring explanation, given the presuppositions of this approach, make it necessary to use a commentary. The differences between explanations mean that any one commentary will not be sufficient.
By contrast, a commentary that is loyal to the Bible has the task of making a specialist's knowledge available as a brotherly service. This knowledge is not absolutely essential to a profound understanding of the word of God, but it can render essential aid in that direction. Such a commentary can help in at least five ways:

1. Support can be given our fellow Christians by providing clear grammatical analysis of the original text based on a thorough knowledge of the original languages. Such an analysis could also pass along possible alternative translations, weighing the presuppositions behind and consequences of each one, and setting forth the preferred translation in a fair and responsible manner.

2. The meaning of words could be illuminated through concept analysis (that is, through the relaying of results of this field of investigation along with references to the relevant literature). The basic meaning of words should constantly be passed along, since this will shed light on many variant meanings. Here etymological derivation and important variations of a word in the history of its usage have their place.

3. Also helpful are: findings regarding the cultural environment of the Old or New testaments; relevant research summaries of archaeology, illustrated where appropriate; insights from extra-biblical history.

4. The course of thought and organization of the Scriptures can be opened up more effectively on the basis of intensive study of them.

5. An overview of God's word can be made available by adducing parallel passages for those with little Bible knowledge. The basic insight that Holy Scripture interprets itself must receive due weight in the composition of a commentary that is loyal to the Bible. Every biblical writing is a part of the entirety of God's revelation; the commentator must bear this in mind, even as he seeks diligently to do justice to each individual portion, correctly handling the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).

A commentary that is loyal to the Bible should do all of the above. Yet the fact remains: God's word is not dependent on some formal process of interpretation. It is directly accessible to every child of God through the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the use of commentaries remains an option for consultation when one has
need; it should never be overplayed as a moral necessity. All children of God are taught by God. We ought never overlook that fact.

**Critiques Critical Methods**

Although theological work that is loyal to the Bible should grow from its own basis, it must still perform the service of staying abreast of historical-critical theology.

Considering the nature of historical-critical theology, it would not be difficult to refute all its fundamental tenets. We are, indeed, dealing with presuppositions and pre-judgments having no solid foundation in God's word. But we must be quite clear on this point: it will be a battle with a twelve-headed hydra that replaces each head that is lopped off with two more! New arguments will be advanced constantly, as we can already observe in the area of the synoptic problem.

We can expect a general turning away from historical-critical theology just as little as we can expect a similar disavowal of the untenable theory of evolution. Critical interaction with historical-critical theology will not—unless God directly intervenes—be a sweeping victory; it will rather engulf us in a wearying trench warfare. Many have not yet seen fit to bring themselves to this disavowal, long called for by God's word, because they regard historical-critical theology as "scientific" and consider its alleged scientific character to be indispensable. We need God's leading, therefore, to recognize those points where we should take up the battle so as not to dissipate our energies unwisely.

**Endnotes**


2 For these little-known utterances of Kierkegaard see the references in N. L. Geisler (previous note) to Kierkegaard's journals as they appear in R. G. Smith, ed. and trans., The Last Years: Journals of S. Kierkegaard 1853-55 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 209.


8 The Barmen Declaration was a statement issued in May 1934 by church leaders in Germany. It renounced Christian complicity in and collaboration with the Third Reich. The "first thesis" cited above includes these words: "Jesus Christ, as he is testified to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust and obey in life and in death. We repudiate the false teaching that the church can and must recognize yet other happenings and powers, images and truths as divine revelation alongside this one Word of God, as a source of her preaching" (see John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 3rd edition (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), p. 520.


10 This phenomenon is abundantly in evidence in literature dealing with the synoptic problem. See my *Gibt es ein synoptisches Problem?* (n. 6 above).


14 Cf. my upcoming *Gibt es ein synoptisches Problem?* (n. 6 above).


17 See Watson, ibid., p. 89: Celsus “‘considered that the different Gospels were incorrect revisions of one original’ (B. F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 1889, p. 405 n. 2), which some believers remodeled and remolded in various ways to answer objectors. To which Origen replies: ‘I know of no people who remodel the Gospel except the followers of Marcion and the followers of Valentinus and perhaps those of Lucian.”’

18 Cf. my *Wissenschaft oder Meinung?*, pp. 125-137 (=Historical Criticism of the Bible, pp. 130-141).

19 As an example I refer to the second and third chapters of my *Gibt es ein
synoptisches Problem?, where a methodological apparatus is developed in response to the particular task needing attention.
 Saved by Grace and Living by Race: 
The Religion Called Racism

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Introduction

I wish to address the forbidden subject of racism and show why it is incompatible with the Christian faith. I say “forbidden” because in our “politically correct” age the existence of racism is often denied by disguising it under euphemistic phrases, such as “ethnic identity/pride” or “being true to one’s cultural heritage.” Even when its prevalence is admitted, it is not always easy to discuss the subject honestly. For example, black people in the United States are too angry to speak about it, and white people are uncomfortable, if not afraid, to address the issue. One should not be surprised, therefore, that even in the Church, whenever the subject of racism comes up for discussion, it is dealt with at the most superficial level.

Given this background, it is quite remarkable that the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) has had the moral courage to raise this subject, a subject that was, nevertheless, confronted by the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. By opening the discussion at this time the ATS seems to validate a prediction made by Ellen G. White some one hundred years ago. Speaking to the black and white racial issue that raged in her days, she stated: “The relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem.” The current attempt to respond to this “most perplexing problem” of racism could also be seen as an affirmation that one day—in our day—the walls of racial
prejudice and bigotry “will tumble down of themselves, as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors.”

The object of this article is captured in the “theologically correct” title I have chosen: “Saved by Grace and Living By Race: The Religion Called Racism.” Let me explain. Besides the euphonic flair of the words “grace” and “race,” the first part of the title alludes to the theological connection between the practice of racism by Christians on one hand, and the adoption of legalism by believers in the Galatian Church on the other. The apostle Paul raised this issue when he demanded to know why the Galatian believers, having begun in the Spirit, were seeking to live by the works of the (flesh) law (Galatians 3:2, 3).

The analogy should not be missed. Christians respond, all too often, to issues of racism only when the socio-political realities force them to do so. Even then, instead of living by the moral imperatives of the gospel, those who claim to be saved by grace tend to depend and live by the (secular) law—affirmative action, threats of economic sanctions, protests, etc.—as the sole basis for their ethical conduct.

My attempt in this article, like the apostle Paul’s in his epistle to the Galatians, is to show that the claim, to be saved by grace while at the same time living by race, is irreconcilable with the demands of biblical Christianity. Consequently, individuals who seek to maintain a simultaneous allegiance to both Jesus Christ and to their race (whether conceived in terms of color of the skin or hair, striking appearance of face or body, unusual mode of speech, language or dress, shape of skull, temperament, etc.) are practicing a form of syncretistic or polytheistic faith. Unfortunately, this has been the practice of many Christians or heirs of Christian civilization.

The Present Context of Racism

We live today in an age that is experiencing an unprecedented oneness in religion (the New Age), in politics (the New World Order), and in economics (free market economics). Our world has become one global city whose highways are inter-connected by advanced networks of transportation, communication, and technol-
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ogy. However, our age has yet to find a sound basis for overcoming hostilities among people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. While it is true that in many lands, much effort is being expended to kill racism in its various forms, one can still point to the Rodney King race riots in Los Angeles, the “ethnic cleansing” in former Yugoslavia, the hundreds of thousands being killed in tribal warfare in Africa, the violence and bloodshed in the Middle East, and the rise of neo-Nazi hate groups and activities in Europe, the USA and South Africa, as evidences of the fact that racism, “although repeatedly killed, is nevertheless undying.”

Racism may be outlawed in the books and laws of the lands, but it remains written in the hearts of people. Only the “born again” experience offered by biblical Christianity can offer a lasting solution to this tragic human problem plaguing human societies.

Unfortunately, the Christian church, the body of people constituted and appointed by Christ to be a counter-voice in our world, is not totally immune to the virus of racism. Forgetting their status as “resident aliens” in this world, and perhaps, out of comfort, fear or blindness, Christians, by and large, have capitulated to the racism of the world. Several years ago sociologists G. E. Simpson and J. M. Yinger concluded their major study on racism with this statement: “Although the Protestant churches stress (1) the dignity and worth of the individual and (2) the brotherhood of man, the racial behavior patterns of most church members have not been substantially affected by these principles.”

The above observation has yet to be contradicted by current practices in Christian churches. In a recent Christianity Today Institute devoted to the “The Myth of Racial Progress,” Billy Graham remarked that even though racial and ethnic hostility is the number one social problem facing the world and the church, “evangelical Christians have turned a blind eye to racism or have been willing to stand aside while others take the lead in racial reconciliation, saying it was not our responsibility.” A historical background to modern racism, as well as a clear understanding of the nature of racism, may explain why Christians have adopted the attitude of indifference to racial problems.
Modern Historical Background

Racial prejudice, the tendency to misjudge an individual primarily on the basis of their identity within an ethnic or racial group, has always existed wherever there have been different groups of people.\textsuperscript{15} But modern racism, the suggestion that some races are inherently superior and inferior, is a fairly recent phenomenon, dating back some three-hundred years.\textsuperscript{16} T. B. Maston traces the rise and development of modern race and color prejudices to four major historical events: (1) the discovery of America and the establishment of trade routes to India; (2) the development of the slave trade; (3) the industrial revolution and its contribution to the enormous wealth and prestige of the white people of Europe and America;\textsuperscript{19} and (4) Darwin’s doctrine of evolution, with the idea of the survival of the fittest, which “was warmly accepted by the people of European stock who saw no reason to doubt that they were the fittest of all.”\textsuperscript{20} Significant in this connection is the “social Darwinism” of English philosopher Herbert Spencer,\textsuperscript{21} who argued that since some populations are “naturally unfit,” they represent a biologically or inherently inferior group of individuals. This teaching has not only provided “the ultimate license for social policies of domination” but also “has lent spurious credence to racism.”\textsuperscript{22}

It is this spirit of inherent superiority that characterized the attitude of the European nations as they expanded overseas, competing for colonial power and the conversion of “heathen” natives. Since the European conquerors possessed superior economic and military technology over the enslaved people of color, they were able to explain the superiority of their cultural apparatus in terms of a superior human endowment. In other words, the European exploiters “read from right to left—from cultural effect to a natural or congenital cause.”\textsuperscript{23}

Thus, although modern racism arose as an ideological justification for the constellations of economic and political power which were expressed in colonialism and slavery, George Kelsey explains that “gradually the idea of the superior race was heightened and deepened in meaning and value so that it pointed beyond the historical structures of relation, in which it emerged, to human existence itself.” The result of this shift was that the alleged
superior race “became and now persists as a center of value and an object of devotion,” with multitudes of people finding their sense and “power of being” from their membership in and identification with the superior race.  

Today racial prejudice and hatred is almost universal—exhibiting itself in a baffling complexity, intensity, and respectability wherever diverse people meet. Besides the prevalent white and black racism,25 racism also manifests itself in forms such as anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, neo-Nazism, tribalism, apartheid, etc. The common thread that passes through all these various manifestations of racism is the idea that one race is inherently superior to all others. This belief, and the practices that issue from it, constitute racism.

The Nature of Racism

An Ideology of Race

Definition. Racism is an ideology (a set of ideas and beliefs about reality) that justifies the prejudice (prejudged negative attitude) and discrimination (unjust acts of domination, exploitation, dehumanization, etc.) of one group by another.26 While one may trace the roots of racial prejudice to a number of factors,27 the foundational assumption upon which the different expressions of racism is built is that all human beings do not necessarily have intrinsic value nor even equal worth. In other words, some races are inherently superior (in ability, intellect, morality, etc.) to others.28 Historically, the races or groups that have been treated as inferior or subhuman, and possessing lives of little societal or personal worth have included Blacks, Jews, native Americans, Gypsies, and women—although, other groups were also often conflated: criminals, chronically ill, the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded, and unwanted babies. These groups of people have been frequently despised and treated as inferior or subhuman.

Doctrinal Foundation. The primary basis for the belief in the inherent superiority and inferiority of races is the pseudo-scientific doctrine of biological determinism, which holds that “natural law” or biological or genetically transmitted physical characteristics (such as, the color of the skin, eye, hair, or some physical features) do not simply influence, but define the basic humanness
and, hence, the status of a person in society. Though such a belief may not be harmful in itself, when it becomes the basis of a social policy, such as Hitler sought to employ, the results can be devastating.

**An Ideology of Power**

**Definition.** Racism is not simply a set of beliefs about race but also an ideology of power. Despite their claim to superiority, racists have a feeling of being threatened by members of the inferior race. This is especially so in situations where some members of the alleged inferior races display the same level of expectation (intelligence, character, ability, etc.) normally reserved for the superior race. To overcome their feeling of insecurity, racists seek to retain power (economic, political, military, etc. resources) exclusively in the hands of the superior. In this way members of the superior race express their self-identity by elaborate acts that systematically deny the essential humanness of people of other races.

**Manifestation.** As an ideology of power, racism takes two major forms: (1) legal or *de jure* racism, in which discriminatory practices are encoded in the laws of the land (such as was the case in the USA and in apartheid South Africa), and (2) institutional or *de facto* racism, where racial practices though not encoded in the laws of the land, are still present (albeit, in subtle and sophisticated form), having been built into the very structure of society. Of the two forms of racism, institutional racism poses the greatest challenge to the Christian church. Not only is it difficult to detect, but, as explained by Ian Robertson, institutional racism “is difficult to eradicate, since, obviously, it cannot be repealed, and in most cases is not susceptible to remedial legislation.” Many Christian believers fail to appreciate this fact, because they are often inclined to believe that the civil rights laws and similar legislation enacted by secular governments, as well as ecclesiastical statements and policies condemning racism, have automatically eliminated expressions of racial prejudice and discrimination within and without the church.

**A Secular Religion**

**Definition.** Racism is (1) an attempt to find meaning for human existence by looking to one’s race as the center of value and the object of devotion; (2) a religious faith in an unverifiable belief
in the inherent superiority of a race—a faith for which countless people will gladly work, suffer, kill, and die.

**Characteristics.** As a religion, racism shares all the essential characteristics of every other religion (secular or supernatural). Thus, racism has its own: (1) Sacred realities, which may take the form of a tangible object (such as a Confederate or Nazi flag), or even a person (e.g. Adolf Hitler or Elijah Muhammad); (2) Sets of beliefs, which are creeds and myths that attempt to explain the origin and nature of reality; (3) Practices, which are the active observable sides of religion (and may include acts of discrimination, violence, segregation, etc. and may involve rituals and ceremonies, such as wearing a special kind of clothing or hair style); (4) Symbolisms, which is an attempt to express the essence of the racist faith by evoking a religious emotion in the follower; in Nazi Germany the symbols used included the swastika, the stretched-out hand and the phrase “Heil Hitler”; (5) Community of worshipers, which is the social group that shares the beliefs and practices of the racist religion; the racist community may be a church, a tribe (and their practice is tribalism), a gang (whether respectable, like the apartheid government of South Africa, or ignoble, e.g., the Skinheads or Ku Klux Klan), or a nation (in which case the civil religion becomes known as fascism); (6) Moral values, which are the racist community’s sense of right and wrong, which it seeks to preserve and transmit to future generations, for the survival of that group (e.g. the view that it is wrong to integrate churches and schools, or marry people of other races, or employ qualified workers of the other races).

But unlike the supernatural religions, (such as the traditional world religions of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam) which emphasize the supernatural and other-worldly values, racism may be classified with communism, socialism, fascism, secular humanism, etc., as one of the most powerful secular religions in today’s world. Consequently, just as the other secular religions (e.g., communism), racism is in competition with Christianity. For example, all three religions—Christianity, communism and racism:39 (1) revere and obey their Leaders (Christ, Marx, Hitler); (2) rely on authoritative writings (Bible, the writings of Marx and Lenin, or Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of the*...
Human Races (1853); 

(3) condemn the evils in society and seek to provide answers to societal problems; (4) extol lofty ideals of justice, equity and brotherhood as basic to meaningful human existence; (5) require absolute obedience, commitment and self-sacrifice; (6) are zealous in winning converts; (7) require faith and confidence that the ideals of their religion will ultimately triumph.

Apparently, because racism has been so well domesticated among those who profess Christianity, few recognize the religious nature of racism. If, however, racism is seen as another religion in competition with Christianity, then the simultaneous adherence, by some Christians, to the God of the Bible and the idol of race is a form of polytheism, and their religious profession is syncretistic. Such Christians may claim to live under the authority of the God of the Bible in many respects, but because they serve two different gods, when they are confronted with crucial matters of race it will soon be apparent that the idol of race will determine their attitude, decision, and action.

Incompatibility of Racism with Christianity

In the preceding section we have argued that racism is not just an ideology of race or power but is also a religion that has its own sets of beliefs and practices. This fact is rarely recognized. In her definition of racism anthropologist Ruth Benedict has correctly suggested that racism is a religion, established on a naturalistic world view, which has the superior race as the focus of its eschatological hope and its philosophy of history. Benedict identifies three cardinal dogmas of the racist faith when she writes that racism is:

the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by Nature to hereditary inferiority and another group is destined to hereditary superiority. It is the dogma that the hope of civilization depends upon eliminating some races and keeping others pure. It is the dogma that one race has carried progress throughout human history and can alone ensure future progress.

The following remarks will briefly summarize the racist faith and show why it is incompatible with biblical Christianity.

Epistemology: Religious Starting Point. Epistemology asks: How does one come to a knowledge of truth? Biblical Chris-
Christianity teaches that the way to come to a dependable knowledge of truth about reality is “from above”—through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and His written Word (2 Tim 3:15-17; John 17:3). On the other hand, the religion of racism distorts the biblical method by offering two alternative sources of knowledge, both of which are “from below”: (1) internal source (self-knowledge), and (2) external source (knowledge of the other race). Both of these are a reflection on the human situation.

On the one hand racists hold that in order to really understand “what is going on” in a given social context, one must belong to the alleged superior race. Thus, a statement like, “You don’t understand because you are not black/white/Hispanic,” may have racist overtones, in that understanding is predicated on identification with a given race. The subtle implication is that unless one is black/white/Hispanic, one cannot fully appreciate or empathize with people of those races. In this respect racist epistemology is similar to those reflected in theologies of liberation, feminism, and homosexuality which also assert that one can only know the truth about a particular reality when one is poor or oppressed, a woman, or a gay. One way this idea of self-knowledge is reinforced is through versions of teaching dubbed “ethnic pride/identity.”

Alternatively, the external source of religious knowledge for the racist is obtained through a knowledge of the other race. This is illustrated in statements like: “you must know the truth about the black/white man, if—” or “you’ve got to understand the black/white/Hispanic person’s thinking or ability if—”). The knowledge being sought usually is in the form of stereotypes (exaggerated beliefs/myths/jokes) about the different races.

There are two major problems with the racist way of knowing. First, it distorts the essential humanness of all races by exaggerating the significance of their outward appearances at the expense of their inner “kinship of spirit.” This inner relatedness of all races (analogous to what theologians refer to as congeniality) is established on the fact that all human beings were created in the image of God, and consequently have been endowed with a capacity to understand, empathize, appreciate, and communicate with all races—irrespective of their racial backgrounds.

Second, since racist epistemology is “from below” and not
“from above,” racist theology tends to look up to sociology, anthropology, history, and “science,” rather than to biblical revelation, to provide explanations and answers to racial problems. It should be noted that while the Bible is sometimes consulted by the racists, the Bible plays only a supportive role, bolstering postures that have already been taken; even then, Scriptural passages are used selectively.\textsuperscript{43}

**Doctrine of Creation.** The Bible’s teaching of the biological unity and racial parity of all people is established by its doctrine of creation. When, for example, Paul declared that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), his statement emphasizes two important facts: “On one hand, the entire creation is unified in the One God. On the other hand, biological unity is affirmed, for all men are of one blood.”\textsuperscript{44} Commenting on this text, Ellen White wrote: “In the sight of God all are on an equality; and to the Creator every human being owes supreme allegiance.”\textsuperscript{45} The biblical doctrine of the seventh-day Sabbath is an eternal witness to God as Creator (Exod 20:8-11), and hence, the reason why He alone is worthy of our worship (Rev 14:6, 7). The religion of racism, however, denies this biblical doctrine of creation by (1) challenging the character of God as a perfect Creator; (2) inverting the order in creation; and (3) undermining the nature of creation.

The Genesis creation account states that at the conclusion of each phase of God’s creative activity, God Himself declared His creation as “good.” Racism’s teaching of the ontological inferiority of some races not only negates this biblical teaching of a perfect creation from the hands of God, but it also affronts the character of God. For if part of God’s original creation is inherently defective, it implies that God is no better than the Demiurge of second-century Gnosticism, an imperfect creator god who is responsible for introducing error into his creation.

Also, by teaching the supremacy of a race, and hence the domination of one by another, racist theology sets itself against the biblical teaching about the order in creation. This racist teaching implies that some races of human beings belong to the natural order; they are not part of the human family to whom was entrusted the responsibility of having dominion over the created things (Gen
1:26). T. F. Torrance has correctly argued that the racist understanding of man involves “an inversion of the very order of creation,” and runs “directly counter to the divine purpose of grace upon which the whole creation depends.”

Finally, by teaching that his own race is superior to all others, the racist seeks “to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12:3). It is self-glorification or self-religion—the worship of “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom 1:25). Thus, racism is the highest form of self-deification. The fact that God’s judgment—in the form of guilt, frustration, hostility, etc.—is being visited on the human race is an indication that God will not remain silent when people “exchange the truth of God for a lie” and worship the creature rather than the Creator.

**Doctrine of Human Beings.** The Bible’s teaching that human beings were created in God’s image suggests that human beings possess intrinsic value or equal worth before God, and that they are endowed with the power of choice. As the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 7 puts it, “man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. . ..” Because they have the power of choice, human beings are free moral agents, in the sense that “they make their own decisions as to what they will do, choosing as they please in the light of their sense of right and wrong and the inclinations they feel” and as such they are “answerable to God and each other for their voluntary choices.”

Racism, however challenges this important biblical doctrine. Its naturalistic teaching of the inherent superiority and inferiority of the races implies a certain kind of biological or genetic determinism.

According to this belief of the religion of racism, if a person succeeds or fails in a particular field of study (e.g., athletic sport or academics) it is because that person has been “predestined” by his/her genes to succeed or fail. What a person does, or what he/she becomes is biologically predetermined or built into him/her at conception. In other words, a person’s personhood or moral worth, or lack of it, is determined by his or her hereditary endowment. Whenever stereotypical statements alleging that blacks/Jews/Hispanics/whites “are by nature—,” or whenever one tries to distance oneself from people of other races because “there’s
something about them that is repulsive to me,” these attitudes and statements are echoes of the naturalistic world view upon which the biological determinism of racism is founded.

Not only is biological determinism pseudo-scientific, and pessimistic, in that it puts limits on human performance and potential, but also this doctrine of racism is dangerously fatalistic in its suggestion that a particular race cannot transcend the artificial barrier that has been erected by racist theology upon them. If this doctrine of racist theology were true, there would be no human accountability of the actions of people, and there would also be no basis for divine judgment for human conduct, but the latter is a primary teaching of the Bible (Acts 17:31; Rev 14:6, etc.).

**Doctrine of the Fall and Sin.** The Bible teaches that, although human beings were created perfect, as a consequence of Adam’s fall “all [including the so-called superior race] have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23; 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). The Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Belief (7) reads:

> When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil . . . .

In so far as a fallen human being makes himself or some collective projection of himself the object of love and value, the racist faith denies a fall for the superior race, and therefore denies the biblical doctrine of original sin—universal sin originating from Adam.

Even if racist theology admits that the superior race has also fallen, it has to reinterpret the nature of the fall in order to be true to its racist doctrine of an inferior/superior race. Thus, for example, the doctrine that some human beings are defective in their very being implies that the so-called inferior races have experienced a double-fall—the first being due to the fall of Adam, and the second, a special racial fall. Alternatively, since, to the racist, the loss of racial purity and race-mixing is a sin against the Creator, racist theology has to teach that, the superior race experiences a fall whenever it allows its blood to mix with the inferior race.

The Bible does not teach such a doctrine. For if it were true,
(1) the superior race would have no need for the atonement of Jesus Christ, since it does not accept its fallen condition, and (2) the inferior race would have no hope of redemption since it would need a second sacrifice of Jesus to atone for their second racial fall. Ultimately, the racist doctrine of the fall is an affront to the character of God.

The Doctrine of the Great Controversy. The Bible teaches that there exists a great controversy between Christ and His people on one hand, and Satan and his people on the other (Eph 6:10ff). In this cosmic conflict the issue centers upon the character of God, as is reflected in the sinless life of the incarnate Christ and expressed in the moral Ten-Commandment Law. The religion of racism also acknowledges that there is a cosmic conflict between two major forces. However, it challenges the biblical teaching by redefining the participants in the conflict along racial lines.

Thus, in the supernatural realm, God and His angels, who are recast in the image of the superior race, are at war with Satan and his evil angels, viewed by racist religion as the essence of the inferior race. This cosmic dualism is also brought into the natural realm where racists create a “We versus Them” dichotomy among people. In the context of black/white racism, even non-human objects are assigned to their black and white spheres (e.g., black sheep, black market, black list), and personal problems between people of different races are recast along racial lines.

Not only is it accepted as an a priori truth that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the races, but also a cosmic conflict between them in which each individual is expected to stand up for his or her kind. In this kind of dualism, racial harmony, according to racist theology, is ensured when members of the different races know “their place” in society. In other words, to avoid conflict the two worlds must be kept apart, separated or segregated (in housing, jobs, churches, or marriage). Racism believes that the different races must live their lives apart from each other as if the other does not exist.

Thus, Christians who are racists can live in the same town or city, without ever visiting the home of another race, attending their church, or school. They may belong to the same Union, but hardly be aware of the existence of the other. Out of sight means out of...
mind. Even when the other race comes to the racist’s church, the racist Christian will politely suggest: “there is another church over there where you will feel more comfortable.” And not only will the racist minister make no efforts to evangelize other races in his area, but when a member of the despised race seeks membership in his church, the minister will piously “transfer” the new member to a congregation next door that belongs to the despised race.

Philosophy of History. Gerhard Maier has correctly observed that in the Bible’s view, all of history unfolds under God’s planning and direction. This is because it was God who brought creation into being to be the “arena of history”; He also created time to measure the “movement of history”; and He formed the human being to be an “entity inhabiting history.” Thus, history always proceeds under God’s divine sovereignty. Ellen G. White captures this theocentric view of history in this way:

In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.

This biblical view of history is, however, overthrown in the religion of racism, according to which the superior race is the center of human history. In the faith of racism the shaping forces of history are the polar opposites of races. Just as in the secular religion of communism economic substructure creates the proletariat and bourgeois social classes, and the clash between the two becomes the basis for the interpretation of the meaning of history, so in racism. The only difference is that in the religion of racism, the shaping forces of history are determined by genetic (not economic) forces. Also, because in the racist religion it is only “one race [the superior race that] has carried progress throughout human history and can alone ensure future progress,” meaningful history is that which is associated with the superior race. Unless the superior race is involved somehow in an event, there is no history. Thus, for example,
the racist not only ignores, discounts, or distorts the histories of other races, but also, will not want to listen or learn from other races. After all, the only history worth recording or paying attention to is the history of or the history interpreted by the superior race.  

While racism cannot be blamed for every failure to recognize the contributions and potentials of people of color, one may wonder if racial arrogance plays no part in the Christian Church’s seeming unwillingness to give equal opportunity to Christians of all races in the theological, missiological and administrative activities of the church’s life? A recognition of the true biblical conception of God’s leading in history (cf. Acts 11:17) can correct the pervasive spirit that is actuated by racism’s morality of pride and contempt for the other race when it comes to the Church’s life and work.  

Ethical System. The Christian’s ethic of race relations is predicated on the belief in the “sanctity of human life”—the belief that since human beings were created in the image of God, all human lives have equal value and worth, and should, therefore, be treated with respect and dignity. The Bible presents the Ten Commandments as the clearest norm for human conduct, and Jesus Christ as the supreme exemplification of this Law. Racism, however, upholds the “quality of human life” doctrine, the belief that since the personhood of human beings is determined by their biological characteristics, some human lives have only a relative value.  

According to the “quality-of-human-life” ethic (also known as utilitarianism or situation ethics), since some human beings are not true “persons,” where necessary (i.e. to enhance the quality of life of the superior persons), they may be exploited and even killed. The institution of slavery in the USA is one classic example of racism’s “quality-of-human-life” ethic. Thus, the Supreme Court ruled, in the Dred Scott case of 1857, that the Black race was less than human and that a slave could be treated as the personal property of the owner. Chief Justice Roger Taney (himself a slave owner) argued:

They [Blacks] had for more than a century been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his
The religion of racism, and the “quality-of-human-life” ethic that is established upon it, is by its very nature, a violation of the principles of God’s Law as well as the spirit of Christ, who was a friend of hated publicans and despised sinners (Matt 11:19; Luke 5:29-30; 15:1, 2).

**Doctrine of Redemption.** Biblical Christianity teaches that the redemption of the human race, secured once and for all by Jesus Christ through His substitutionary atonement on Calvary, will be ushered in at His second coming (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:14ff.; 2 Pet 3) and be consummated in the earth made new (Rev 21). In other words, the redemption of the human race is a divine act graciously extended to all—Jews and Gentiles—who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. However, in the religion of racism, since the fall means “racial impoverishment,” the mixing of the blood of the superior race with that of inferior, “the essence of redemption is racial renewal, the revivification of the superior race by techniques of purification.”

In other words, racist theology teaches that human beings (the super-race) can effect their own redemption—a doctrine that has led to the subordination, oppression, deprivation and extermination of the alleged inferior races (Blacks, Jews, poor, mentally ill, deformed, weak, etc.).

This belief flows out of the racism’s mechanistic doctrine of human nature. Given its belief in biological determinism, the eschatological reasoning of racists may go somewhat like this: Since changing the environment cannot change behavior, the superior race must take steps to protect itself and its superior genes from being diminished by members of the inferior race. When this kind of reasoning is adopted as a social policy, it leads to a delimitation, degradation, and dehumanization of some races. In the legal racism of Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa, for example, this led to the promulgation of laws that curtail the freedom of movement, or rights of property, or citizenship, or freedom of marriage, and in some extreme cases, collection, or “concentration” of the inferior races and, perhaps, the ultimate or final solution to ensure permanent protection of the superior race. For if some races are
Inherently superior and others inferior, the superior race must be bred and the inferior race must be eliminated. It is this that Ruth Benedict has in mind when she defines racism’s second dogma as a belief that “the hope of civilization depends upon eliminating some races and keeping others pure.” In pursuit of the racist’s eschatological dream, a number of techniques have been used, over the years. These range from race improvement techniques (such as psychological motivation or group affirmation of self, or identity seminars) to “scientific” programs of social engineering like “positive” and “negative” eugenics. While positive eugenics involves the multiplication of the superior race by careful selection and breeding of people possessing superior genes, negative eugenics may take several forms, including efforts that prevent procreation by inferior races (e.g., by using contraceptives, sterilization, etc.), and those involving ethnic or racial cleansing or the elimination of the unwanted inferior race (whether it is by warfare, lynching, eugenic-abortions, euthanasia, or even nuclear experimentation).

Evaluation of Racism

The foregoing discussion has shown that the belief system of racism, in whatever form it may appear, is indeed antithetical to biblical religion. If this is the case, then Bible-believing Christians—individuals who have been saved by grace and are seeking to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ—cannot accept this secular religion. Additionally, the ethics of racism can be shown to be a violation of God’s Moral Ten-Commandment Law and the example of Jesus Christ.

Thus, with regard to God’s moral Ten Commandment Law, Everett Tilson has shown that racism breaches: (1) The first commandment, because it substitutes race for God as the organizing center of life; (2) the second commandment, because it turns the face of a particular race into a graven image, then bows down and worships “the likeness” of what is “in the earth beneath”; (3) the third commandment’s prohibition against taking God’s name in vain when the Christian who is a racist piously cries “Lord, Lord,” but does not do the will of God by showing the love of God—which is “value blind, creed blind, color-blind—to his neighbor (cf. Matt
(4) the fourth commandment in that on the Sabbath, instead of bringing Christians together because of their common faith, it keeps them apart despite the common faith; (5) the fifth commandment to “honor thy father and thy mother,” because it defines kinship in terms of blood rather than faith (cf. Matt 12:48-50); (6) the sixth commandment not only because the racist literally kills the despised race, but also because the derogatory words of the racist “can be just as murderous as the sword or bomb in the hands of a maniac” (cf. Matt 5:21-22); (7) the seventh commandment, because among other things, it equates adultery with adulteration of blood; (8) the eighth commandment, in that it robs the inferior race of equal access to opportunities, and respect and dignity due them as human beings; (9) the ninth commandment, in that it bears false witness about both races by ascribing the undeserved advantages of the superior race to extraneous considerations (such as his industry, superior intelligence, moral rectitude, etc.), while the denial of basic rights to the despised race is justified on the grounds that he is lazy, unintelligent, or immoral; and finally, (10) the tenth commandment, by making one race covet what truly belongs to the despised race.

Jesus’ earthly life and teaching also refuted the ethics of racism. One can point to the story of the Syrophoenician woman (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) as a classic example of how Jesus viewed the morality of racial prejudice and bigotry. In the form of an acted parable Jesus portrayed to His followers the unchristian manner in which they have often treated people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, and sought to teach them the compassionate manner in which they ought to deal with the “despised race.” Speaking about the “wider purpose” of Christ’s dealing with the Syrophoenician woman, Ellen White suggests that Jesus demonstrated that any form of caste—distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege—“is hateful to God,” and that His love “was not to be circumscribed to race or nation.”

Thus, in His own day, Jesus not only confronted the national and religious pride that had developed as a result of Israel’s status as a favored people, but He also condemned the resulting racial and religious prejudice and bigotry—the contempt and heartless treatment of other races, as well as the polarization of groups into
Greeks and Barbarians, Jews and Samaritans, and Jews and Gentiles. Of these racial conflicts, the Jewish-Samaritan problem was probably “the most acute racial, national, and religious conflict of His [Christ’s] day,” comparable, to no small extent “in its depth and viciousness” to the black-white problem of our day.69

By His life and teaching Jesus passed a negative judgment on racism. First, instead of endorsing the prevalent secular religion of racism, He “laid the foundation” for a completely different religion “by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God.”70 Second, by commissioning His followers to be His witnesses “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth,” (Acts 1:8) He embraced all races as objects of salvation. Why did Jesus include “and Samaria”?71 T. B. Maston’s suggests that Samaria was deliberately included, because “Jesus intended to challenge the strongest prejudice of His followers of that day.”72 Ellen White, therefore, explains that, by His life and teaching (cf. Matt 15:21-28; Luke 15:1, 2; John 4), Christ sought to instruct His “slow to learn” followers that not only was His love “not to be circumscribed to race or nation,” but that any form of caste—distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege—is hateful to God.73

Seventh-day Adventists may probably have understated their judgement on racism when they simply state that “racism is sinful.”74 Will D. Campbell underscores the seriousness of racial sin when he argues that it is a “heresy”75 for Bible-believers to adhere to the tenets of the religion of racism. The Jewish scholar, Abraham J. Heschel, goes even farther in his evaluation. He insists that racism is “worse than idolatry,” it is “satanism,” an “unmitigated evil,” “a treacherous denial of the existence of God” and “blasphemy.”76

The argument, thus far, has some implications. Racism is so incompatible with the Christian faith that anyone who professes Christianity and at the same time is a racist will find himself living under two different ethical values: racism’s morality of pride and contempt for the other race, and Christianity’s ethic, in which followers of Christ are called upon to show love, compassion, and respect to all people irrespective of their ethnic or racial back-
grounds. The only way that a “Christian racist” can reconcile the two conflicting tendencies is by transforming the Christian values, so that he isolates Christian morality from certain areas of his life. 

The challenge to Christians today is one that requires that they correct their past history with regard to race relations, a history in which the major denominations compromised their Christian ethic to the mood and practices of their ambient culture; a history in which they were indifferent or vacillated when they had the opportunity to speak and act; and a history that reveals that many of the acts of injustice are still firmly entrenched in the present institutional structures of Church and society. Of the Bible-believing Christian churches, Seventh-day Adventists are most equipped to deal with the racial issue.

Racism: Adventism’s Challenge

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a unique opportunity to address the issue of racism in both society and the church. First, the Adventist Church’s self-understanding as the remnant Church—the true Israel of God—recognizes the fact that just as was the case in OT Israel, membership in the New Israel is not dependent on natural birth but on the spiritual birth of conversion (John 3:3-21); not on ethnic blood but on the redeeming blood of Christ (Heb 9:14, 15). The only kind of race the Bible recognizes is not a superior race, but a holy race (1 Pet 2:9); and the only kind of apartheid (an Afrikaans word that means separation) acceptable in the biblical religion is separation from sin.

Second, the Adventist Church understands its reason for existence not in terms of an exclusivistic communion that boasts of its privileged status as the remnant, but rather as a unique body of people with a unique global mission in the world. They have been called to praise Jesus Christ, the One who “has redeemed us to God by [His] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9) and to proclaim His everlasting gospel unto “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6).

Third, the unique name by which the Church is identified, Seventh-day Adventist, calls for a unique display of racial harmony. The “Seventh-day” component of their name announces
its theology of the Sabbath. The Genesis creation account points to God as the
Creator (and hence, re-Creator or Redeemer) and Father of all human races. The
fourth Commandment which enshrines the Sabbath is designed to remind be-
lievers every week of the inherent worth of every person, and the need to treat
them—irrespective of their gender, race or class—with respect and dignity
(Exod 20:8-11). Indeed, their doctrine of creation is “the antidote to idolatry,” is
the “foundation of true worship,” is “the basis for true worth,” and is “the basis
for true fellowship.”

The “Adventist” component in their name rec-
ognizes that in the church, and
in the earth made new, there are going to be people from “every nation, tribe,
people, and language.” This reality is a fact of history falling within divine
providence. That such a community—a grouping of humankind from every na-
tionality, race, and language—should actually exist in a world that is torn by
ethnic and racial divisions and hatred will be a wonder and a marvel to the
world. Thus, the church is “a kind of preliminary model, on a small and imper-
fect scale, of what the final state of mankind is to be in God’s design.”

The above three identifying characteristics of the Church—its identity as a
remnant, its global mission, and its unique name—compel the Church to exhibit
to the world a kind of racial harmony that has, perhaps, not been experienced
in the world since the early church. Describing how the early church conceived
itself in the world, one writer in the second century has written:

Christians are not to be distinguished from other men by coun-
try, language, or customs. They have no cities of their own, they use
no peculiar dialect, and they practice no extraordinary way of life.
Residing in cities of the Greek world and beyond it, as is the lot of
each, they follow the local customs in clothing, diet, and general
manner of life, but at the same time they exhibit the constitution of
their own commonwealth as something quite paradoxical. They re-
side in their homelands—but as aliens. Every foreign land is home to
them, every homeland a place of exile. . . .

Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventist history bears eloquent testimony to
the fact that not only has their church been silent and insensitive to racial issues,
but also it has often been guilty of ethnic or racial prejudice, discrimination,
pride, condescension, pater-
nalism, and scorn to some groups within its membership. Seventh-day Adventist historian, Richard W. Schwartz, has summarized, in his Light Bearers to the Remnant, how this racial attitude was manifested in the Adventist Church:

Afro-Americans were not the only group to be treated for years in a paternal, patronizing way. Adventist missionaries going to Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the early years of the twentieth century did not escape the general Western imperialistic attitude practiced by the colonial powers. In general this attitude tended to equate European culture, education, and technology with progress. The more another culture varied from the European or North American model, the more backward it was assumed to be. It was easy to conclude that nationals from non-Western areas could not be trusted in leadership roles until they had absorbed Western ways as well as Adventist doctrines.

Explaining why Adventists have “had their share of casualties over racial issues,” George R. Knight, in his recent brief history of Seventh-day Adventists, Anticipating the Advent, argues that “racial prejudice, like other sins, is not totally eradicated in most Christians at conversion. Nor are the racial tensions embodied in a culture easy for the churches existing in that culture to overcome.” This fact poses a serious challenge that requires an urgent response.

Towards Racial Harmony
As Ellen White states, “The same agencies that barred men away from Christ eighteen hundred years ago are at work today.” The spirit of pride and prejudice “which built up the partition wall between Jew and Gentile is still active.” If the racial problem is not to “ever remain a most perplexing problem” for the Adventist Church, then the time is ripe for the church seek biblical insights to address the problem of racism in the church. The following are a few suggestions.

Acknowledge Our Racial Prejudices. Expounding upon the meaning of the holocaust for Christians today, David A. Rausch has stated: “The most dangerous attitude we can have is to think that we have no prejudice. The next danger is to believe that it cannot make us cold and indifferent—that it does not harm our
society and that it takes no toll on our spiritual life.”

To begin the process of racial healing and harmony we must be humble enough to acknowledge the fact that we, like the people in the world, have often cherished racial attitudes and engaged in racially discriminatory acts. This should not be too hard for us to accept since the Bible records that even in the Apostolic church, among the founders of the Christian faith, racial and ethnic prejudice was cherished.

Thus, when Peter declared in the house of Cornelius, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34), he was speaking for many of the early Jewish Christians. One rather surprising thing about this statement is that it took some ten years after Pentecost for Peter—an apostle of Christ and a prominent leader in the Apostolic church, a Spirit-filled Pentecost evangelist whose preaching on one day yielded some 3,000 souls—“to perceive” that God is no respecter of persons, and that his favor is not along racial or ethnic lines. Like the other believers, Peter had a theoretical knowledge of the truth of the gospel, yet he did not fully understand that it had some practical, ethical implications for his own life. Peter and the others did not “perceive” racism or ethnic prejudice is not acceptable to God.

Could the Scriptures be telling us something? Perhaps, suggesting that even a Bible-believing Christian, an honest, missionary-minded believer, successful soul-winner, capable and well-meaning church administrator, professor of religion or theology, and an active and God-fearing church member can cherish racial or ethnic prejudice, without fully realizing it?

Confess the Sins of Racism. Peter’s statement, “Of truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. . .” must be understood as a public act of confession. He certainly understood that injustice cannot be forgotten, but it can be forgiven upon confession. Therefore, if we desire racial harmony, we must confess our sins for deliberately or unknowingly perpetrating racism. We must confess our sin:

—for remaining silent when there was opportunity for us to act nobly and courageously in treating people of all races as equal;
— for shirking our responsibility to show concern for the poor and oppressed, instead of blaming them for the racial injustices they suffer;
— for the racial and derogatory jokes/expressions (and the “innocent” caricatures and stereotypes) we have used for other races when we were behind closed committee doors;
— of paternalistic “love” for the despised race—as long as we kept them “in their place”;
— for the will-to-power that is often exhibited by clandestine political maneuvers at church council deliberations, elections, and appointments;
— for encouraging “race-flight” in the churches when other races begin to worship with us;
— for equating Christianity with Western “civilization,” and Seventh-day Adventism with ideological conservatism of a political party in the USA;\textsuperscript{92}
— for placing “prejudicial stumbling-blocks” in the path of our children, and letting them mimic our racial attitudes and actions.

But moral responsibility for racism must also be shared by those of us who have been historic victims of racial prejudice and bigotry. We also must confess our sins for being as much a part of the racial problem as the perpetrator. We must confess our sins:\textsuperscript{93}
— for mirroring and retaliating with prejudice, bitterness and anger the prejudice we ourselves have experienced;
— for being suspicious of the intentions, and for rebuffing as hypocritical, all genuine gestures of goodwill from persons belonging to the favored race;
— for accusing and blaming the children of the favored race for the wrongs committed by their parents;
— for the times when we have “Uncle Tomed” (i.e., hypocritically eulogized) the perpetrators of racism;
— for the occasions when, for personal gain, power, and anger, we have argued for the existence and perpetuation of racially exclusive churches, schools and institutions;
— for casting every conflict between us and others as a racial problem, and for blaming our lack of responsibility and personal failures upon other races.
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For if we all confess our racial sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

**Seek Biblical Solutions.** We must seek biblical solutions to the problems of racism. This means that we must, first, clearly understand that the root cause of racism is not economic or political exploitation, but *human pride.* And if the problem of racism is a “heart problem,” then, the cure for this is not through “education, culture, the exercise of the will, [or] human effort,” all of which “may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart.” We need to have a born again experience. “There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul and attract it to God, to holiness.”

Henry Ward Beecher puts it well:

> The moment a man’s heart touches the heart of Christ in living faith, he becomes, whether he knows it or not, the brother of every other, in heaven or on earth, who has come into the same relationship with Christ. Whoever is united to Christ is brother or sister to everybody else that is united to Him.  

Second, in the pursuit of racial harmony, we must be clear about our objective. For example, we must pursue the path of reconciliation, not a forced integration. For while integration—a political pursuit that makes it illegal for one to discriminate against the other on the basis of his race—may be helpful in reducing the effects of racism, a lasting solution is only possible through the transforming power of Christ (2 Cor 5:16-21). The gospel imperative for reconciliation is much stronger than the legal urge for racial integration (Matt 5:24; 2 Cor 5:18-20).

Third, we must not confuse the Christian’s pursuit of unity among the various races, with the secular agitation for equality—a political declaration that is enshrined in the constitution or laws of nations, and which can be redefined or revoked by legislators, when they so wish (e.g., the *Dred Scott* decision during the era of slavery, and the *Roe v. Wade* ruling with respect to the abortion issue). Christians must be certain of who it is that makes the declaration of human equality. If it is the Creator God of the Bible, they must clearly understand in what way all human beings are equal—whether it is an ontological equality or a functional
equality. The Church may need to remind itself that the only kind of equality that the Bible teaches is ontological equality, not a functional equality (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4).  

**Develop Interracial Relationships.** Since racism is kept alive by ignorance of the other races—the absence of genuine intimate knowledge of others, and an unwillingness to engage in genuine interaction—racial harmony can be restored and strengthened only if we make the effort of moving beyond our segregated homes, neighborhoods, schools, churches, conferences, etc., and relating meaningfully with people of other races.

The process that led to Peter’s “perceiving” that God is no respecter of persons began with prayer (on the part of both Peter and Cornelius). Then, contrary to the restrictions imposed by societal customs and traditions (Acts 10:28), Peter risked his life, career, and position in order to establish a relationship between himself (a representative of the favored race) and Cornelius (a member of the despised race). Peter allowed the messengers from Cornelius “to be his guests” (Acts 10:23), and Cornelius, apparently, permitted Peter and his fellow Jews to stay with him “for a few days” (Acts 10:48; cf. 11:3). Can we imagine what would happen if we began to visit one another, and shared our homes and meals? When we truly get to know people of other races as real human beings, no different from us,

---we shall begin to identify our next door neighbors as Sue and John, and not “my white neighbors”; we shall recognize the physician as Dr. Jones, and not as a “fine black doctor”;
---we shall not only allow them to speak, but we shall make efforts to hear them in our church publications and at our church council meetings;
---we shall hire them in our churches and schools not in order to fulfill some racial quotas, but because they are the best qualified personnel available when we assign duties;
---we shall not place members of the different races in stereotypical positions (such as blacks in church ministry and personal ministry departments, and whites in theology and treasury departments), but where they are most gifted to be;
---we shall celebrate their histories not as monuments to tokenism, but because their experiences have kinship with our own;
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— we shall not be as hesitant as we are today about interracial adoption and interracial marriages; for then, it will be easier for us to accept the members of the other race not only as our brothers and sisters, but also as our brothers and sisters-in-law.

Take a Stand Against Racial Prejudice and Injustice. Restoring and strengthening racial harmony requires that we take a stand against any form of racial injustice, wherever and whenever it appears—and not only when the problem concerns our race. It compels us to be ethically sensitive to issues affecting human beings (war, abortion, euthanasia, poverty, unemployment, ecology, etc). In this effort, those who have historically been perpetrators and beneficiaries of legal and institutional racism must take the lead.

The NT suggests that those who have been in privileged positions or situations and those who have benefited from their favored status—i.e., those who were slow to recognize that “God is no respecter of persons”—should be foremost in speaking out against racial injustice. For example, Peter (1 Pet 1:17), Paul (Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6), and James 2:1, all proclaimed without fear this doctrine. John, the disciple, who once wished Jesus to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, was the one who went on a loving mission to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-25). And this may explain Ellen White’s rhetorical question: “Is there not much due to them [colored race] from the white people? After so great a wrong has been done them, should not an earnest effort be made to lift them up?” This is the true spirit of Christianity, which teaches the believer “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12:3), “but in humility count others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3, RSV).

Taking a stand for justice means that:
— some of us will have to go the extra mile by equipping (financially or otherwise) some members of the underprivileged race so that their talents as missionaries, administrators, theologians, etc., can be developed;
— when there are opportunities for employment or advancement, etc., we would not ignore or overlook the underprivileged group;
— since English has been adopted as the lingua franca of the church, and yet a majority of the church does not speak it, in some
instances, such as at major business sessions, the world wide church will have to
make an alternate provision to enable the majority to voice their opinions (in
say, Spanish, Swahili or Russian) on issues that affect the general direction of
the church;
— in a united church, such as our own, no one region of the world field
would be tempted to arrogantly defy the consensus of the church on theological
issues, nor blackmail the church to adopt a certain position because of its eco-
nomic and human resources;
— we quit masquerading our contempt for some races in the church by us-
ing political categories (such as patriarchal/authoritarian vs. egalitarian/democratic) to describe their theological views;
— whenever the church is called upon to compute its success, some of us
will have to take a stand and insist that the computation should not be in terms
of dollars and degrees, but in terms of faithfulness to historic Christian truths,
and in terms of costly discipleship.102

Conclusion

One of the most tragic chapters in human experience records the practice of
racism. It has created in its victims a sense of inferiority, defeatism, resentment,
and a determination to get even. It has despised, beaten, wounded, robbed,
bruised and left unconscious people of other races, while those who are in a po-
sition to show compassion and bind up the wounds of the victims of racism, like
the priest and Levite in Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan, have passed by
on the other side. Worse still, racism has murdered many innocent people just
because of the shape of their noses, the color of their skins or some other physi-
cal features.

Can anyone still doubt the fact that the tenets of the secular religion called
racism are so incompatible with the Christian faith, that anyone who claims to
be saved by grace, cannot live by race? Can it still be disputed that if a Christian
is found to be a racist, his profession is a syncretistic faith, and hence a depar-
ture from the everlasting gospel?

The good news, however, is that Bible-believing Christians do not have to
worship at any of the shrines of racism. In the person
of Jesus Christ we have the God of all races. The children’s Sabbath School song summarizes this:

Jesus loves the little Children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.103

These words state a very profound truth of biblical Christianity: the principle of love is the foundation of the supernatural religion that Christ Himself has founded—love for God, and love for our neighbors—irrespective of their race. Even more, Christ Himself can effect the necessary transformation in our lives to follow in His steps.

“Our remembrance of the love of Jesus, a love that directed Him to declare that even enemies are to be loved, should strengthen the Christian on this journey. If we are to love our enemies, should we not also love our fellow neighbor of a different race, ethnic origin, or religious faith?”105 Ellen G. White is emphatic: “When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many very differently from the way in which it is now regarded.”106

Can we imagine the powerful impact our Christianity will have, if we live out the ethical implications of our calling as a people who are saved by grace and are living by faith?

Endnotes

1 This fact is captured by William A. Henry III, “Pride and Prejudice,” Time (February 28, 1994), 21, in his cover story article, when he speaks about the two “ugly truths of American life.” He writes: “A great many black Americans view their white fellow citizens with anger. And a great many white Americans view their black fellow citizens with fear.”

2 Over three decades ago, Kyle Haselden asked: “Why are there so many Christians who, belonging to the same church, converse with each other only on the most superficial level, smiling and amiable as they meet but never discussing with each other the issues which trouble them most?” Haselden urges Christians to answer this question if they are to discover “why Christian communion is in most churches a pretense, a cordial but uneasy fiction, rather than a strengthening, creative reality” (see Kyle Haselden, Mandate for White Christians [Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966], p. 24).


6 According to Paul, such an effort on the part of believers is tantamount to “seeking to be justified by the law”—instead of by grace (Gal 5:4). He referred to their action as a perversion of and departure from the gospel (Gal 1:6, 7) and Christ (5:4); he argued that those “bewitched” by this “folly” were in bondage and under a curse. Paul’s goal in the epistle to the Galatians was not only to show the incompatibility of being saved by grace and at the same time living by the works of the law, but also to emphasize the fact that there is an ethical dimension to the gospel of grace.

7 “Race” is one great catchword that means different things to different people, and about which much ink and blood have been spilled. Despite this fact, no agreement seems to exist regarding what is a race, how it can be recognized, who constitute the several races, and how the different races are to be ranked in their relative abilities and closeness to some ideal referent (whether an ape, or a Creator). Thus, over the years, in an effort to abstract some defining traits as characteristic of a race, notable individuals—statesmen, scholars, scientists, etc.—have erroneously pointed to certain easily noted human features (such as color of skin or hair, striking appearance of face or body, unusual mode of speech or dress, shape of skull, temperament, etc.) as the permanent ineradicable hallmark of a race. For a critique of some of the different definitions of race, see Jacques Barzun’s *Race: A Study in Superstition*, revised, with a new preface (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), in which he argues that the idea of race is a “fiction” (not a fact), a “fatal superstition” that has been put forward from time to time to advance some ideological goal; see also Ashley Montagu, *Race Science and Humanity* (New York: Van Nostrand Co., 1963).

8 George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Scribner’s, 1965), p. 10, explains: “By and large, the people who have been the racists of the modern world have also been Christians or the heirs of Christian civilization. Among large numbers of Christians, racism has been the other faith or one of the other faiths.”

9 Barzun, p. ix.

10 For a provocative analysis of what has happened to members of the Christian church, and what can be done to recapture their status as “resident aliens,” see Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, 9th printing (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992). Speaking on the subject of Christian social concern today, Hauerwas and Willimon argue: “In fact, much of what passes for Christian social concern today, of the left or of the right, is the social concern of a church that seems to have despised of being the church. Unable through our preaching, baptism, and witness to form a visible community of faith, we content ourselves with ersatz Christian ethical activity—lobbying Congress to support progressive strategies, asking the culture...
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at large to be a little less racist, a little less promiscuous, a little less violent” (ibid., p. 80).

11 With this kind of worldliness the Churches have become, in the words of Jesus, salt without
savor, useful only as it is “thrown out and trampled under foot by men” (Matt 5:13). Waldo Beach,
“A Theological Analysis of Race Relations,” in Paul Ramsey, ed., Faith and Ethics: The Theology of
H. Richard Niebuhr (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 218, has this in mind when he
writes: “Seeking their life in quantity, they [churches] lose their life in quality and only earn the
scorn of men.”

12 G. E. Simpson and J. M. Yinger, Racial and Cultural Minorities, An Analysis of Prejudice

13 Billy Graham, “Racism and the Evangelical Church,” Christianity Today, October 4, 1993,
p. 27. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not altogether immune from this infection of racism (see
George R. Knight, Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists [Boise, Idaho:
Pacific Press, 1992], p. 112). For a documentation of how racism has sometimes been manifested in
the Seventh-day Adventist Church, see Richard Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant (Mountain
(Spring 1970): 21-30; Louis B. Reynolds’s We Have Tomorrow: The Story of American Seventh-day
Adventists with an African Heritage (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1984), especially appen
dix B—”Actions From the Regional Advisory Committee in Miami, April 7-9, 1969” [pp. 362-
370]; W. W. Fordham’s autobiography, Righteous Rebel: The Unforgettable Legacy of a Fearless

14 It is rather ironical that politicians, the military, and promoters and managers of boxing,
baseball, football, etc., whose activities are often at cross purposes with the teachings of Christianity,
are doing more to heal racial divisions in society than are Christians. We may discredit their efforts
by arguing that the reason they do so is because of the fear of legislative pressures or sanctions from
secular authorities, or the violent protests of individuals who can no longer accept the racial status
quo; we may even discount secular efforts at curbing racism on the grounds that these are done for
some monetary gain. But as Frank Stagg reminds us, “To say that these have done it for money
removes none of the sting, for it is a humiliation if a pagan for money effects good which a Christian
fails to effect for love” (see Frank Stagg, The Book of Acts [Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1955],
p. 124).

15 Wherever there have been different groups of people, ethnocentrism (the belief in the
unique value and rightness of one’s own group, and hence the tendency to evaluate other races or
groups by criteria that is specific to one’s own) has existed in some ways. But ethnocentrism is not
necessarily racial; ethnocentrism turns into racism when an ethnic group believes that it is innately
superior to all others and transposes that belief into serving the vested interest of that particular
ethnic or racial group (e. g., fascism is nationalism built on racism).

16 With regard to the black/white form of racism, Cornel West, Prophetic Fragments (Grand
skin color—was first employed as a means of classifying human bodies by François Bernier, a
French physician, in 1684. The
first authoritative racial division of human kind is found in the influential *Natural System* (1735) of the preeminent naturalist Carolus Linnaeus.”


18 Slavery was first accepted as an economic way of life, and later justified as a positive good that was sanctioned by Scripture itself as capable of effecting Christian social order based on the observance of mutual duty of slave to master and vice versa. On how Christianity later came to play a part, Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 96, has remarked: “Right from the very beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, conversions of the slaves to Christianity was viewed by the emerging nations of Western Christendom as a justification for enslavement of Africans. . . . Pangs of guilt over the cruelty inherent in enslaving fellow human beings were assuaged by emphasizing the grace of faith made available to Africans, who otherwise would die as pagans.”

19 Barzun, p. xix, argues that “since 1850, when industrialization broke traditional bonds and detached man from his native soil without affording him new loyalties, the idea of race has been put forward as a principle of political and emotional union.”


21 Herbert Spencer coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” in reference to the evolution of cultures and Darwin adopted the term to describe the outcome of the process of natural selection. E. Tobach, J. Gianutsos, et. al., *The Four Horsemen: Racism, Sexism, Militarism, and Social Darwinism* (New York: Behavioral Publications, 1974), pp. 99, 101, argue that the integration of this idea of Spencer with Darwin’s theory of the evolution of species, “produced a seemingly scientific rationalization of the 19th century European and American view of the peoples of the world as two populations, one of which was superior to the other by reason of physical and mental characteristics. . . . This rationalization came to be known as Social Darwinism. . . . [This view] arose during the most active period of industrialization and developing colonialism. The issue was the weeding out of the weak, the ill, the poor, the ‘socially unfit’. . . . The ‘survival of the fittest’ was an appropriate concept for that goal.”

22 See Stephen T. Asma, “The New Social Darwinism: Deserving Your Destitution,” *The Humanist* 53:5 (September-October, 1993), p. 12. Asma argues that the social Darwinism (more accurately social Spencerism) of Herbert Spencer, and his American disciples (e.g., John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie), with its foundation in the “survival of the fittest” ethic, not only fueled Western capitalism but also provided “the ultimate justification for social passivity and acquiescence in the status quo” on matters pertaining to the poor, homeless, unemployed, etc. (ibid., p. 11).


24 Kelsey, p. 9.

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207-210), and Adolf Hitler, in his Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal & Hitchcook, 1939), insisted that “The Aryan Race is superior” (see Racism: Opposing Viewpoints, pp. 211-214), Albert J. Beveridge (1862-1927), a lawyer, US senator and historian, and Josiah Strong (1847-1916), a clergyman, social reformer and author, are two representatives of the views endorsing American or Anglo-Saxon racism (see Bruno Leone, ed., Racism: Opposing Viewpoints, pp. 20-25; 31-34. On the other hand, Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam religion may be cited as one of those advocating the superiority of the Black race (see his “The Black Race is Superior,” ibid., pp. 215-219); cf. the article by Leon Jaroff, “Teaching Reverse Racism,” Time, April 4, 1994, pp. 74-75, which also discusses some extremist views within the Afrocentric movement in which the history of black superiority is taught on the basis of melanism—the “science” of skin-pigmentation.


28 Caleb Rosado, Broken Walls (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1990), p. 29, thus, defines racism (the “ideology of supremacy”) in this way: “Racism is both an attitude and an act of superiority that justifies its very existence by giving biological differences, such as skin color, texture of the hair, physical features, language, and cultural differences a negative meaning of inferiority. This negative meaning in turn legitimizes treating the other person as inferior to oneself.”

29 In other words, racism’s doctrine of biological determinism is “the glue” that defines and separates racial groups according to genes or “blood.” Speaking about biological determinism, R. C. Lewontin, “Foreword” in Richard M. Lerner, Final Solutions: Biology, Prejudice, and Genocide (Pennsylvania, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. vii-ix, states: “It makes the error of equating heritable with unchangeable, a biological mistake of the first magnitude”—a “pseudo-scientific nonsense.”

30 Richard Lerner, Final Solutions: Biology, Prejudice, and Genocide, has identified biological determinism as the central dogma of the Nazi ideology or religion, without which Nazism could not have achieved its power and realized its racial program of holocaust. Lerner maintains that biological determinism is the doctrine that underlies the early 20th century embryological work of Ernst Haeckel, F. Lenz, the ideas of the European and American Social Darwinists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the American and European eugenics movement during the same period, the German racial hygiene movement (Alfred Ploetz, Wilhelm Schallmayer, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche) of the first half of the twentieth century, and the contemporary ‘synthetic’ science of sociobiology in biology and in the behavioral and social sciences (J. P. Ruston, E. O. Wilson, R. Dawkins, Daniel Freedman).

31 It should be noted that it is not only those holding the reins of power who are racists. Kelsey’s distinction between “imperialistic racism” or “aggressive
“racism” and “counter-racism” may be helpful here. In imperialistic/aggressive racism, racism is in power; it is full-blooded, in that “it can walk on its feet and strike with its feet because its spirit permeates the institutions of power”—political, military, economic, educational, ecclesiastical and other cultural institutions. “Counter racism” (others will say “reverse racism”), on the other hand is racism that is out of power. “It lacks feet to walk on and fists with which to strike. The spirit is present; the hope is compelling; but the will to power cannot find the institutions of power through which it can express itself” (Kelsey, pp. 10-11).

In the context of USA, since power has tended to reside in the hands of whites, imperialistic racism or institutional racism tends to be white racism. On the other hand since Blacks, Hispanics and Orientals, generally speaking, do not possess power, the racism exhibited by these groups tend to bear the characteristics of counter (or reverse) racism. Given the chance and the appropriate conditions of power, Black/Hispanic/Oriental racism can become as aggressive and imperialistic as white racism.

Roger Daniels and Harry H. L. Kitano, American Racism: Exploration of the Nature of Prejudice (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1970), pp. 9-28, have argued that a racist society tends to go through four stages, each stage distinguishable by identifiable characteristics. In stage 1, a member of a minority (or despised) group finds himself avoided, stereotyped, and victimized by prejudice (informal rules operate here); in stages 2 and 3, he is deprived through discriminatory laws and insulated through segregation; finally in stage 4 the superior race adopts some “extraordinary” measures (isolation, exclusion and genocide. Historically this last stage has translated as apartheid, expulsion, exile, lynching, and concentration camps. Of these four stages, Daniels and Kitano maintain that stages two and three (discrimination/deprivation and segregation/insulation stages) “are the most damaging steps in race relations,” since they provide the necessary condition for stage four (ibid., p. 20).

In the past believers of racial supremacy were nakedly racist; they were not too squeamish in advocating and putting into practice views overtly racist: racial discrimination, segregation, etc. Today however, with racism outlawed in many countries, it has assumed a sophisticated form, and racists are more covert or subtle in expressing their views and in implementing racial policies. Legal racism may be dead, but institutional racism is still alive.


Thus, in the code of ethics for the Seventh-day Adventist minister, racism is condemned as a sinful practice (see, Seventh-day Adventist Church Minister’s Manual [1992], p. 53); see also the document, “Christian Declaration on Race Relations,” that was adopted by the Southern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in session on March 1, 1970 (Spectrum 2:2 [Spring 1970]:53-55).

Since racism often expresses itself as a conflict among people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, attempts to understand the nature of racism have typically centered on an analysis of political, economic, and cultural factors. Not much attention has been given to the religious nature of racism. One notable exception is George D. Kelsey, Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man. To my knowledge, this work, to which I am indebted for insights expressed in this paper, is probably the most detailed analysis of racism as a faith system.
38 For a helpful discussion of the nature, characteristics, and types of religion, see Elizabeth K. Nottingham, Religion and Society (New York: Random House, 1954), pp. 1-11. Our analysis, in this section, of racism as a religion builds upon this work by Nottingham.

39 The following are adapted from the comparison between Christianity and Communism, provided by Richard J. Gehman, African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989), p. 38.

40 The Frenchman, Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, is recognized as the “Father of Modern Racism” and one of the first contributors to the “science” of racism (see Bruno Leone, ed., Racism: Opposing Viewpoints, p. 207; Michael D. Biddiss, Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau [New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970]). Gobineau used the word Aryan, a word that had been used by linguistic scholars for a number of related languages, including German and Latin, to denote a supreme and original white race. David A. Rausch, A Legacy of Hatred: Why Christians Must Not Forget the Holocaust, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), pp. 34-35, summarizes Gobineau’s views on race: “Gobineau claimed that race was the determining factor in the rise and fall of civilizations, postulating a hierarchy of humanity ranging from the superior white race to the inferior black race. Racial mixing had brought decline to the Latin and Semitic peoples, whereas Aryan Germans—the western Germanic tribes—held the key to a successful human destiny. These powerful people, he said, could be brought down only by the degenerative effect of race mixing” (cf. Biddiss, pp. 112-121). Building on the work of Gobineau, Adolf Hitler articulated in his Mein Kampf, “a book that became the bible of the Nazi movement in Germany,” why the Aryan race was superior to all others (see Racism: Opposing Viewpoints, p. 211).

41 The naturalistic world view is built on the assumption that nothing exists outside the material mechanical natural order. This world view which offers “the major competition” to the Christian world view (so Ronald H. Nash, Worldviews in Conflict [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992], p. 116), was “born in the eighteenth century, it came of age in the nineteenth and grew to maturity in the twentieth” (see James W. Sire, The Universe Next Door [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988], p. 82). For a discussion of how a world view shapes a person’s lifestyle, see Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, “Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle: A Clash of Worldviews,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 4 (Spring 1993): 129-150.


43 For example, those who justify racial segregation on Scriptural grounds often do so on the grounds of an alleged Biblical mandate (“God himself has separated the races by geographical barriers [Acts 17:26], differences in color and other racial characteristics [Gen 10:5, 32; 11:1-9], by His blessings and curses on Son’s of Noah [Gen 9:24-27], and by His notable example of making Israel separate from all other races—forbidding intermarriage of Israelites with others [Gen 24:3-4; 28:1; Deut 7:1-3, 6; Josh 23:12-13; Ezra 9:1-2, 10-12; 1 Kings 8:53; Exod 33:16]. But in actual fact, none of these prohibitions are grounded on race. For a discussion of some of the texts used to justify racism, see Cain Hope Felder, “Race, Racism and the biblical Narratives,” in Stony the Road We Trod, ed. Cain Hope Felder, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 127-145; T. B. Maston, The Bible and Race, pp. 105-117.


Waldo Beach, “A Theological Analysis of Race Relations,” in *Faith and Ethics*, p. 211:

“From the standpoint of classical Christian thought, of course, racial prejudice is not one of a catalogue of sins, but is a facet or expression of the single sin of pride, the rejection of the Infinite Sovereign Source of life and the attempt to set up as final some substitute sovereignty derived from the finite. Insofar as fallen man tends to make of himself or some collective projection of himself the center of love and value. Racial pride within and discriminatory practices are one ready way among many to ‘exchange the truth of God for a lie,’ and to worship the creature rather than the Creator.”


Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 452, maintains that whereas everything in the world can be improved as long as the blood remains preserved in its purity, “Alone the loss of the purity of blood destroys the inner happiness forever; it eternally lowers man, and never again can its consequences be removed from body and mind.” Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1922), p. 88, concurs: “Racial impoverishment is the plague of civilization”; it is a “hideous disease” that has reduced “the proudest societies to charred and squalid ruin.”

See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, pp. 98-105, for a summary discussion of “the great controversy” doctrine. For a more detailed and theological discussion of the theme, see the five volume Conflict of the Ages series by Ellen G. White [*Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, Desire of Ages, Acts of the Apostles, & the Great Controversy*] (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890-1917). The implication of “the great controversy” doctrine for ethics can be found in my “Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle,” pp. 143-147, see footnote #41.


Racial segregation must be distinguished from various forms of voluntary segregation or separation, that are functionally necessary to accomplish a task. Kelsey, p. 98 states: “[Racial] Segregation is born in hatred, fear, pride, and contempt. It knows nothing of love and does not aim at the general well-being; it is inspired by the spirit of pride and hostility, generated by the racist faith. Segregation is anticommmunity. It is the structured will to deprive and reduce the life of the other. The appointed ‘place’ of the other is below, and the functions of the other are the structured servilities of society.”

57 Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, p. 98; thus, Joseph Gobineau, the “Father of Modern Racism,” argues that history “shows us that all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it, provided that this group itself belongs to the most illustrious branch of our species” (see Bruno Leone, *Racism: Opposing Views*, pp. 13, 210).
59 Joseph Fletcher is a leading proponent of this quality of life ethic. See his *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1979), pp. 12-18, where he provides fifteen positive and five negative criteria for measuring the quality of one’s life and whether a person achieved humanhood; elsewhere, Fletcher reduces the criteria to “four indicators” (see his “Four Indicators of Humanhood—The Enquiry Matures,” *The Hastings Center Report* 4, no. 6 (December 1974): 4-7.
61 Kelsey, p. 162.
62 Charles Darwin is often cited for laying the scientific foundation for this aspect of the racist faith. The second half of the title of Darwin’s famous book, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Survival of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, was understood by some to justify the extermination of people of other races (see Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition*, pp. 47-48). A more blatant advocate of this view is Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1931), pp. 41-60.
64 The eminent English scientist, Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin is credited with proposing in 1883 a new science-eugenics (from the Greek, meaning “good in birth” or “noble in heredity”—which aimed at ensuring that “the best” of human stock survived. As explained by D. J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. ix, this new science was intended to give “the more suitable race or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.”
66 For example, if the Black person lives in a slum, he “is charged not with poverty, but laziness. If he works in a kitchen the reason is not discrimination, but limitation. If he fails as an engineer the reason is not lack of education, but a shortage of intelligence. If he goes to jail the reason is not environment, but heredity” (ibid., pp. 102-103).
67 Let us observe that in this account, there was a desperate need (the woman’s child needed help). Instead, those who were in a position to help chose to be apathetic to the need and therefore ignored the woman (“Jesus did not answer a word,” vs. 23). Secondly, pressure was put on Jesus, by His closest associates, to refuse offering the needed help; because it was inconvenient (“she
keeps crying after us,” the disciples said); here is illustrated how pressure is often applied so that people will conform to ambient expectations, and show an unwillingness to go against popular opinion, etc., when they could no longer pretend the need was not there. Also, there was a shift of the responsibility to others (notice in verse 24 that when even Jesus, felt compelled to do something about it, he indicated that the specific need of the woman could only be met by someone else—“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel”; the implication was that, he could only offer help to the in-race). Finally, they justified their reason for denying the help by first labeling the woman as a “dog” and then rationalizing that it was not appropriate to give what is due to humans to a subhuman (dog).

68 White, Desire of Ages, pp. 402-403.

69 Maston, The Bible and Race, p. 58. Some parallels can be drawn between the racial bitterness between Jews and Samaritans and the racial conflicts between blacks and whites in USA (see ibid., pp. 53-67). In both instances, (1) racial division is manifested in a “We-You” relationship. Thus, the Jews proclaimed in John 8:33, “we are descendants of Abraham,” and charged Jesus (and hence, anyone who did not agree with them), “you are a Samaritan” (John 8:33, 48, RSV); in this “we-you” relationship, the Jews saw themselves as the favored race, and the Samaritans as the unfa- vored race (an incipient superior/inferior race dichotomy). (2) Like our modern racism, the cause of this racial prejudice had some historical basis (cultural, religious, political, economic—2 Kngs 17:24; Ezra 4, Neh 13:28). (3) Because of the racial prejudice between the two groups of people, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4:9, RSV)—a kind of segregation in which Jews had a difficult time associating with, offering and accepting food and drink from Samaritans, and even rendering helping to wounded persons of the opposite race—as the story of the good Samaritan suggests (cf. Luke 10:25-37; 17:11-18). (4) For the Jews, Samaritans were the embodiment of evil; thus, the religious leaders told Jesus: “You are a Samaritan and have a demon” (John 8:48, RSV). Even the disciples of Christ were not totally free of this racial prejudice; on one occasion James and John asked Jesus to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. (5) But the racial prejudice of Jews against Samaritans was not entirely one-sided; the Samaritans also were prejudiced against the Jews. This is reflected in the statement of the Samaritan woman at the well, when she asked Christ: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria” (John 4:9, RSV). This reverse racism on the part of the Samaritans was equally as sinful and deadly as that perpetrated by those on the other side. It led to the creation of a myth spiritual superiority in which, for example, Samaritans considered their form of worship to be superior to all others (John 4:20), a view that may have contributed to their initial rejection of Jesus (Luke 9:52, 53).

70 Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:225; “No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere.” Cf. idem., Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 386.

71 With respect to the despised Samaritans, when Jesus first sent out the twelve, He specifically forbade them to preach to the Gentiles—particularly the Samaritans (Matt 10:5)—apparently because He knew that His followers were not adequately prepared at this time “to preach the gospel, or to do good works, either
among Samaritans or Gentiles. Their hearts were too narrow, their prejudices too strong: there was too much of the Jew, too little of the Christian, in their character.” (See A. B. Bruce, The Training of the Twelve [New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1929], p. 101). But after His resurrection and shortly before His ascension, Jesus made it clear that the barriers of race must be overcome as they preached to all the world, including Samaria.

72 Maston, The Bible and Race, p. 62. He continues by saying: “What about us—do we need the message of ‘and Samaria’? Do we have our Samarias, or areas of prejudice? If so, Jesus would have us cross over the border. There are no national or racial lines in his Commission” (ibid.).

73 Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, pp. 402-403.
74 Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual, p. 53.
77 Thus, Kyle Haselden, The Racial Problem in Christian Perspective (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 49-50, notes that, a white racist, just like racists from other races, has often “restricted the scope of his moral responsibility to members of his own race and reduced the intensity of his ethic to a strictly personal piety” which ignores Christian responsibility for the despised race. This compartmentalization of morality on the part of Christian racists explains why “the extremes of piety and racial discrimination occupy the same territory” (ibid., p. 50).
78 See also, Sakae Kubo, The God of Relationships (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993), pp. 33-49.
79 Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . ., pp. 73-74.
83 Schwarz, pp. 571-572.
84 George R. Knight, Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), p. 112. Calvin Rock, “A Better Way,” pp. 22-24, has also offered some psychological, sociological, and theological factors that have historically led to white racism in the Adventist Church. Among other factors, Rock points to political expediency (the fear of a loss of prestige, finance, status and even loss of job) should racism be eliminated; an evangelistic strategy that is directed to the upper-lower and lower-middle class—the segment most threatened by racial parity; a certain kind of conservatism and fundamentalism that ignores the ethical dimension of the biblical doctrines; and a tendency to ignore social issues on the pretext that the situation is too hopeless for any meaningful change.
85 Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 403.
86 Cf., Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:214.
87 There is a sense in which we all are prisoners of our time and the cultures of our age. Consequently we do not always see some aspects of our respective
cultures, however hard we try, until we are made to stand outside of it, and measure it by the standards that are not part of it. In order to address the contemporary problem of racism in the Church, it may be necessary to look at the subject as it manifested itself during the NT times. From the vantage point of the past, we may be able to assess our present situation, and thereby avoid the inescapable mind-set in which we have been set. Testing our contemporary presuppositions by the NT Church can help us avoid some mistakes on the subject of race relations (cf. Packer, “The Comfort of Conservatism,” in Power Religion, ed. Michael Scot Horton, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 291, where, in his discussion of the benefits of the Christian Tradition, he speaks about the sense of realism Christians gain when they learn from the experiences of the past).


89 That Peter was not alone in “perceiving” that God is no respecter of persons is indicated by the fact that those who had come with Peter from Joppa “were amazed” at seeing the Gentiles in Cornelius home receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45). Apparently, they thought that Gentiles were not worthy of such a gift. Even more, we are told in Acts 11 that when the brethren in Jerusalem heard the news, they were very upset. Therefore, Peter’s statement of Acts 10:34 is a clear indication that the early Jewish Christians failed to fully grasp the fact that no form of ethnic or racial prejudice is justifiable under the gospel.

90 The truth of God being no respecter of persons, and His insistence that His followers be impartial, are recorded in several places in the OT Scriptures (Deut 10:18, Job 34:19, 2 Chron 19:7). Peter and the others may have known this Bible truth, and their association with Jesus provided a living demonstration of this truth to them.

91 They had bought so much into the established societal norms (“For we know that it is an unlawful thing for me who is Jew to . . . [Acts 10:28; 11:1, 2]) that if they had their own way, they would certainly have maintained segregated churches on Sabbaths, they would have preferred to run segregated schools in the same towns and cities, and wherever possible, would have had segregated dining hall facilities (Gal 2:11f). But for the Spirit of God, the privileged group in the early church (Jews) would have wanted to control the leadership and resources of the Church (Acts 6), paying little attention to the needs of the deprived members and making little effort to train leaders among the unfavored group.


93 George Kelsey, “Racial Patterns and the Churches,” pp. 74-76.


97 Equality is a concept introduced by scientists in their effort to define the basic relationship between some separate items. What is not generally recognized, however, is that the concept of equality is not scientific; it is neither provable nor disprovable. It is valid only when one assumes it. In other words, the idea of
equality must be accepted by faith. As applied to human beings, individuals and groups are said to be equal solely because they are so declared. The Christian must therefore be clear in his or her mind regarding who it is that grants that equality and on what basis it is granted.

98 Ontological equality (suggesting that human beings are equal in their standing before God, in that they were all created in the image of God, they are all sinners, they all need salvation through Christ, they all have been called to the same destiny) refers solely to God’s action and purposes, and not to any intrinsic qualities that human beings possess by themselves; it is a gift from God. Ontological equality must not be confused with functional equality (implying equality of ability, knowledge, skill, power, position, treatment, etc.). The Bible proclaims an ontological equality (cf. Gal 3:28), not a functional equality (cf. 1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8).

99 Ellen White: “Their [Blacks’] voices are to be heard in the representative assemblies (Testimonies for the Church, 9:207).

100 Southern Work, pp. 11-12; “Every effort should be made to wipe out the terrible wrong which has been done them [colored race]” (ibid., p. 13); “The American nation owes a debt of love to the colored race, and God has ordained that they should make restitution for the wrong they have done them in the past. Those who have taken no active part in enforcing slavery upon the colored people are not relieved from the responsibility of making special efforts to remove, as far as possible, the sure result of their enslavement” (ibid., p. 74); “The Lord demands restitution from the churches in America. . . The Lord calls upon you to restore to his people the advantages which they have so long been deprived” (ibid., p. 144).

101 Ellen White: “special efforts should be made to increase the force of colored workers” (Testimonies for the Church, 9:207). “Among the negro race, there are many who have talent and ability” and “Many wise, Christian men will be called to work” (ibid., p. 202).

102 Ellen White: “Many of the colored race are rich in faith and trust. God sees among them precious jewels that will one day shine out brightly. . .” (Testimonies for the Church, 7:229).

103 It is very remarkable that this biblical truth is taught to our children at a very early age. The fact that this truth is put in a song, and repeated every week, suggests that adults expect their children to remember this cardinal teaching of Christianity, as they grow and live in a world torn by ethnic and racial hatred. It is therefore, a matter of surprise that by the time the children become adults and take their places in the pews and pulpits of the Church, and at the desks in classrooms and administrative offices of the Church’s institutions, this truth is either misunderstood or largely forgotten, ignored, discredited, or even rejected. And with this attitude towards the theology underlying the truth of God’s love for the “Red and yellow, black and white,” the church is left in a position in which it is totally incapable of confronting ethnic and racial prejudice and bigotry within and without the Church. Abdicating this responsibility, the Church then waits upon an ungodly society to demonstrate and prescribe ways by which racism should be addressed.

104 The religion that was established by the life and message of the Incarnate Christ is one in which there is no caste, “a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God.” See Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:225 (cf. idem, Ministry of Healing, pp. 25-26).

106 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:209; “Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and the blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down of themselves as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors. For Christ’s sake, let us do something now” (*Southern Work*, p. 54).
The Battle Against the Sabbath and Its End-time Importance

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God and the principles of His law are eternal. The law is an outward manifestation of His character. The two are inseparable and unchangeable. As Ellen G. White put it, "His law is without variableness, unalterable, eternal, because it is the transcript of His character."¹ "`God is love.' His nature, his law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. 'The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,' whose ways are everlasting,' changeth not. With Him 'is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'"²

The unchangeable God (Mal 3:6) gives expression of Himself in His unchanging law (Matt 5:18, Luke 16:17). One can no more change His law than change God. Both God and His law transcend created beings in such a way that they function, in different ways, to change human beings rather than be changed by them. That change comes from the law exposing human need (Rom 7:7). The law shows people what they are really like (Rom 3:20). The law exposes their desperate need of God.³ The law changes their distorted self-esteem. God changes them to see their true self-worth—in Him (Eph 1:3, 4; 2 Cor 3:18).

Lucifer Attacks God’s Law

Sin originated in one bent on changing the law and disputing Christ’s supremacy (cf. Isa 14:12-15; Eze 28:13-15). “In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the
Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. What was his response?

While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government. Thus while working to excite opposition to the law of God and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven. While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.

Behind his pretense, jealousy of Christ consumed Lucifer. How inexplicable! All He was and had came from Christ. He held the place of highest honor among created beings. He stood as the covering cherub at the throne (Eze 28:14). He owed his very existence to Christ. For Christ created everyone and everything (Col 1:15,16; Heb 1:1,2). Yet Lucifer plunged down a path that led inexorably to Calvary. He would kill the One who gave Him life. He would go on, in the Christian age, to overthrow the Sabbath which reminds humans of their Creator (Exod 20:11). Satan’s whole rebellion is Christ-centered. Calvary and Sunday expose his hatred of Christ. Sunday is Satan’s creation, not a day in honor of Christ’s resurrection. Whether realized or not, Sunday honors Satan’s work (change of commandment) rather than Christ’s work (resurrection). Sunday is Satan’s fourth commandment in place of the Sabbath command of the pre-incarnate Christ (Deut 5:22). In his counterfeit role as promoter of loyalty to God, Satan reacted against angels who were really loyal.

Rejecting with disdain the arguments and entreaties of the loyal angels, he denounced them as deluded slaves. The preference shown to Christ he declared an act of injustice both to himself and to all the heavenly host, and announced that he would no longer submit to this invasion of his rights and theirs. He would never again acknowledge the supremacy of Christ. He had determined to claim the honor which should have been given him, and take command of all who would become his followers; and he promised those who would enter his ranks a new and better government, under which all would enjoy
freedom. Great numbers of the angels signified their purpose to accept him as their leader. Since that time it has been Satan’s purpose “to secure the abolition of law,” and he has “exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus.” He hates the law, because He hates Christ. His long political campaign of deception has been to oust Christ and His law, and to take their place. In the end-time on planet-earth it will appear that he has succeeded. With consummate cunning Satan will come pretending to be Christ and promoting Sunday. Here is the ultimate deception—coming as Christ, but with his own version of the fourth commandment.

Satan’s policy in this final conflict with God’s people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish, he charged upon the loyal angels. The same policy of deception has marked the history of the Roman Church. It has professed to act as the vicegerent of Heaven, while seeking to exalt itself above God and to change His law.

God’s authority as Creator is referred to in only one commandment, in the “Sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Exod 20:10). An attack against the Sabbath is an attack against God. It is also an attack against all that the Sabbath represents. The Sabbath is a memorial of Christ’s creation (Exod 20:11), the liberation of his people (Deut 5:15) and His relationship with His followers (Ezek 20:12). To set up a substitute sabbath (Sunday) is the work of a substitute Christ (Satan). This is the bottom line. Satan hates Christ, wants to overthrow Him and wrench from Him His rule, and does so in part by promoting Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Satan’s coming advent as Christ to push Sunday sacredness is the ultimate attack against Christ and His day.

In this article we will see that throughout history, Satan has promoted Sunday by falsely linking it with Christ. Satan has hidden the fact that he changed the day by giving credit to Christ for the change. With cunning deception He has promoted his work against Christ as the work of Christ Himself. In the name of Christ, countless Christians have and will fight for what they believe to be
the Sabbath of Christ, not knowing that it is the Sabbath of Satan. We will consider what some early church fathers thought about the Sabbath, the thinking of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and two recent books. We will then consider the Sabbath as a creation-ordination, the Sabbath as a Christian belief, the end-time Sabbath test and how to prepare for the coming crisis will close our study.

**The Sabbath: Displaced in Christian History**

Early church fathers who speak about the Sabbath include Justin Martyr, “Epistle of Barnabas,” Ignatius, Tertullian and Victorinus. In this article our reference to them will necessarily be brief. They discuss a number of matters. One dealt with when the Sabbath was instituted. Was it at creation, or much later at the time of Israel? Justin Martyr believed that followers of God before Moses and Abraham “observed no sabbaths,” and so it is not a creation-ordination. On the other hand Tertullian believed it was kept by Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Melchizedek. Barnabas concurred that “the Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the creation.” So there was a difference relative to when the Sabbath was instituted. This developed two views, one that saw the Sabbath as relevant for all human beings, being given at the creation of the race; whereas the other group saw the Sabbath as only relevant to the Jews, because it was instituted for that nation alone.

Besides these two beginning dates, Tertullian thought there were two different Sabbaths in scripture, that is, the “temporal sabbath,” considered human, and the “eternal sabbath,” considered divine. The temporal sabbath was merely “temporary.” The temporal sabbath merely foreshadowed the eternal sabbath. Here is a type/antitype paradigm that would become a persuasive evidence for the temporal nature of the Old Testament Sabbath, because many would conclude that it merely pointed to Christ who came to fulfill/replace/transcend it.

Another question concerned what Christ thought of the Sabbath. Tertullian suggests that Christ broke the Sabbath when He excused His hungry disciples, after plucking some ears of corn, to rub them in their hands to get food. He qualified this statement by saying, “Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath; He kept the law thereof, and both in the former case did a work which was beneficial
Gulley: The Sabbath and Its End-time Importance

to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry, and in the present instance cured the withered hand. . . .”\textsuperscript{15}

The so-called “Epistle of Barnabas” (generally regarded as written by a Christian in Alexandria, c. 130) projected the six days of creation onto history, with each creation day representing one thousand years of historical time. The author says:

“‘He finished in six days.’ This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. . . . Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. ‘And He rested on the seventh day.’ This meaneth: when His Son, coming (again), shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day.”\textsuperscript{16}

That future seventh day will be followed by an eighth day. Putting words into the Lord’s mouth, The author says, “I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead.”\textsuperscript{17}

Here is an early reference to Sunday observance. It ignores the obvious parallel of creation Friday and crucifixion Friday being followed by a seventh-day Sabbath celebration, with Sunday as merely the first day of the week. Rather, it invents an eighth day, never found in Scripture, and attempts to identify the first day of the week with some supposedly eighth day new world time. It is understood that human history is to be six thousand years, the millennium is the seventh day, followed by the new earth time as the eighth day.

Interestingly the time-grids of the author of Barnabas and Tertullian do not synchronize. For how can the eternal sabbath of Tertullian function from the second advent onward, when the Epistle waits to the new world for the eighth day sabbath to begin? The millennium is left hanging. Even though the Epistle of Barnabas refers to the Psalms as source for the eighth day idea (Psa 6, 12), there is no such reference. The “eighth day” is mentioned only twenty times in Scripture, and not one reference supports the imaginary views of the Epistle of Barnabas and other early church fathers.
Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Augustine was the greatest theologian of his time, and one of the greatest of all time. His voluminous writings became the basis of Catholic theology for centuries. He is also the theologian most quoted by the Reformers in their attempt to attack the Catholic church, which speaks of the selectivity at work by both sides that looked to him as authority. Behind this is the fact that Augustine has given contradictory ideas in his theology.

By the time we come to Augustine, we have moved away from the early church fathers’ thinking about the Sabbath. Even though some of Augustine’s thinking finds its roots in theirs, he is much clearer in his antipathy to the Sabbath. Augustine said of the Sabbath, it “ought not to be kept by a Christian.” He reasoned that the Sabbath merely “prophesied” Christ’s first advent. After Christ arrived on earth the Sabbath had no more usefulness than any other prophecy about his birth. As Augustine put it, “The Lord did break the Sabbath; but was not therefore guilty. What is that that I have said, `He broke the sabbath'? He, the Light had come, He was removing the shadows.” So all of Christ’s Sabbath miracles and instruction about the Sabbath are dismissed as a process of removing the shadows (the Sabbath) now that He the Light had arrived. Just as the sacraments of wine and bread show forth the Lord’s death till He comes the second time, so Augustine’s Sabbath was a sacrament fulfilled by Christ’s first advent.

Hence, according to Augustine, Christ replaced the Sabbath when He came. But when did He come? Augustine answers this question by looking at creation days as types of historical periods.

For these days were not without reason ordained in such order, but for that age also were to run in a like course, before we rest in God. . . As therefore God made man in His own image on the sixth day: thus we find that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the sixth age, that man might be formed anew after the image of God. . . The sixth day beginneth from the preaching of John, and lasteth unto the end: and after the end of the sixth day, we reach our rest.

Apparently mankind is still in the sixth day with the sabbath in the post-advent future, for the creation Sabbath being open-ended can only be fully realized in the open-endedness of eternity. Augustine’s time periods do not agree with those of Barnabas.
Augustine’s sixth historical day began a millennium before the sixth historical day of Barnabas.

To Augustine the creation account in Genesis is mystical, for God merely spoke things into existence by His omnipotent power during six days. Creation work was easy for Him, so how could He possibly need the seventh-day Sabbath rest that followed? Augustine said, “How could He require rest after the world was made, as if to enjoy leisure after toil, He who in commanding never toiled?” Augustine makes too much of the anthropomorphism of rest, not allowing the word “rest” to mean anything other than rest from toil. He apparently has no room for “rest” meaning a change from creation-work to its celebration, without reference to any toil. He certainly has no room for the Sabbath being a celebration of Christ’s finished work of creation or of redemption. Not only that, Augustine goes on to conjure up a meaning not found in the text. “Consequently these sayings are mystical, and are laid down in this wise that we may be looking for rest after this life, provided we have done good works.”

Just as Christ’s work issued in rest after it was completed, so will Christians rest in the eternal day after their life of works. Again the Sabbath is confined to the eternal future.

Although the sacramental/typical sabbath signifying Christ is not to be kept by Christians, anymore than they should sacrifice lambs, Augustine paradoxically (in view of what has been said thus far) urges Christians to be even more diligent in their observation of the sabbath than the Jews. He said, “Observe the Sabbath-day’ is enjoined on us more than on them, because it is commanded to be spiritually observed. . . . The Christian observes the Sabbath spiritually, abstaining from servile work. For what is it to abstain from servile work? From sin.” For this is the spiritual Sabbath, to have no sin. In fact, brethren, it is of this that God admonishes us, when He commends the Sabbath to our notice: ’Thou shalt do no servile work.” For Augustine, the sabbath seems to be a seven day experience of sinlessness.

He sees the fifty days from Passover to the day Moses received the Ten Commandments at Sinai as typical of the fifty days between the death of Christ and Pentecost. He recognizes that the Holy Spirit is called “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20). Just as God wrote the Decalogue with His finger on external tables, so the Holy Spirit
as the finger of God writes “the new law” on the tables of the heart.\textsuperscript{25} The new law within does not include the Sabbath as a day, but as an experience.

One must keep in mind that the Sabbath-keeping of the Jews, contemporary with Augustine, was often in the background of his Sabbath comments. Like Ignatius,\textsuperscript{26} Augustine speaks of Sunday observance over-against the Jewish Sabbath-keeping. His revulsion for the Jewish Sabbath caused him to over-react to the Sabbath. His mystical bent is seen in the way he compares the Sabbath for Christians with the Sabbath for the Jews.

Lo, this day is the Sabbath, which the Jews at this period observe by a kind of bodily rest, languid and luxurious. They abstain from labours, and give themselves up to trifles; and though God ordained the Sabbath, they spend it in actions which God forbids. Our rest is from evil works, theirs from good; for it is better to plough than to dance. They abstain from good, but not from trifling, works. God proclaims to us a Sabbath. What sort of Sabbath? First consider, where it is. It is in the heart, within us; for many are idle with their limbs, while they are disturbed in conscience. . . . That very joy in the tranquility of our hope, is our Sabbath. This is the subject of praise and of song in this Psalm, how a Christian man is in the Sabbath of his own heart, that is, in the quiet, tranquility, and serenity of his conscience, undisturbed; hence he tells us here, whence men are wont to be disturbed, and he teaches thee to keep Sabbath in thine own heart.\textsuperscript{27}

This existential rather than weekly Sabbath ignores the uniqueness of the Sabbath. For on each day Christians should be tranquil as they rest in Christ. So Augustine projects the Sabbath into the future and within, to the eternal and internal, to the eschatological and to the existential. He does this at the expense of the present historical claims of the Sabbath. He ignores these. This is reminiscent of later Preterist and Futurist schools of prophetic interpretation that ignore the historical. Furthermore Augustine can even merge these two horizons (eschatological/existential). For example, in the last paragraphs of \textit{The City of God}, he speaks of the perpetual sabbath, saying “There shall be the great Sabbath which has no evening, which God celebrated among His first works, as it is written, ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.
which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God began to make.’ For we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God’s blessing and sanctification.”

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)

Satan’s attack against Christ is made in a Christian guise. What a tragedy that so many Christians, through the centuries, have jettisoned the Sabbath in what they thought was support for Christ. Think of the awful irony: they rallied to be true to Christ only to help His enemy. Here we find the deceptive front of Satan, clothing Sunday with Christ’s garb to deceive, as verily as he will clothe himself as Christ in the end-time. Fooled by the Christian garb, the vast majority of Christians fall into the enemy’s camp without knowing it. Early church fathers and Augustine fell into the trap, what about Aquinas and Calvin?

Aquinas joins Augustine as the most important theologian for Catholic theology. He compares the old and new laws. “The New Law is compared to the Old as the perfect to the imperfect. . . the New Law gives what the Old Law promised.” To Aquinas the Old Law was merely pointing to the New Law, as shadow to substance. He said,

The reality is found in Christ. Wherefore the New Law is called the law of reality; whereas the Old Law is called the law of shadow or of figure.

Here Aquinas is comparing the Old Law, including the Sabbath, as merely a shadow that was overtaken by its reality in Jesus Christ. To keep the seventh-day Sabbath would be no better than slaying lamb’s in the Christian age. However, unlike so many since his day, Aquinas understood why Jesus apparently broke the Sabbath command. Whereas many scholars believe Christ broke the law to show that He transcended the law, Aquinas saw it differently. He writes,

But He did seem to break the sabbath according to the superstitious interpretation of the Pharisees, who thought that man ought to abstain from doing even works of kindness on the sabbath; which was contrary to the intention of the Law.
Aquinas speaks of God’s resting on the seventh day as a cessation “from creating new creatures.” Because God had no need of the creatures He made, Aquinas can say, “When all things were made He is not said to have rested in His works, as though needing them for His own happiness, but to have rested from them, as in fact resting in Himself, as He suffices for Himself and fulfills His own desire.” He also believed that “God rested in giving rest to us.” But, the most important fact, for our purpose, is the focus of Aquinas on Christ taking the place of the Old Law, including the Sabbath. For Aquinas, Christ, and not the seventh-day Sabbath, is meant for Christians.

John Calvin (1509 - 1564)

Calvin believed that there was no commandment which God more strictly enforced than the Sabbath command. He concurs with those who hold that the OT Sabbath was typical of Christ, and, like all other types, met its fulfillment in Christ. Christ “is the truth, at whose presence all the emblems banish; the body, at the sight of which the shadows disappear. He, I say, is the true completion of the Sabbath.” But he says this is only half of the meaning of the Sabbath. For, first, under the rest of the seventh day, the divine Lawgiver meant to furnish the people of Israel with a type of the spiritual rest by which believers were to cease from their own works, and allow God to work in them. Secondly, he meant that there should be a stated day on which they should assemble to hear the Law, and perform religious rites, or which, at least, they should specially employ in meditating on his works, and be thereby trained to piety. Thirdly, he meant that servants, and those who lived under the authority of others, should be indulged with a day of rest, and thus have some intermission from labour.

Like others before him, Calvin distinguishes between the meaning of the Sabbath as “the mystery of perpetual resting from our works,” from the ceremonial part of the Sabbath. He affirms that “on the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ceremonial part of the commandment was abolished.” But the existential part of the Sabbath continues every day of our lives. It is a daily experience. “Christians, therefore, should have nothing to do with a superstitious observance of days.” In this way Calvin jettisons the
weekly Sabbath. So what is the purpose of the Sabbath commandment? Calvin sees its purpose in providing a day for public worship and a day for the laborer’s vacation.\textsuperscript{37}

Calvin rejected any continuance of the seventh day as a holy day given to mankind to keep. The seventh day was identified with Jewish superstitions. Another day was chosen by Christians to place distance between them and the Jews. But why was Sunday chosen? Calvin says,

\begin{quote}
It was not, however, without a reason that the early Christians substituted what we call the Lord’s day for the Sabbath. The resurrection of our Lord being the end and accomplishment of that true rest which the ancient Sabbath typified, this day, by which types were abolished, serves to warn Christians against adhering to a shadowy ceremony.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

He went on to say that “I do not cling so to the number seven as to bring the Church under bondage to it, nor do I condemn churches for holding their meetings on other solemn days, provided they guard against superstition.”\textsuperscript{39} So Calvin’s advice was: choose any day you wish as long as it is free from superstition, for the distinction between the seventh day from the rest was only typical.\textsuperscript{40}

**Summary**

In our brief overview of these church leaders, Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin, we notice some differences, but also a theme running throughout. The theme is that Christ is the antitype of the seventh-day Sabbath, just as He is the antitype of all Christological types in the OT. Even though the Sabbath is seen as vested with more than typical value, it is the typical that designates it as temporary and fulfilled/transcended by Christ. We have seen that Satan’s cunning deception has been to pretend to promote Christ while behind that guise he attacks Christ and His Sabbath. This is a forceful argument that recurs again in later times. We will delimit our attention to two recent books.

**The Ratzlaff/Carson Books**

A recently published book, entitled *Sabbath in Crisis*,\textsuperscript{41} rejects the seventh-day Sabbath as a day to be kept holy by Christians. The tragedy is that the book is written by Dale Ratzlaff, a former
Seventh-day Adventist minister. D. A. Carson has written the foreword. Carson edited the book *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day* (1982), a volume written by a group of scholars at Cambridge University. The work was essentially a response to Adventist Samuele Bacchiocchi’s book *From Sabbath to Sunday* (1977). Ratzlaff’s book is a popularized version of the basic thesis found in the more scholarly Carson tome.

There are three views concerning the Sabbath today: 1. Sunday sabbatarianism, which considers Sunday as the Christian Sabbath (transfer/modification). This view alleges that the Sabbath of the OT was transferred to Sunday in the NT, with modification of Sabbath keeping regulations. 2. Saturday sabbatarianism, which considers Saturday as the continued Sabbath (reformation/continuation). This view, held by Seventh-day Adventists, believes that the Sabbath of the OT was kept by Jesus, who reformed Sabbath keeping by overthrowing the human rules that bound it. This reformed Sabbath of the OT continues to be the Sabbath of the NT. 3. Non-sabbatarianism, which considers the Sabbath to have culminated in Christ (fulfillment/transformation). This view alleges that the Sabbath of the OT was fulfilled by Jesus, and the symbolism of the Sinaitic Sabbath has been transformed into other symbols in the new covenant. The Ratzlaff/Carson books subscribe to this non-sabbatarian view. Their view, though different in some details, is in essential agreement with the church theologians, Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin. All replace the Sabbath with Christ.

The non-sabbatarian thesis is this: The fourth commandment Sabbath is only for Israel, and is essentially different from the creation Sabbath, and is merely a type of the salvation-rest Christ brought. Hence, like the priesthood, sacrifices and Messianic prophecies, the Sinaitic Sabbath met both its reality and fulfillment in Christ. So the Sabbath has undergone transformation from physical rest to salvation instead of transference from Saturday to Sunday.

Behind their thesis, the Carson and Ratzlaff books posit a radical difference between the old covenant and its Sabbath and the new covenant and Christ. But, does not such a distinction between the two covenants call in question the unity of the Old and
New Testaments and the unity of the plan of salvation? Does God change? Is He different in the New Testament and its covenant from what He was in the Old Testament and its covenant? The Bible is clear that God changes not (Mal 3:6). He “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8).

In fact, the new covenant is the same as the everlasting covenant (Gen 17:13, Heb 13:20), with the old covenant a temporary teaching device used by God to meet people fresh out of slavery, with a view to preparing them to enter into the everlasting covenant, which by contrast to this old covenant is called the new covenant. This is the “historical period” view of the covenants, where the new is really older than the old, even though the old covenant is a historical period that precedes the new covenant as a historical period.

There is another way to look at the two covenants. This is the “existential,” or “experience” view. Here the old covenant is a works or legalistic response to God, whereas the new covenant is a faith or relationship response to Him. In this view David, who delighted in God’s law (Psa 119:70), had the new covenant experience though living in the old covenant historical period; whereas some legalistic believers in Galatia (Gal 1:6-9) experienced the old covenant while living in the new covenant period.

Therefore, if the new covenant is the same as the everlasting covenant, then both are the same as the one plan of salvation. Sabbath, salvation, and everlasting covenant each reveal God’s desire to be with humankind. All three are equally included in the everlasting gospel. As such, the Sabbath is a creation ordinance and not tied to the temporary and passing old covenant. The Carson/Ratzlaff books fail to relate the new covenant to the everlasting covenant and the Sabbath to creation. In linking the Sabbath only to a temporary covenant, an unbiblical dichotomy between law in the OT and gospel in the NT is made.

It must be observed that while no NT writer doubts the importance of the new covenant, none of them speak against the seventh-day Sabbath, or speak of its replacement through Christ’s salvation. Given the sacredness of the seventh-day (Exod 20:8-11), the death penalty for failure to keep it in the past (Exod 31:14), the Babylonian captivity caused in part through Sabbath breaking (Jer
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17:19-27), and the prophets’ support of the Sabbath (Ezek 20:12-24, 22:8, 26, 23:38; Isa 56:2-6, 58:13-14; Neh 10:31, 13:15-22), one would expect a clear announcement of any Sabbath change if such was a part of the gospel good news. No command to forsake the seventh-day Sabbath or to keep any other day exists in the NT. Equally significant, Christ never suggested a change of His Sabbath, which He kept (Mark 1:21, 3:1; Luke 4:16-27, 13:10). Yet He instituted the Lord’s Supper to replace the Passover (Matt 26:17-30), even designating the cup as “the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20, cf. vs. 7-20).

In spite of these facts, in the Carson/Ratzlaff books the old covenant law is replaced by the new covenant Holy Spirit. The Sabbath is replaced by the Lord’s Supper. The moral/ceremonial distinctions of law are not considered the self-evident biblical basis for any continuity/discontinuity. In other words, the Sabbath as moral law does not remain for Christians on the basis of being in the moral law (Decalogue). The Sabbath is even placed within the ceremonial category. Whereas in history the fourth commandment is dichotomized as moral (time for God) and ceremonial (time of week), with the moral “rest” remaining, while the ceremonial “seventh” does not; these books view the salvation-history mission of Jesus as fulfilling/transforming/transcending/replacing the old covenant Sabbath.

“In short the physical rest of the Old Testament sabbath has become the salvation rest of the true Sabbath . . . the Sabbath keeping now demanded is the cessation from reliance on one’s own works (Heb 4:9, 10).” The Old sabbaths have been “superseded,” “transformed.” Christ’s mission “brought the true sabbath rest of the end time into the course of history,” throwing the law into eclipse, making it obsolete, so that He taught a new sabbath law, and His resurrection “fulfills the rest signified by the Old Testament sabbath.”

At best, the Ratslaff/Carson books attempt to understand the Sabbath in the light of Christ, even though their attempt is a dismal failure. But at least they tried. That’s more than the Jews did in the time of Christ with all their six hundred halakot, or man-made laws, to keep the Sabbath. The Jews bent on trying to earn their own salvation through the Sabbath, did not see through the Sab-
bath to the Savior. At least the Ratslaff/Carson books make the attempt. But, as we will see later, they missed the most important aspect of the relationship between the Sabbath and the Savior.

Carson and Ratslaff deny that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, stating that it only began with Israel. They claim that the creation sabbath was different in quality (different rest) and time (permanent, not one day) from the Sinaitic sabbaths. This is reminiscent of Tertullian’s “eternal sabbath” and “temporal sabbath.” They note that there is no mention of the evening and morning in connection with the seventh day (Gen 2:2) as there had been for the other six (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). They believe that the seventh-day of creation was open, that the sabbath rest continued until the fall. Christ’s salvific mission was a new creation through His death and resurrection. Just as creation week concluded in an open-ended sabbath, so Christ’s re-creation brings this “divine rest of Genesis 2:2, 3.” It is claimed that “the New Testament testing truth is faith in Jesus. It is not the Seventh-day of the Sinaitic Covenant.” Christ’s Sabbath keeping is dismissed as not being a valid example for Christians, even though He was rejecting the halakah rather than the commandment as given by God. It is claimed that the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) did not require Gentiles to keep the Sabbath.

To summarize the major thrust of Ratzlaff’s book, for example, it views the creation sabbath as a permanent rest (not a seventh day). This permanent sabbath was interrupted by sin, acted out by the Sinaitic Sabbath, and restored with Christ’s rest. Now Christ’s rest has arrived; it replaces the seventh-day Sabbath. Biblical passages are interpreted within this framework.

Ratzlaff likens the Sabbath to a map. This analogy gives insight into Satan’s consistent attempt to garb falsehood with truth, to present Christ as the reason for replacing the Sabbath, when all the time Satan is the reason for the change. Here is the analogy:

The map and trail guide served important functions. But upon arrival at the destination it is time to put the map down and look up. So it is with the Sabbath. Rather than seek to keep a day holy let us put the day down and step into the arms of our holy Creator. Let us
enter ‘today’ into fellowship, into a ‘rest’ which remains for those who have believed.76

The only way to step into the arms of our Creator is to come with the Sabbath, which is the memorial of His creation. There is no either-or here. It is not Christ or the Sabbath. Nowhere in Scripture are the two mutually exclusive. We come to Him for rest (Matt 11:28), which is the only way to experience the Sabbath rest. We come precisely to Him so that we can keep all His commandments, including the Sabbath command. Disobedience, including Sabbath-disobedience, robs one of rest (Heb 4:3-11). When we step into the arms of our holy Creator, we step into the arms of the “Lord of the sabbath” (Matt 12:8). What God has joined together let not man (or devil) put asunder, is good theological as well as marital advice (Matt 19:6).

Sabbath as a Creation Ordinance

Although Carson and Ratzlaff deny the Sabbath as a creation ordinance,77 scholars of the past have supported the creation ordinance of the Sabbath. For example, Philo described the Sabbath as “the birthday of the world” and “the festival not of a single city or country but of the universe.” We have seen that Tertullian and Barnabas believed the Sabbath was instituted at creation. Others supporting Sabbath as a creation ordinance include Martin Luther,78 John Calvin,79 Alfred Edersheim,80 C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch,81 Gordon J. Wenham,82 Robert L. Dabney,83 Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott,84 John Skinner,85 John P. Lange86 and James G. Murphy,87 to name a few, together with The Bible Commentary,88 and A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.89

Some contemporary scholars also support the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. For example, R. Alan Cole says, “It is highly likely that the origins of sabbath (like the origins of tithing and circumcision) go back well beyond the law, even though there is no direct biblical evidence for its observance.”90 Walter Elwell says, “The sabbath’s setting in the biblical account of creation implies that it is one of those OT standards which are meant for all men, and not just for Israel.”91 Some other scholars include D. A Rausch,92 J. C. McCann Jr.93 and J. H. Sailhamer.94 Gordon J.
Wenham states, “the Sabbath idea is as old as creation itself.” The fact of manna not falling on Sabbaths before the commandments were given at Sinai (Exod 16), and the very term “remember” the sabbath in the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8), both presuppose a Sabbath commandment before Sinai. Evidence supports the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. It is not good enough to say that there is no biblical record that the patriarchs kept the Sabbath. It is equally true that there is no biblical evidence that they didn’t keep the Sabbath. Arguments from silence are not sufficient to make a case, as they can be argued as evidence for opposite conclusions. At best, such arguments cancel out one another. Far more important is the fact that the biblical record refers to Sabbath keeping before Sinai. The logical conclusion is to ask from whence came that Sabbath deference. It involved a miracle from God, that is, manna not falling on the seventh day. In this way the sanctity of the Sabbath before Sinai is shown to be supported by God’s action in supplying a double quantity of manna on Friday so that the seventh day could be a day of rest. It would appear that such a practice is rooted in God’s blessing of the Sabbath at the end of creation week (Gen 2:3).

The fact that the seventh day does not have the usual “evening and morning” designation (Gen 2:3), as do the other six days of creation, in no way suggests that it was an eternal sabbath merely interrupted by sin, to be restored after the consummation, as some suggest. Though the creation record makes no mention of the word “sabbath,” nor a sabbath command, God’s act of blessing the seventh day (Gen 2:2) must be understood in the context of His other two blessings of animals (Gen 1:22) and man (Gen 1:28). As J. G. Murphy discerned, “The solemn act of blessing and hallowing is the institution of a perpetual order of seventh-day rest: in the same manner as the blessing of the animals denoted a perpetuity of self-multiplication, and the blessing of man indicated further a perpetuity of dominion over the earth and its products.” Subsequent Sabbath commandments identify the seventh-day of creation as the day that God blessed and set apart as His holy Sabbath (eg. Exod 20:11, 31:15).

In the Carson tome, A. T. Lincoln, admits “If the hypothesis of the sabbath as a creation ordinance could be established, then,
whatever the temporary nature of the sabbath as part of the Mosaic covenant, the appeal could still be made to the permanence of the mandate for one day of rest as inherent to humanity made in the image of God. The Bible supports the seventh-day Sabbath as a creation ordinance, given to mankind as a perpetual memorial, to celebrate the finished works of Christ (cf. Mark 2:27).

In my opinion, the most serious failure of the Carson and Ratzlaff books is their unbiblical dichotomy between the work of Christ as Creator and His work as Redeemer, with the resulting discontinuity between the Sabbath of the Old and New Testaments. Scripture is clear that the Christ who came as Savior of mankind in the NT is the same One who created humankind as recorded in the OT (Heb 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17). Both were acts of Christ as gifts to all mankind. Both were creative gifts, creation out-of-nothing (ex nihilo) before sin and creation without human contribution after sin. Humankind made no contribution to either acts of Christ. Both were His acts, performed by His power, voluntarily and decisively as gifts to all the race. It was the same Christ who created the Sabbath. He blessed it and set it apart from the other six days, as a symbol of the difference between man’s working days and His need to rest in Christ’s work. The Sabbath compared to the six days of creation was a powerful type signifying that man’s work has a limit. Humans can do many awesome things, but no human can make himself or herself, and no human can save himself or herself. The Sabbath followed both gifts, for Christ created humans on creation Friday and redeemed them on crucifixion Friday. The first full day to follow both creations by Christ was the Sabbath: to celebrate Christ’s finished work, and to rest in that work.

What is missing in the Ratslaff/Carson books, as well as in the theology of some past church leaders (Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin) is the deeper Christological significance of Christ’s acts in both creation and salvation with respect to the Sabbath celebration of His work. The wedge placed between the Old and New Testaments fails to do justice to the everlasting gospel revealed throughout Scripture. And the severance of Christ from the Sabbath fails to acknowledge the salvific meaning of the Sabbath throughout Scripture. Readers interested in following the unfolding meaning of the Sabbath throughout Scripture can read my
article “How to Survive the Coming Sunday-Law Crisis” in the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 2/1, Spring 1991. In other words, while these authors think they exalt Christ by rejecting the seventh-day Sabbath, they really reject the significance of Christ as Creator-Redeemer.

Sunday has traditionally been recognized as the Christian sabbath by those who believe it replaced the Jewish Sabbath in honor of the resurrection of Christ. This is by far the prevailing view of Christians throughout the literature, from earliest times till the present. This linking of Sunday with a great salvific event of Christ is a further example of clothing an attack against the seventh-day Sabbath in a Christian garb. Most Christians have bought the identity without stopping to think through the Christological insights that this view jettisons. But not all have viewed Sunday in this way. It is of interest that scholars writing in Carson’s book conclude that “it is all but impossible to believe that Sunday was established as the Lord’s Day, as a holy convocation, and as a Christian response to a creation ordinance in Palestine shortly after the Resurrection. The arguments against this position are virtually conclusive.” Later the same work states: “It cannot be argued that the New Testament itself provides warrant for the belief that since the Resurrection God appointed the first day to be observed as the Sabbath.” Concerning the Sabbath, it is admitted that “There is no biblical or compelling theological reason why it has to be Sunday.”

In contrast to linking Sunday with Christ’s resurrection, and therefore rooting Sunday into a NT event, Dominion Theology links Sunday with the OT Jewish Sabbath. Advocates of Dominion Theology are calling for a reinstitution of all the sabbath laws in connection with Sunday, including the sabbath death decree. Forces now at work across the planet are leading to the fulfillment of Revelation 13. In that chapter John predicts that America will lead all the world to wonder and worship the Catholic church (Rev 13:11) and to enforce its Sunday keeping with a death decree (Rev 13:14-15). Never before this time has there been a global sabbath law. Paradoxically the law will be promoted as a memorial of Christ’s resurrection, but pushed with OT enforcement. It is necessary that Seventh-day Adventist be prepared to give a reason for
why the seventh day is still holy, and be prepared to stand firm for truth. To stand when the whole world bows before a modern image on the plain of Dura (Dan 3:4-30) will necessitate not only knowing why the seventh-day is the right day, but what it means to keep that day holy. To this we now turn.

The Christian Sabbath

Christ began His ministry on a Sabbath (Luke 4:16), proclaiming His mission to set the oppressed and prisoners free and to announce “the year of the Lord’s favor” (vs. 18-19). As Samuele Bacchiocchi notes, most commentators refer this year to the Jubilee or sabbatical year. Christ cited Isaiah 61:1-2, claiming that “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Bacchiocchi asks a crucial question about this fulfillment. Did Christ view the sabbath as a type that met its fulfillment in Him, or did He identify His mission with the sabbath? I believe the Sabbath was a type of redemption. Every week it came to bring relief from the burdens of work. It set workers free for a day. Thus the weekly Sabbath gives insight into Christ’s mission to set free those burdened with sin.

Yet the Sabbath was not a type in the sense that it met its fulfillment in the antitype and afterwards had no function. In His announcement Christ identified His mission with the essence of the Sabbath. He had come to bring rest to sin and sick weary people. He had come to set them free in Himself. He would demonstrate through miracles the total freedom He had to offer. And He often chose a Sabbath to perform that healing (Luke 4:31-37, 38-40; Matt 12:9-21; Luke 13:10-17; John 5:1-18, 9:1-41) so that the physical release could give some insight into the spiritual salvation He came to give. Christ gave the Sabbath and salvation to mankind. He illustrated the salvation gift through the Sabbath miracles.

The Sabbath gift of freedom had deteriorated into a day of work in Christ’s day. There were some six hundred halakot, or man-made requirements that smothered the day with legalistic burdens. The Sabbath was no longer an invitation to set the burdened free. It had become itself an instrument to shackle. In stark contrast, Christ came to set the prisoners free, and illustrated this freeing work through the Sabbath. He came to illustrate the for-
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gotten essence of the Sabbath (cf. Matt 5:17-19). Like His mission, the Sabbath came to set prisoners free.

Christ was well aware of the ceremonial law. He knew that it was a type of Himself. The function of the earthly sanctuary/temple came to an end at Calvary. The sacrifices came to an end in His sacrifice, circumcision gave way to adult baptism. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29) met to consider the Pharisees’ charge that Gentiles must be circumcised according to the law of Moses (vs. 5). Peter reported to the Council that Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit without being circumcised according to the law of Moses (vss. 7-11). Paul and Barnabas told of the miraculous signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles (v. 12). But nowhere do we read that the Sabbath was replaced by Sunday.

Types met their fulfillment in Christ, to whom they pointed, and in Whom they found their meaning. And these included ceremonial sabbaths, sabbaths that were connected with festivals such as Unleavened bread (Lev 23:6-8), Feast of Weeks (Lev 23:15, 16, 21), Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23: 24, 25), Day of Atonement (Lev 23:28, 32), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:34, 39). These ceremonial sabbaths came to an end with the ceremonial feasts of which they were a part.

The cessation of these ceremonial sabbaths is the content of Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:16,17, “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” Clearly Paul was not speaking about the moral law of the Ten Commandments. The separation of the Sabbath day—”one day in seven” rest—from the specified seventh, calling the first moral and the second ceremonial, has no logical or biblical foundation.

The seventh-day Sabbath must be more than a type. The fact that Christ saw the Sabbath in a far greater context is seen when He said, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). Christ also said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Christ did not say the Sabbath was made for the Jewish race, but for mankind. Clearly Christ is rejecting the national confines placed on the Sabbath by
human thinkers and squarely places it into its global context. This is tantamount to saying that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. The Sabbath, as understood by Christ, breaks beyond national and typical confines and is solidly placed in its broadest context as transcultural and transgenerational.

As Gerhard Hasel expressed it,

The Son of Man as Lord determines the true meaning of the sabbath. The sabbath activities of Jesus are neither hurtful provocations nor mere protests against rabbinic legal restrictions, but are the kingdom of God in which man is taught the original meaning of the sabbath as the recurring weekly proleptic ‘day of the Lord’ in which God manifests his healing and saving rulership over man.¹⁰⁴

The New Testament corroborates this conclusion, for the secondary meaning of Hebrews 4 states that there still remains a seventh-day Sabbath rest (kata-pausis) for the people of God (vss. 4-5), and Hebrews was written in AD 70, nearly forty years after Christ’s crucifixion (to which scholars look to discontinue the Sabbath because a type) and resurrection (to which scholars look to change the sabbath to the first day). Hebrews 4 denies the possibility of either of these reasons for both the Sabbath’s demise or its change. Hebrews 4 agrees with Christ’s linking of the Sabbath with the entire human race without exception relative to the Old and New Testament periods.

The Christian Sabbath is the day made holy by Christ in the creation of the world. It was Christ who created the planet and Adam and Eve. It was He who rested on the seventh day, setting it apart as holy. It was this seventh day given to mankind that Christ kept while He lived on earth as the God-man. He did not keep the Sabbath because he was a Jew, even though this can be said about His being circumcised and keeping the Passover. Rather He kept the Sabbath as He kept all Ten Commandments. In this He is an example for all humans and not just for the Jews. It is the same Sabbath Christ kept that will be kept forever in the new earth (Isa 66:22-23). The Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:1-29) says nothing about changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

**The End-time Sabbath Test**

Dale Ratzlaff rejects the Sabbath as the seal of God as an
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end-time testing truth. He says, “Nowhere in the New Testament is this type of evangelism taught or practiced. Rather, New Testament evangelism is always a proclamation of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ!” Furthermore, he says, “The SDA ‘traditional evangelistic method,’ as mentioned above, undermines the gospel. It takes the gospel out of the center and makes Sabbath observance ‘the testing truth.’”

It is Ratzlaff that takes the Sabbath out of its gospel context, and excises the good news about coming events. Furthermore, no careful reading of Revelation 13-20 can escape the fact that the beast and its image is a significant factor in an end-time test over the gospel of Christ. We shall consider this omitted dimension of the gospel in this section, and see that the Sabbath is actually the very essence of the gospel in the end-time. There is no gospel without the Sabbath, and there is no Sabbath without the gospel. The two are inextricably combined in Scripture and in end-time events. An attack against one is an attack against both. This is a serious problem of Ratzlaff’s book that he totally overlooks. While attempting to champion the gospel he rejects Christ’s Sabbath that magnifies it. The sad fact in the end-time is that separation from Christ’s Sabbath leads inexorably to separation from Him, or rejection of Christ leads to rejection of His Sabbath.

Satan has ever claimed to offer a more exalted existence to those who would free themselves from Christ. This took place in heaven, in Eden and will again be offered in the end-time.

To the very close of the controversy in heaven, the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator’s law. He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty, and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence. With one accord, Satan and his host threw the blame of their rebellion wholly upon Christ. . . .

In Eden Satan said Eve would become as God if she ate the fruit (Gen 3:5). “As she ate, she seemed to feel a vivifying power,
and imagined herself entering upon a higher state of existence.\textsuperscript{107} In the end-time “Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith; but at the same time he works as a destroyer.”\textsuperscript{108}

Throughout the great controversy this more exalted experience has been equated with freedom from God’s law. As noted above, in Heaven Satan “boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator’s law. . . . He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty. . . .”\textsuperscript{109} Yet, in the end-time, Satan will come to enforce his Sunday law with a death decree (Rev 13:11-15)!

The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.\textsuperscript{110}

In the great time of trouble Satan will come as Christ and reign on planet-earth. He has always wanted to take Christ’s position and receive the worship due to Him alone. He will rule over billions of humans as the Savior, when really He has robbed them of eternal life. “While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation.”\textsuperscript{111} He will send tornadoes, hailstorms, floods, earthquakes “in every place and in a thousand forms” and declare “that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday-sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troubler of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity.”\textsuperscript{112}

When the angels cease to hold the winds of strife in the end-time (Rev 7:1-3), unprecedented troubles will deluge the planet. These will include natural disasters and moral collapse. “Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth.”\textsuperscript{113}
Communications from the spirits will declare that God has sent them to convince the rejecters of Sunday of their error, affirming that the laws of the land should be obeyed as the law of God. They will lament the great wickedness in the world, and second the testimony of religious teachers that the degraded state of morals is caused by the desecration of Sunday. Great will be the indignation excited against all who refuse to accept their testimony.114

After probation’s close Satan will cause havoc. “The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.”115

Satan’s unholy Trinity116 of dragon (paganism, Rev 12:4), beast (Catholicism, Rev 13:1-3) and false prophet (Apostate Protestantism, Rev 13:11-12) will deceive the nations through miracles and bring them to the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:12-16). Then the true Christ is pictured as a rider on a white horse coming to make war (Rev 19:11), and “I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army” (Rev 19:19). Here are the two sides. Those who follow the counterfeit Christ and those who follow the genuine Christ, those who keep the Sabbath and those who enforce Sunday. “The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict in which all the world will act a part.”117 The Sabbath question “will agitate the whole world,”118 as all the world wonders after the beast (Rev 13:3). “The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself. He will arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth.”119

In the coming conflict, “The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists, because they will not yield homage to the papacy by honoring Sunday, the institution of this antichristian power.”120 “As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration.”121
“There will come a time when, because of our advocacy of Bible truth, we shall be treated as traitors.”

“Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith.”

“Satan has a thousand masked batteries which will be opened upon the loyal, commandment-keeping people of God to compel them to violate conscience.”

“All who in that evil day would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of conscience, will need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His Word; for those who are true to God will be persecuted, their motives will be impugned, their best efforts misinterpreted, and their names cast out as evil.”

What will happen when this crisis overtakes Seventh-day Adventists? “The great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. . . .”

So many will leave that “The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place.”

**How to Prepare for the Coming Crisis**

To survive the Sabbath test we need to experience the Sabbath rest: The Sabbath test is far more than mathematics. It transcends which day is the seventh. It goes to the essence of the Sabbath itself. The Sabbath teaches “the distinction between the Creator and His creatures.” This is precisely what Satan has refused to acknowledge since the inception of his rebellion. In the end-time Satan seeks to replace His Creator when he comes impersonating Christ and promoting Sunday.

The end-time saints will not worry about the world-wide opposition against them. This is because sabbath keeping is more than a day—it is an experience. They keep Christ’s Sabbath and so can rest in Him. They experience the sabbath resting in a Creator Who alone can take them through. They recognize that they didn’t do anything to get into this world, and they cannot do anything to earn the right to get into the next one. Christ has done for them that which they could never do for themselves—He created them.
and redeemed them. The Sabbath is resting in this double finished work of Christ.

This is why the Sabbath follows creation Friday (Gen 2:2) and crucifixion Friday (Luke 23:54-24:1). Properly understood both Sabbaths were time to celebrate a finished work of Christ: His finished work of creation and His finished work of redemption. It is resting in these works of Christ that is the very essence of the Sabbath rest. We rest in Him as our Creator-Redeemer. Psalm 91 speaks of this rest during final events on planet-earth. “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand will fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent” (Psa 91:1-10).

There are many OT texts that contain typological references to the last battle between truth and error. It is good to read these over and over to fix them in our memory to give us courage as we face the time when the Sabbath “will be the great point at issue.” These texts include Joshua 10:7-14 and Job 38:22-23, which indicate that God uses hail as a weapon against the enemies of His people. Rev 16:17-21 shows that He will do it again in the seventh plague. A number of texts speak of God causing the enemy to kill each other, eg, in Judges 7:19-23; 1 Sam 14:19; 20; 2 Chron 20:22-24; Isa 19:2, 31:8-9; Ezek 38:14-23; Hag 2:22. Other battles that typify Armageddon include Judges 4-5; 1 Kings 18:16-40; Isa 34:8-10; Jer 25:12-15, 29-38 and Zech 14:13. Finally, Isaiah 63:1-6 is typical of the description of Armageddon in Revelation 19:14-21. All of these texts share one common fact: without Christ the victory is impossible. In past battles, God’s people were completely out-
numbered. They felt helpless, but rested in their only Helper. This is the essence of the Sabbath rest in the coming battle.

_The exodus out of Egypt is a type of the exodus from this world through final events:_ It was important for the children of Israel to recognize their utter need of God in the escape. God and they both had a part. Their part was infinitesimally small, but essential. God said to the leader, “Step into the water and I will do the rest.” Israel entered the Red Sea and crossed over on dry ground, while God opened up the waters for a safe crossing. As they traversed the passage through walls of water, with the world’s greatest army pursuing, they could only look to God for survival. Whether they knew it or not, they experienced the essence of the Sabbath—experienced the distinction between the Creator and themselves as creatures.

In the final exodus, God’s saints will have every earthly support taken from them. They can neither buy nor sell (Rev 13:17), the world is against them (Rev 13:3, 12), and a death decree hangs over their heads (Rev 13:15). All they can do is rest in God, realizing that it is His department to get them through. Their department is to trust in Him implicitly. They will cry out as Israel did in the time of Jehoshaphat, “O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you” (2 Chron 20:12). God answered “‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. . . . You will not have to fight in this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you’” (2 Chron 20:15, 17).

So it was in the Exodus. “Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still!’” (Exod 14:13-14). All Israel had to do was to follow God’s instruction to cross over. He did the rest. He protected His people (Exod 14:19). “The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians” (Exod 14:29), and threw the Egyptians into confusion. “He made the wheels of their chariots swerve so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said,
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‘Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt’” (Exod 14:25), and “not one of them survived” (Exod 14:28). He wrought mightily for Israel in a deliverance that was swift, complete and final.

No wonder liberated Israel sang the song of Moses: “I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him. . . . Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. . . . In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling” (Exod 15:1, 2, 6-8, 13).

After the exodus, Christ added a new reason for sabbath keeping beyond remembering Him as Creator. He said, “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:15). Properly understood, the utter dependence upon Christ in the exodus is the essence of the sabbath: resting in Him.

The way to prepare for the coming crisis is to remember that Christ is our Creator and Deliverer. We need to enter the shelter of God’s presence, abide in Him, and allow Him to deepen our relationship with Him through Bible study, communion and through the infilling of the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9). Not until we realize the distinction between ourselves and our Creator, until we find nothing in ourselves to commend us to Him and to fit us for heaven, will we really rest in Him. Resting in Him is the heart of the Gospel. It is the good news that in Him alone is our title and fitness for heaven.130 Having done all good things, we are still unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). Gone is confidence in works, in position and title. We have become as little children (Matt 18:3)—trusting in Christ alone. Sabbath keeping is more than keeping a day, it is being kept by Christ in that day. It is a day that reminds us that He means
everything to us. It is a day in which we find in Him alone our self worth. It tells us that He made us and redeemed us. We matter to God.

Modern Israel will come to the banks of the Red Sea when the Sunday law and death decree move in against them, and the whole world surrounds them as the enemy. Now the exodus type is to meet its cosmic antitype. A planet-wide escalation, including the worst time of trouble ever (Dan 12:1), closes in on God’s remnant. Every earthly support is gone. They have only One to whom they can cling. Like Jacob they cling to Christ (Gen 32:22-26). Christ promised the saints, “never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb 13:5) for “I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:20). Standing with us in the final fiery furnace (Dan 3:25), “He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor 10:13). He promised, “I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth” (Rev 3:10). Dark will be the night of this world’s end, but brighter and more glorious the deliverance. He will stand there with us in the trenches and open up a way through final events.

The saints will cross over on dry ground as Christ keeps back the devastating waters ready to destroy the remnant. Deliverance comes and the saints will sing “a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:3). This is “the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had. . . ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation,’ for they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob’s trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God’s judgments.”

What is this song they sing? They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your
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righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev 15:3,4). Like ancient Israel after the exodus they do not sing about themselves. Their song is about Christ. They worship and praise Him alone. This reveals how opposite they are to Satan. Whereas they know the distinction between the Creator and creatures, Satan denies this fact. The lost are those who try to take God’s place and lose their own. The saved acknowledge Christ’s place and remain content in their own. They do not try to be God. They rest in their Creator-Redeemer. They keep the Sabbath of Christ because He keeps them.

The crucial difference between the saved and the lost is this understanding and acceptance of Christ’s distinction from them. The saved will experience this distinction in their resting in Him. This is what will get them through the final exodus, through the end-events. This is the essence of the Sabbath. These are the ones who rest in Christ alone, and throughout eternity will sing about Him and their experience in the end-time (Rev 14:3). If its worth singing about on mount Zion (Rev 14:1-3), either in Heaven (Heb 12:22-23) or in the new earth, then it must be worth going through. It is from this perspective that we need to consider final events, for they will be a Sabbath resting in Him that will cause the saints to sing in the life to come the song of deliverance.

Central to the deliverance through the Red Sea and through the final events is the deliverance of Calvary: There Christ did not go unimpeded through the waters. He succumbed to the death we deserve. He became the enemy in our place. It was as if He became the Egyptian army and the Babylonian beast. He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), took our place, died our death (Rom 4:25), that we could cross over on dry ground. No wonder we will forever sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, the song of deliverance. Resting in His salvation is the heart of the gospel, and the very essence of the Sabbath. All attempts to change the Sabbath, even through a Christian guise, are a rebellious attempt to save oneself, to cross over in one’s own might and to deny to the Savior the proper distinction between Him as Creator-Redeemer and humans as His dependent creatures.
Endnotes
Note: Biblical citations are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.
1 Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 12, 1896.
3 Ellen G. White put it this way, “The law makes sin appear exceedingly sinful. It condemns the transgressor, but it has no power to save and restore him. Its province is not to pardon. Pardon comes through Christ, who lived the law in humanity. Man’s only hope is in the substitute provided by God, who gave his Son, that he might reconcile the world to himself.” *Advent Review and Herald*, July 25, 1899.
4 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36.
5 Ellen G. White, p. 38.
13 Barnabas, *ANF*, 1.146.
16 Barnabas, *ANF*, 1.146.
17 Barnabas, *ANF*, 1.147.
22 Augustine, *NANF*, 7.132.
26 Ignatius said ‘“He will come and save us.’ Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness; for ‘he that does not work, let him not eat.’ For say the (holy) oracles, ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread.’ But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God and not eating things prepared the day before, not using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, not finding delight in dancing and plaudits which have no sense in them. And after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s Day as a
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festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days (of the week).” Ignatius, ANF, 1.62-63.

27 Augustine, ANF, 8.453.
28 Augustine, ANF, 2.511.
30 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 2:1110, (Q. 107, Art 2).
32 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1:354 (Q. 73, Art. 2).
33 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Ibid.
35 John Calvin, Institutes, 1:339, (2.8.28).
36 John Calvin, Institutes, 2:341, (2.8.30).
37 John Calvin, Institutes, 1:342, (2.8.32).
38 John Calvin, Institutes, 1:343, (2.8.34).
39 John Calvin, Institutes, Ibid.
40 John Calvin, Institutes, 1:344, (2.8.34).
42 Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 310.
43 D. A. Carson, ed, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982). That same year the Seventh-day Adventist church published its own contribution: Kenneth A Strand ed., The Sabbath in Scripture and History (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982). These contributions make no reference to each other, but some of the arguments found in From Sabbath to Lord’s Day are answered in The Sabbath in Scripture and History.
45 In the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 2/1, pp. 153-154, I made reference to these books, noting the need for a separate article (footnote no. 6). The present article is, in part, to meet this need.
46 Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, pp. 274-277.
47 Dale Ratzlaff, p. 41. The Sabbath originated in Israel, (D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, pp. 23-24), was not a creation ordinance, p. 34, cf pp. 349-350; and is transcended by Christ, p. 364).
49 The new covenant interprets, modifies and transforms the old covenant laws (including the Sabbath), with reference to Christ as center of the new covenant (Sabbath in Crisis, p. 81).
50 The Sabbath is likened to a map that serves merely to get one to a destination. Upon arrival it has no further function (Sabbath in Crisis, p. 267). With obvious reference to Hebrews 4:9, Ratzlaff claims, “The `sabbatismos' (Gr.) rest of the new covenant is better than the `sabbaton' (Gr.) rest of the old covenant for it deals with the reality to which the old covenant only prefigured. It moves from observance to experience” (Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 268). “Jesus views the law as essentially prophetic of Himself and His ministry” (D.A. Carson,
From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 84). “Christ’s life, death, resurrection and teaching threw the law into eclipse” (From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 126). The OT law was transitory, imperfect and inferior to Christ (op cit, pp. 376-377). “Christ brings the spiritual reality; His work fulfills the intent of the Sabbath, and with Christ comes that for which the Sabbath existed. The reality of salvation rest supersedes the sign” (op cit p. 215).


53 Cf. “One cannot go both directions; he is a disciple of Jesus or a disciple of Moses” (Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 128, cf. p. 135 cf. p. 138).


55 Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 265. “It is no longer ‘remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,’ but DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME” (Sabbath in Crisis, p. 274). Cf. “It is just possible, in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus Himself replaces the Sabbath” (D.A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 84).


57 However Ratzlaff claims, “the moral principles upon which the Sinaitic Covenant laws were based are included in the moral principles of the new covenant” (p. 264).

58 D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 69. The Sabbath law is not moral law (p. 85). Compare the fact that second century writers believed that the Sabbath commandment, though in the Decalogue, was classified with the ceremonial ordinances that passed when Christ’s fulfilled them (p. 267-268). “The writers of this period take one attitude towards the Decalogue but a different one towards the Sabbath” (p. 378). “The majority of second-century writers seem to have been sound in their instinct to treat the Sabbath as a temporary Mosaic institution” (p. 381).


60 Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 293; D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, pp. 113, 205, 373-374; cf. p. 84.


62 D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 346

63 D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 126.

64 D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 378.


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68 D. Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, pp. 22-23, 245-246, 263; D.A. Carson, Sabbath to Lord’s Day, pp. 349-351.
69 D. Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 20; D.A. Carson, Sabbath to Lord’s Day, pp. 348.
71 D. Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 333.
72 D. Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 88.
73 D. Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 115; D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, pp. 73, 76, 345, 361-362; cf. an exception, p. 364.
75 For example, Ratzlaff uses the Pharisees’ words (“You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! John 9:28”) to say “One cannot go both directions; either he is a disciple of Jesus or a disciple of Moses” (p. 135). He says “This is a key verse in this chapter and a very important one in our study of the Sabbath” (p. 135). Here his presupposition does not stop him from borrowing language from those in error to support his claim.
76 Dale Ratzlaff, Sabbath in Crisis, p. 267.
77 “The Sabbath is not viewed as a universal ordinance for all mankind but as a specific institution for Israel. As a sign of the covenant it was to last as long as that covenant.” (Harold H. P. Dressler in D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 34). Keil-Delitsch deny a pre-Sinaitic Sabbath commandment (Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. James Martin, (Grand Rapids MI:Eerdmans, 1986), Vol. 2, p. 119). “The evidence thus leads us to the conclusion that while the notion of God’s rest in Genesis 2 was treated eschatologically by the biblical writers, it was not held by them to be a ‘creation ordinance.’” (A. T. Lincoln in D. A. Carson, From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 351).
78 Martin Luther, Luther Works, ed. J. Pelikan, (St. Louis, MI: Concordia, 1958) 1.79-82.
84 James G. Murphy, This is the Day. The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1978), p. 2.
96 One commentary claims that the Genesis Sabbath account is a command, as follows, “And God rested on the seventh day from all His work, which He made; and God commanded (man) to bless and worship on the seventh day, and ordered (him) to sanctify it” (Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, D. Brown, A Commentary critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments, pp. 28-29).
99 M. Max B. Turner in From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, pp. 133-134.
100 A. T. Lincoln in From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, p. 386.
102 Samuele Bacchiocchi, From Sabbath to Sunday, p. 20.
103 Samuele Bacchiocchi, From Sabbath to Sunday, p.21.
105 Dale Ratzlaff, The Sabbath Crisis, p. 304.
107 Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 56.
110 Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 582.
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119 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 7. 141.
123 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5. 450.

Deceptive Views on the Second Coming

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The dragon of the Apocalypse can no more prevent Christ’s second coming than he could prevent Christ’s rising from the dead. But while Satan cannot prevent His return, he does attempt to deceive Christ’s followers, to confuse them about the manner, time, place, purpose and setting of the Lord’s return. With these terms of reference in mind, we turn to review the subject of our study.

Why is it important for Christians to believe in the second coming of Christ, and how important it is to understand the biblical teachings about His coming? The answer to the first part of the question is rather simple, for the Scriptures abound with the promises of His coming. Those Christians who believe in the reliability of the Word of God will certainly believe in the second coming of Christ. Both Testaments speak of His coming. In the OT we find two prophetic foci, the first and second Advents; while in the NT the prophetic focus is on the second Advent. The answer to the second part of the question concerning the importance of the events surrounding Christ’s second coming is altogether a different issue and is the concern of this paper.

As Jude reminds us, the first person in the OT to have a vision of the second coming of Christ was Enoch, the seventh from Adam, only six generations after creation. “Now Enoch prophesied saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints’” (Jude 14). In the Gospels we find Jesus saying to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare
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a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3). And in the book of Revelation, John says, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:1, 2, 4). From these few texts alone there ought to be no question about the certainty of Christ’s second coming and the centrality of this belief in the life of the Christian.

The Apostolic Church

The teaching of the second coming of Christ in the NT was misunderstood as early as the times of Paul. Although the subject of eschatology—the theological category for “the last things”—has been the playground of theologians throughout the centuries, particularly during the last one hundred and fifty years, the Thessalonian believers were the first to misunderstand Paul’s teachings concerning the second Advent. They thought the events immediately preceding the Second Coming were already taking place, and Christ would return in their day.

While among them, Paul had so forcefully preached the certainty of Christ’s return and the sequence of events that would precede it, that he did not think it necessary to repeat what he had said when writing to them about the resurrection in his first epistle. Not, that is, until he received word of how they had misconstrued what he had told them about the sequence of events.

Their confusion led Paul to clarify in his second epistle what he had previously taught them. He wrote, “Let no one deceive you by any means, for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?” (2 Thess 2:3-5). Paul made very
clear, in his second epistle to the Thessalonian believers, the events that needed to take place before the return of Christ.\textsuperscript{3}

Unfortunately, some Adventists have picked up the arguments from scholars using the higher-critical method who say Paul expected Christ to come in his day, and when He did not, he changed his mind. For evidence, they cite what he said to his converts in his first epistle to the Thessalonians: Christ would descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel; their dead loved ones would rise; and “we,” the living would be caught up with them (1 Thess 4:13-18). Then they point to his second epistle where Paul said Christ would not come until a falling away first occurred (2 Thess 2:1-4). This shows, they say, that when Christ did not come as soon as Paul expected Him, he changed his mind.\textsuperscript{4}

Ellen White clarifies the situation that existed in Thessalonica and gives us insight into what Paul believed and taught concerning the Second Coming:

In this First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul’s teachings concerning the second coming of Christ were in perfect harmony with his former instructions to the church. Yet his words were misapprehended by some of the Thessalonian brethren. They understood him to express the hope that he himself would live to witness the Saviour’s advent. This belief served to increase their enthusiasm and excitement. . . . In his second letter to this church, Paul seeks to correct their misapprehensions, and to set before them his true position. . . . He then showed that great events were to transpire in the future, as foretold in prophecy, before Christ should come. . . . The papal power, so clearly described by the prophet Daniel, was yet to rise, and wage war against God’s people, and trample upon his law. . . . Thus Paul put to naught the arguments of those who represented him as teaching that the day of Christ was at hand.\textsuperscript{5}

This misapprehended belief regarding the second coming of Christ had dramatic consequences in the lives of the believers in Thessalonica. Some inferred that, if indeed, the present world were so soon to come to an end, it was useless to pursue their common employment or carry on their business any longer. They gave themselves up to dreamy expectations of the future, to the point that the whole framework of fellowship in the Thessalonian church was in danger of dissolution.
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Those who encouraged this false expectation supported it by imagined revelations from the Holy Spirit, even forging and circulating a letter supposedly written by Paul to confirm their views. Satan even succeeded in leading some in Thessalonica to reject the gift of prophecy and to exalt other spiritual gifts in its place.

It was to check this evil that Paul felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to write his second epistle. This time he corrected their erroneous expectations about the immediacy of Christ’s return by reminding them of certain signs which must precede His coming, about which he had told them when he was with them.

The Post-Apostolic Church

Origen: Spiritualizing Scripture. This was not the end of Satan’s attempt to lead believers to misunderstand the Scriptures regarding the second Advent. In the third century, a theologian named Origen spiritualized the second coming. He taught that the return of Christ takes place when He comes into the soul, uniting the believer with Himself. The enlightenment of the believer through the writings of the prophets and apostles is Christ’s second coming, and it is in this sense that the believer enters into the kingdom of God. Thus it is that the second Advent of the Word made flesh takes place.

Origen’s understanding of Christ’s return was consistent with his overall understanding of Scripture. For him the Word of God had three parts: body, soul, and spirit. Each part represented a legitimate level of biblical interpretation: from the literal (body) to the moral (soul) to the spiritual (spirit). By using this approach for the understanding of Scripture, he was able to read into it whatever he wished.

Origen did not deny the literalness of Scripture, the actuality of biblical history per se. For him the spiritualization of the Bible did not deny its historicity, but believed the Bible to be primarily a spiritual book, and that a person could find its true meaning only by spiritualizing it. The literal meaning of Scripture he compared to the body. This meant that the “simple” have to be satisfied with faith in the crucified Christ. The soul of Scripture he compared to its moral teachings. But only the “perfect” could ascend beyond this and contemplate the spiritual teachings of the Bible. This is what
led him to speak of the coming of Christ in the “prophetic clouds” rather than the literal clouds of heaven, and of the end of the age as being the crucifixion of the world in the hearts of believers, meaning that for them the world had become dead.\textsuperscript{11} From such views we can see that it does matter what we believe about Christ’s coming and how Scripture should be interpreted.

\textit{Augustine: Millennial Reign Now.} A third example of misinterpreting the doctrine of the second Advent comes from the fifth century. Augustine, one of the Latin Church Fathers, influenced Christian understanding of the second coming of Christ for centuries. While he believed that Christ’s second Advent does occur when He comes into the hearts of the believers, he did not preclude, as Origen did, the literal, glorious return of Christ from heaven. Rather, he taught that Christ’s millennial reign began when He was here and would continue for 1,000 years before He would return in the clouds of heaven. He believed that the second coming of Christ occurs little by little and piece by piece in His church, and when the whole church is filled with His spiritual presence, then He will come in person.\textsuperscript{12}

Just prior to Augustine’s time, the Roman Empire under Constantine had become nominally Christian. Thus, according to Augustine, the Empire was no longer the seat of evil. Evil reigned in the hearts of the pagans, and they were also the millennial abyss—according to the book of Revelation—to which Satan had been assigned. In this sense, the great controversy between good and evil is between the “City of God” and the “City of the Devil.”\textsuperscript{13}

Those persons who make up the “City of God” are the elect. The Church is the Kingdom of Heaven, inhabited by the saints. Therefore, the “City of God”—the visible, hierarchically-organized church—must rule more and more of the world. This is to be done by a close relationship with the Christian state, which must promote the true worship of God by punishing and suppressing heresy and in this sense help the City of God to overcome the “City of the Devil.”\textsuperscript{14} With certain modifications this view is still the understanding of many in the Roman Catholic Church today, as we will point out later.
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The Reformation

Revival of Second Advent Truth. It was not until a thousand years after Augustine that his concept of equating the millennium and the second coming of Christ with the triumph of the Roman Church began to be challenged. The Reformation not only brought about a shift in the doctrine of salvation by its emphasis on justification by faith, but also an eschatological shift by reviving the true teachings of Scripture concerning the second coming of Christ. Luther and Calvin emphasized that believers should look forward to and prepare for the second Advent, which they believed was imminent.

While Luther tended to focus on time by saying that the “end” was not far off, Calvin did not; he simply admonished believers to watch and be ready. However, both rejected Augustine’s concept of equating the Roman Church with the seminal Kingdom of God on earth. Both believed that the pope was the Antichrist. And both held that the final struggle between the true church and the false that had now begun would culminate in the second coming of Christ.\(^{15}\)

It is interesting to note that while Luther saw many of the happenings in Europe as signs of the end, he also spoke at various times of the second coming as being a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred years away.\(^{16}\) The latter figure brings us to the Great Awakening of the nineteenth century.

Daniel Whitby: Postmillennialism. Prior to the Great Awakening, Daniel Whitby, an English commentator in Britain, popularized his theory that before the second Advent the whole world would be converted, and there would be a thousand years of peace culminating in the return of Christ. This meant that Christ would first come in mighty power through the Holy Spirit to convert the world, and then at the end of this glorious millennial period He would come in Person.\(^{17}\) But Christ did not say that all the world would be converted, only that the gospel of the kingdom should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; then the end would come. There would be no temporal millennium as Whitby and others envisioned.\(^{18}\)

By the nineteenth century and the rise of the Adventist movement the concept of a temporal millennium had been adopted by
the majority of evangelical ministers, who believed that during these one thousand years Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Moslems would renounce sin and be thoroughly converted, then Christ would come to set up His Kingdom. This concept so dominated Protestant theology that when Timothy Dwight, president of Yale University, gave his 1798 Fourth of July sermon, he enthusiastically spoke of Christ’s coming as being at the door. What he had in mind was the Whitbyan “spiritual” Advent of Christ, not His literal Advent as some have been led to think.

This “spiritualizing” of the second coming of Christ had a profound impact on the Protestant church. As men and women thought about a thousand years of peace and righteousness, they no longer looked forward to seeing Christ’s coming in the clouds of heaven.

Manuel de Lacunza: Revival of Premillennialism. About the same time that the Whitbyan emphasis was becoming popular, Manuel de Lacunza, a Jesuit missionary priest, wrote a book entitled, The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty, in which he showed his belief that, according to Scripture, Christ would come in Person at the beginning of the millennium before the conversion of the world. This placed him in direct opposition to Whitby’s popular concept. Lacunza’s writings once again awakened many to the imminent, literal return of Christ. His writings were one of the greatest single factors to motivate men and women to restudy the prophecies, which in turn led to the preaching of the 2300-day prophecy.

The Millerites, like all other premillennialists, thought Christ’s millennial kingdom would be established on earth. They differed with them, however, in believing that probation would first close and that only the redeemed would inhabit the earth during those one thousand years as part of their eternal state. While Seventh-day Adventists are also premillennialists, they believe that the millennial reign of Christ and the saints will be in heaven, with the two general resurrections marking the beginning and the close of those one thousand years. The first resurrection would be that of the righteous at Christ’s second coming. The resurrection of the wicked would occur at the end of the millennium when they would
be confronted with the consequences of their sins prior to the Lord’s creation of a new heaven and a new earth.\textsuperscript{25}

**The Twentieth Century**

By the dawn of the twentieth century the misapplication of Scripture regarding the second coming of Christ had become more sophisticated, largely due to the higher-critical approach to the Bible which began to sweep the theological world in the mid-1800s.\textsuperscript{26} The higher-critical method, with its presuppositions, had a devastating effect on theological interpretation of Scripture. That is one reason why, through the Methods of Bible Study Committee, Seventh-day Adventists as a church have taken such a decided stand against this method of interpreting Scripture.\textsuperscript{27}

*Consistent Eschatology.* One example of the destructive impact of the higher-critical method on Scripture comes from the writings of Albert Schweitzer—well-known musician, theologian, and later missionary-physician—in his influential work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. First published in German in 1906, it confined the message of the coming Kingdom to the time of Christ. He saw Jesus attempting to bring about the Kingdom of God in His day, first by His preaching, then by sending out the disciples two by two, and finally by the desperate attempt of sacrificing His own life, hoping in this manner to take hold of the wheel of time, as it were, to bring about the Kingdom of God. Since none of these attempts succeeded, Jesus died a disillusioned man. And although His mission was consistent throughout His life, His teaching about the end time has no relevance to us today, unless just before the parousia. This interpretation of the Gospels is called Consistent Eschatology and places the focus of the second coming of Christ on the past.\textsuperscript{28}

*Realized Eschatology.* A second example comes from the writings of C. H. Dodd. He reacted to Schweitzer’s interpretation and introduced what is called, Realized Eschatology. Dodd placed his emphasis on those texts of Scripture which say, The kingdom of God has come among you. For him this meant that the decisive eschatological moment came to us in the ministry of Jesus. It was not something that did not materialize, as Schweitzer taught. Jesus did not die a disappointed man. The Kingdom of God has been realized, it is already present. It has broken into history. The “day of Jesus,”
that is, His ministry here, is a timeless fact which Jesus brought about and to which all men must relate. This interpretation places the focus of Christ’s coming on the present. The Kingdom has been actuated. It is here. We must decide to accept it.

_Inaugurated Eschatology._ A third example of Scripture misapplication is Inaugurated Eschatology. J. A. T. Robinson, Dodd’s pupil, sees Christ’s parousia as something that happens whenever Christ comes in love and power displaying the signs of His presence. This was inaugurated by Jesus’ death and resurrection which began a new phase of God’s kingdom, the fullness of which is yet to be achieved. Therefore, we live in anticipation of what is yet to be. This places the focus of the Second Coming on the future, on anticipatory living, but not on Christ’s imminent, literal coming.

_Secret Rapture._ Then there is the more popular concept of the second Advent, found generally among Evangelicals, called the Rapture, which is largely based on a misunderstanding of Matthew 24:40-44 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The expression in Matthew “one shall be taken and the other left” and the expression in Thessalonians “we shall be caught up in the clouds” are thought to mean that the saints will be secretly snatched from this earth. Consequently, the rapture could occur any moment since we are living in the end time. This will deliver the saints from the agony of the great tribulation. Seven years later the Lord will return, bringing the saints with Him in a great triumphal arrival to set up His millennial kingdom. There are variations of this view, such as posttribulationism and others, which are beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say, that the secret rapture is not a correct understanding of Scripture as the context of these texts will bear out.

It is significant to observe that the core belief of the theories of the second Advent which we have mentioned are, in one form or another, still in vogue today. In the New Age movement’s emphasis on the “Christ” within us, we recognize some of the elements of Origen’s spiritual enlightenment theory; the Roman Catholic Church has not altogether shed the concept of the world becoming Catholic prior to the coming of Christ; there continue to be abuses of Scripture by higher critics who mold the Word of God into what they want it to say and in the process make the biblical teaching of
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the second coming of Christ of non-effect;34 and in the Evangelical community the principles of the Whitbyan concept of a coming golden age with a thousand years of peace are still very much alive.35 As one prominent Evangelical says, “A new social order will emerge when Christ comes back to set up His Kingdom. Swords will be turned into pruning hooks, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. A fabulous future is on the way.”36

Adventists’ Unique Position

In contrast, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taken a stand against such concepts and is more in harmony with the 16th century Reformers’ understanding of the second coming of Christ. Seventh-day Adventists believe that “the Saviour’s coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. . . . The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ’s coming is imminent. . . . The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven . . . During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, . . . At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth.”37

In this sense, Adventists are unique in their interpretation of Scripture and in their understanding of the second coming of Christ and the events that will follow. For them the second Advent is not the spiritual enlightenment taught by Origen; the presence of Christ in the Roman Church believed by Augustine, the spiritual return of Christ preached by Whitby, the concepts of Consistent, Realized, and Inaugurated Eschatology by Schweitzer, Dodd, and Robinson, and certainly not the rapture theory as taught by some Evangelicals. Adventists believe that the church will not escape the difficult times of the end and that everything on the earth will be destroyed in a series of events called the Seven Last Plagues and by the appearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven.38

As Jeremiah says, “I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities thereof were broken down at the
presence of the Lord, by His fierce anger. For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken, I have purposed, and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it” (Jer 4:24-28).

In the NT Paul says, “You who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess 1:7-9).

In the book of Revelation John says, “I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. . . . And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:11-16).

Following the Christ’s victorious return, John speaks of the Millennium during which the saints are with Christ in heaven (Rev 20). This passage is one of the most controversial apocalyptic chapters of the whole Bible. After the one thousand years or the Millennium the Lord and the saints descend, and after the executive phase of final judgment is completed, God will create a new heaven and a new earth as a home for all the redeemed (Rev 20-22).

In the biblical sequence of things the doctrine of the Millennium becomes extremely important, because it clearly separates the events surrounding the second coming of Christ from what some call His “third coming” at the end of the thousand years. Scripture teaches that at the beginning of the Millennium the earth will be desolated and become an unpopulated wilderness; it is only after the one thousand years are finished that the Lord will make a new heavens and a new earth.

What is happening, however, is that among Protestants and
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Catholics—in spite of their eschatological differences—the notion exists that Christ will return the second time to make all things new. Generally, this concept is based on humanity’s great need and the belief that Christ’s coming is the answer to all our problems. As true as that statement is, in and of itself, it is incorrect when Christ-being-the-answer-to-this-earth’s-problems is applied to mean that His second coming will simply improve and cure under His direct reign society’s numerous ills.

For instance, in the turbulent sixties one Evangelical author expressed his conviction that the solution to our problems is the second Advent. He said, as he understood it, the Bible teaches that when Christ comes He will bring peace to the earth, for He is called the Prince of Peace; He will reconstruct our social institutions; He will restore nature to its original state; He will make righteousness international; and He will reproduce the will of God on earth.40

Apparently the author has not changed his view on the Second Coming, for in one of his recent televised sermons he said, “The climax of history is going to be judgment. The Bible warns that the world is in for a gigantic judgment. The only bright spot is the promised return of Jesus Christ, because the Scripture teaches from one end to the other that Christ is going to come back some day. He’s going to set up His kingdom and evil and the devil are going to be eliminated. And this is going to be heaven on earth when Jesus comes back!”41 We appreciate the concern of such men, for all sensible people are concerned about the rise in crime and violence and the lowering of morality.

Adventist believe that according to Revelation chapters 20-22 God will set up His kingdom at Christ’s “third coming,” which takes place at the close of the millennium.42 This difference is crucial because the Millennium separates events associated with the Second Coming, at which time the wicked die from its impact, the righteous are taken to heaven, and the earth is left desolated, from events associated with the third coming, when the earth will be made new and God’s Kingdom of righteousness and peace will be set up. To expect God’s Kingdom of righteousness and peace to be set up at Christ’s second coming is to create a false hope, a false expectation. It was this deception among others that Jesus warned His disciples against when in answer to their question, “When will
these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming?” He said, “Take heed that no one deceives you” (Matt 24:1-4).

The destruction of the wicked and, to a degree, of the earth that the Bible presents as occurring at the second coming of Christ will be real and not merely symbolic of the cleansing of this world of its “earthly” elements as some would believe. When a prominent evangelical was asked what the fires of the last days were, he said,

Many times in the Bible the word ‘fire’ is not the fire of combustion as we commonly know it. The Bible teaches that God uses fire as a cleansing and purifying agent. When we read that the Holy Spirit came as ‘tongues of fire,’ we do not suppose these were literal fires but rather a representation of the character of the Holy Spirit as a cleansing agent. Fire can be considered also an agent of purification. When the prophets speak of fire in the world’s judgment, or when Peter mentions fire at the end of the age, it is not likely that they refer to the fire of destruction. It could be the fire of fission, the release of nuclear power by the splitting of the atom. This is only speculation, of course, but it could be the elemental and creative form of fire used in the beginning and to be used again in the ‘new beginning’ to bring into being a new earth.43

Then speaking of the change that will occur at the second coming of Christ he continues,

Whatever is not suited for the new life of the new world will be destroyed. This is what some call the end of the world, but the world will never end. It will only be changed into a better world. . . . And when the things of nature ‘shall be dissolved,’ they shall be loosed from their grave clothes of disease, death, and poverty. All nature will be let go into a new and glorious state of existence. . . . Great moral and spiritual changes will occur because it will be a new world ‘wherein dwelleth righteousness.’44

If we say that when the Bible speaks of destruction, it means simply dissolving the present order of things and substituting for it a righteous and peaceful order, that the atmosphere surrounding the earth will be replaced with a new atmosphere, that the earth will be reconstructed for the habitation of the new man who will have a new body, and that even the climate will be changed to accommodate this new man, and then tie these concepts to the
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second coming, we have created a false hope that will lead to disappointment and deception.\(^{45}\)

The false expectation of the creation of a great new society that will include all persons presently living (righteous and unrighteous) at the coming of Christ creates a most suitable climate for deception. Adventists believe that Satan will take advantage of this mind-set among believers and will deceive many. Ellen White describes the deception created by this false expectation when she says,

The churches of our time are seeking worldly aggrandizement, and are as unwilling to see the light of the prophecies, and receive the evidences of their fulfillment which show that Christ is soon to come, as were the Jews in reference to his first appearing. They were looking for the temporal and triumphant reign of [the] Messiah in Jerusalem. Professed Christians of our time are expecting the temporal prosperity of the church, in the conversion of the world, and the enjoyment of the temporal millennium.\(^{46}\)

Although Ellen G. White cautioned early Adventists against the then popular Whitbyan concept of a temporal millennium, in principle the warning is still valid today. For instance, the Jews of Christ’s day expected Him to come as King of kings and free them from the poverty of cruelty brought about by the over-taxation and occupation of the Romans. But Christ came as the King of Peace to free them from sin. In our day the scenario is reversed, but is rooted in the same false expectation of what is to take place as His second coming. Today, many Christians expect Christ to come as the King of Peace to free them from the temporal restrictions of poverty, disease, and inequality, but in reality He will come as King of kings, to bring the reign of sin on this earth to an end.

The final deception will be heightened by the appearance of Satan as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Ellen White describes the scene as follows:

As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of
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God given by John in the Revelation. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, ‘Christ has come! Christ has come!’

Disguised as Christ, Satan will promise a new order of things, a reconstructed society in which there will be no more injustice, poverty, disease, and death. If as the false “Christ” he were to promise only the riches of God’s grace and Christ’s sustaining power for our everyday lives, would that cause the shout of triumph that Christ has come? Is it not the promise of a new order of things falsely associated with Christ’s second coming that will bring about this shout of joy? The personation of Christ by Satan will be an overmastering delusion based on a false expectation created by a misinterpretation of the plain reading of Scripture. Only those who are diligent students of the Word of God and have received the truth for this time will be able to see the difference and be shielded by the power of God during this time of deception.

Do we still need to ask the question, Why is it important for us to believe, not only in the certainty of the second coming of Christ, but to knowledgeable about the events connected with His coming? The answer is surely obvious. What our Adventist pioneers hammered out by diligent Bible study was confirmed by the Holy Spirit through the prophetic office. And it yet remains to be seen who really believes the Word of God and the testimony of His Spirit. Those who do, can rightfully claim God’s promise of protection. They will say, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust. Surely He shall deliver you. . . . A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked” (Ps 91:2-8).

The Christian’s Hope

Not only is it important for Christians to believe in the return of Christ because it is biblical, but also more importantly, because it brings hope and buoyancy into our present lives. “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself . . . [and] confirmed it by an oath. That by two, immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,
we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb 6:13, 18-19).

The Christian’s salvation is rooted in Jesus Christ: in who He is, in what He did, and in what He said. But if He only came to live a sinless life and to die for us, and then rose from the dead just to return to His heavenly Father and nothing more, what ultimate benefit would derive from such a terrible excursion from heaven to earth for either God or man? It would demonstrate God’s love for His creation to the universe, and it would provide forgiveness and acceptance. But when life on earth was over, whether it was a few short years because of sickness, war, or accident, or whether “three-score and ten,” the body parts would finally wear out, and that would be the end of our existence. There would be no assured schedule for the resurrection nor an earth made new. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor 15:19). “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. . . . [and] your faith is futile, you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. . . . But now Christ is risen from the dead, . . . For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor 15:13, 17-22).

This is our hope! The promise of Christ’s second coming assures the implementation of His promise of a future life for those He loves! “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess 4:13-18).
Endnotes

Note: All scripture citations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

1 Norskov V. Olsen, Editor, The Advent Hope In Scripture and History (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987), p. 15. Neils-Erik Andreasen in Chapter 1 entitled, “The Advent Hope in the Old Testament,” says, “This hope has been a firm conviction and constant companion of many Christians since New Testament times. But also God’s people in Old Testament times shared the advent hope, and we find it expressed in the pages of the Bible from Genesis to Malachi. The Old Testament advent hope was based upon the promises of a coming Redeemer—the same promises that the early Christians applied to Jesus Christ, according to the New Testament. But whereas the New Testament hope focuses exclusively upon the return of Christ, the Old Testament hope has two foci—the nearer first advent and the more distant second advent. Frequently, both foci come to expression in a single picture.” Ibid.


3 Olsen, p. 61.

4 The Interpreter’s Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 11:311. “This instruction concerning the coming of the day of the Lord is set out in part as something not yet understood by the Thessalonians and in part as something well known by them. The conception that the day of the Lord was not only to be expected, but to be expected soon, was a part of the gospel from the beginning. Paul and his fellow writers share that general view. Comparison of the two letters to the Thessalonians with the earliest materials in the book of Acts reveals both a common tradition and in general a common understanding of that tradition.” Ibid. (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 11:234. “Hence they [the Thessalonians] have every reason to persevere because they anticipate a deliverer who at any moment may summon them to meet him in the air.” Ibid. (See also, Guthrie, Donald, New Testament Introduction, rev. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), p. 570. “A change of approach is alleged in the second Epistle as compared with the first in respect of the parousia. Here it is less imminent, for certain events must take place first.” Ibid.

5 Ellen G. White, Sketches from the Life of Paul (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1883), pp. 116-117.


7 White, p. 110.

8 Olsen, p. 78.


12 Olsen, p. 87.

13 Ibid., p. 86.
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15 Olsen, pp. 115-117.
17 Froom, 2:651.
21 Ibid., p. 654.
24 Schwarz, pp. 26-27.
25 Froom, 4:416, Footnote #12; also pp. 1146-1147.
27 Appendix, “Methods of Bible Study.” (See also, White, Ellen G., The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 474. “The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us to-day. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so to-day, by the pleasing sentiments of ’higher criticism,’ evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. To many, the Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of ’higher criticism,’ in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God’s word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.” Ibid.
29 Olsen, p. 49. (See also, EDT, p. 364).
30 Elwell, pp. 364-365.
31 Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 3:1190-1192; 1217-1224. (See also, SDABSS, pp. 924-932.)
33 White, The Great Controversy (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), pp. 563-581. (See also: Malachit Martin, The Keys of This Blood (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 15-54. As he says, “Willing or not, ready or not, we are all involved in an all-out, no-holds-barred, three way global competition. Most of us are not competitors, however. We are the stakes. For the competition is about who will establish the first one-world system of government that has ever existed in the society of nations. It is about who will
hold and wield the dual power of authority and control over each of us as individuals and over all of us together as a community; over the entire six billion people expected by the demographers to inhabit the earth by early in the third millennium. The competition is all-out because, now that it has started, there is no way it can be reversed or called off.

No holds are barred because, once the competition has been decided, the world and all that’s in it—our way of life as individuals and as citizens of the nations; our families and our jobs; our trade and commerce and money; our educational systems and our religions and our cultures; even the badges of our national identity, which most of us have always taken for granted—all will have been powerfully and radically altered forever. No one can be exempted from its effects. No sector of our lives will remain untouched.” p. 15.

“As to the time factor involved, those of us who are under seventy will see at least the basic structures of the new world government installed. Those of us under forty will surely live under its legislative, executive and judiciary authority and control. Indeed, the three rivals themselves—and many more besides as time goes on—speak about this new world order not as something around a distant corner of time, but as something that is imminent. As a system that will be introduced and installed in our midst by the end of this final decade of the second millennium.” pp. 15-16.

There are two extremes to be avoided in quoting from *The Keys of this Blood*. On the one hand, its contents ought not to be used to create a state of panic. Martin, a former Jesuit, only seems to be expressing his impatience with the heretics and rebels in the Catholic Church, particularly blaming the Jesuit order for its secularism and moral compromise and in that sense betraying the Church. (Anderson, Eric, “More Catholic Than the Pope?” *Adventist Review*, Vol. 170, No. 42, October 21, 1993). On the other hand, while Martin is not an official spokesman for the Catholic Church, neither is he ignorant of expressed sentiments within its ranks that something needs to be done to save the human race from moral collapse, and the institution to bring the world back to moral sanity is the Catholic Church.

36 Ibid., p. 201.
39 Hans LaRondelle, “The One Thousand Years of Revelation 20,” *Ministry*, September, 1982), pp. 12-14. In this article LaRondelle how Christians have divided themselves into premillenialists, postmillennialists, and amillennialists. Some Christians even believe in the restoration of the Temple and its sacrifices in Jerusalem as part of the millennial kingdom.
40 Graham, pp. 208-213.
41 Three River Stadium, Pittsburgh, Friday 11, 1994.
42 *Seventh-day Adventist Believe...* pp. 363-383. (See also, *SDABC*, 7:877-899; and White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662-678.
43 Graham, pp. 246-247.
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44 Ibid., pp. 250-251.
48 Ibid., p. 625.
Christ’s Inauguration as King-Priest*

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On the eve of His betrayal and crucifixion Jesus prayed to the Father in the presence of His disciples. He acknowledged the completion of His mission and made a request for Himself:

I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made (John 17:4-5).

Exalted Victor

Fifty days later—in heaven—“innumerable angels in festal gathering” (cf. Heb 12:22) witnessed “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42) “crowned (stephanoũ) with glory and honor” (Heb 2:9). The inspired writer’s allusion to the stephanos—the chaplet bestowed on the victor of an athletic contest—rather than to the kingly diadēma (diadem) discloses the excitement and rapturous joy all Heaven experienced on this occasion to celebrate the victory of our Lord over the forces of evil!

Because God the Son had previously “humbled himself” through His amazing willingness to assume on a permanent basis our human nature, and because He “became obedient unto death, even death on a cross,” God “highly exalted (huperupsōũ) him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, 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 2:8-11).

Christ’s heavenly exaltation presupposed His earthly “exalta-
tion” or “lifting up” (hupsoo) on the cross for “the expiation... of our sins” (1 John 2:2). Jesus had explained to Nicodemus: “As Moses lifted up (hupsoo) the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up (hupsoo)” (John 3:14). Near the end of His life He made a similar statement to the Greeks who had sought an interview in the court of the Temple: “‘I, when I am lifted up (hupsoo) from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ He said this,” adds John, “to show by what death he was to die” (John 12:32-33). In a very real sense Christ’s atoning death on the cross, though it appeared at first to be a terrible defeat, was truly the “lifting up”—the exaltation—of a victor! The Father’s enthronement of Christ at Pentecost (A.D. 31) acknowledged His Son’s magnificent accomplishment (Acts 2).

Glorified Redeemer

Christ’s heavenly exaltation is also described by the apostles as His glorification. Peter declared to the crowd in Solomon’s Porch that God had “glorified (doxazoœ) his servant Jesus” whom they had denied (Acts 3:13 cf. 2:33). John comments that in the days of Jesus’ ministry, “The Spirit had not been given [a reference to Pentecost, Acts 2] “because Jesus was not yet glorified” (doxazoœ, John 7:39). He also observes that the apostles’ understanding of their Master’s life (involving the prophecies about it) was clarified after “Jesus was glorified” (doxazoœ, John 12:16).

The Father glorified Jesus—that is, honored the incarnate Christ by appointing Him “the heir of all things” (Heb 1:2). In addition, He conferred on Christ “all authority (exousia) in heaven and in earth” (Matt 28:18), recognizing Him as “the head (kephaleœ) over all things for the church” (Eph 1:22). All the attributes of kingly majesty, dignity, and splendor were bestowed upon Christ. Holy angels and the representatives of the unfallen worlds honored the Redeemer and submitted willingly to His sovereignty (cf. Job 1:6; 1 Pet 3:22).

The book of Revelation symbolizes the enthronement of the exalted Christ under the figure of a lamb standing “in the midst” of God’s throne “as though it had been slain” (Rev 5:6; 7:17). Twenty-eight times throughout the Apocalypse Christ is referred to as “the Lamb,” and the throne of God’s universal dominion
Revelation 5:6 is the first visionary description of Christ’s enthronement beside His Father. The emphasis of the scene is upon the Redeemer’s atoning sacrifice. “Worthy art thou,” exclaim the living creatures and elders, “for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:8-9).

The ascription of praise and honor to the Lamb is repeated and enlarged upon by the myriads of angels who joyfully exclaim, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power (dunamis) and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 5:11-12).

This particular scene, symbolizing Christ as a once-slain—but again living—lamb standing at the throne of God, carries a significant truth (Rev 5:6). The tense of the verb (“had been slain”) in the original language (a perfect, passive, participle) denotes that Christ had been slain in the past, but the results obtained by His death remain and are always available for the redemption of repentant sinners. The horns and eyes of the symbol indicate the glorified Christ’s absolute power and wisdom. But the Apocalypse’s repeated emphasis on Christ’s title: “the Lamb,” and the underscoring by the Greek perfect tense of the continuous efficacy of His sacrifice, clearly mark out the heavenly sanctuary as the command center from which the glorified Redeemer will now carry forward to a successful conclusion all aspects of the Plan of Salvation.

Enthroned King

Upon Christ’s ascension to the heavenly realm, God “made him sit at his right hand” (Eph 1:20). Sharing the eternal throne of universal dominion (Rev 3:21), Christ occupies a kingship “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21). In this position God “has put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22)—and continues to do so until His Messianic reign is accomplished (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28).

The expression, to “sit at his [God’s] right hand” occurs (with slight variations) 20 times in the NT (if we count Gospel parallels
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and citations of Psalm 110:1). The NT statements are all based on Psalm 110, a Davidic writing. “The Lord [Yahweh] says to my lord [Adoni]: ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’” (vs. 1). It is evident from His discussion with the Pharisees that both Jesus and the scribes understood the personage addressed as “my lord” to be the Messiah or Christ.

Since the NT writers accept Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies, they recognize His enthronement as co-Ruler with the Father as the direct fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. The expression, “at my right hand,” connotes a place or position of honor (that is, at God’s side), but is in no wise intended to locate the whereabouts of Christ’s physical presence in the heavenly sanctuary.

“To sit at God’s right hand” is a figurative phrase indicating the Saviour’s new, exalted dignity, full authority and majesty, His rank and preeminence over the created universe. Christ Himself speaks of the glorified redeemed in a similar manner when He promises: “They will sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev 3:21). Obviously, the phrasing speaks of their dignity as “fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17) and not of a sitting on a single, literal throne which would be impossible for the millions of redeemed persons.

In what manner does Christ now “reign”? What is the nature of His kingdom? When Christ stood before Pilate, He plainly indicated He sought no earthly empire to rule. “My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world!” (John 18:36).

The advent of “the kingdom of God,” which Christ early on announced as imminent, was the kingdom of His grace. Repentance from sin and faith in Him as Saviour were the requirements for entrance (Mark 1:15). The Holy Spirit would work in the heart to bring about an entirely new life (John 3:3-8; cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Many of Christ’s parables taught the characteristics of that spiritual kingdom and of those who would become its subjects.

When the Pharisees, who thought only in terms of political rule, challenged Him about “when” the announced kingdom was coming, He replied: “‘The kingdom of God is not coming with signs...
to be observed; nor will they say, “Lo, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, margin). Those who accept Christ as Saviour and Lord not only obtain “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” from the Father, but are also “delivered. . . from the dominion of darkness and transferred. . . to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 3:13-14, emphasis added).

In this age (the Messianic Age) Christ reigns from “the throne of grace” in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 4:16). The NT writers view the previous ages from Adam to the Messiah as moving toward “the climax of history” (Heb 9:26, NEB)—literally, “[the] completion of the ages.” Thus, the era in which Christ’s first advent, death, resurrection, and subsequent reign from heaven take place is viewed as “these last days” (Heb 1:2) or “the last days” (Acts 2:17). The present era of Christ’s reign of grace also has its end-time events that will culminate in our Lord’s second advent to take His people to Himself (Matt 24:32-33; Heb 9:28).

The reign of Christ from the “throne of grace” is not something mystical or intangible. Through the agency of His church He is extending the borders of His kingdom throughout the world. Just as He once said to the Jewish leaders—“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working: (John 5:17, NASB)—so now He rules in the nations of this world to carry out “the eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11) to bring the plan of salvation to a triumphant conclusion and to terminate the rule of sin.

“When comes the end, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he [Christ] must reign until he [God the Father] has put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:24-25, emphasis added). When, at the end of the age—at the end of Christ’s reign of grace—the seventh angel blows his trumpet, “The kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ!” At that point Christ moves into the rulership of the kingdom of glory, “and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15) upon “his glorious throne” (literally, “upon his throne of glory,” Matt 25:31).

But Christ’s kingship will always be subordinate to that of the Father. Just as in the incarnation, God the Son condescended to take humanity’s nature so as to be our Representative Head, just so He volunteers to remain in that position eternally. “And when
all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to
the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor
15:28, NASB).

**Invested High Priest**

In his speech to the Jews assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of
Pentecost, Peter explained that the Joel-predicted outpouring of the Holy Spirit,
which they were witnessing, was the Divine announcement that Jesus of Naz-
areth had been enthroned at God’s right hand as Lord and Christ.

“This Jesus God raised up, . . . Being therefore exalted at the right hand of
God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has
poured out this which you see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heav-
ens; but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I
make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know
assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you
crucified” (Acts 2:32-36, emphasis added).

But Peter understood Christ’s heavenly role to involve more than kingship.
A few weeks later he proclaimed in the Temple courts that Jesus “is the one
whom God exalted to His right hand as Prince (archegos) and a Savior (soter),
to grant (didomi, give) repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31,
NASB, emphasis added). In this declaration Peter combines the princely or
kingly rule of Christ with that of priest-
hood. In Israel it was the priesthood (the
high priest and his associate priests) who dealt with the issues of sin, repentance,
and forgiveness.

The apostolic author of Hebrews sums up the argument of the first half of
his epistle with an affirmation similar to Peter’s: “Now the point in what we are
saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of
the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary (ta hagia) and
the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 8:1-2, emphasis
added).

Thus, it is evident that in the mind of Peter and his brethren Pentecost (Acts
2) marked not only the enthronement of the exalted and glorified Christ as King,
but also His investiture as High Priest. He was inaugurated to be a royal priest
on Heaven’s highest throne.
Whereas in Israel, kingship and priesthood were separated (inherited by descendants of Judah and Levi respectively), in Jesus Christ the two roles are united.

But Christ is not merely occupying an impersonal position. He is humanity’s King-Priest, our Royal High Priest, forever linked to us through His incarnation so that He may minister in our behalf the salvation Heaven has devised. “Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted” (Heb 2:17-18, emphasis added).

The blood of Jesus Christ is Heaven’s currency in its business of salvation. That is, the merits of His sinless life and atoning death are what He pleads before God in behalf of every repentant sinner who comes seeking forgiveness and acceptance. As John writes: “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2, emphasis added). And the apostolic author of Hebrews adds: “Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

It is fitting, as Christians, that we should continually look back to Calvary, for there the basis of our salvation was achieved. Every communion service recalls the central truth of the Christian faith: Christ’s atoning death (1 Cor 11:26). And it is equally fitting that we eagerly anticipate His Second Coming, the great consummation of the plan of redemption (Heb 9:28). But it is also a Christian’s great privilege to focus his/her faith and life’s energies in this present era upon the living Christ in the heavenly sanctuary ministering “in the presence of God on our behalf” (Heb 9:24!).

We approach the living Christ—our High Priest—through the medium of prayer. And we can do this with confidence. He bears our humanity; He has experienced our pain and sorrows. He understands our fears, our hurts, our griefs. “Since therefore we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the religion we profess. For ours is not a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but
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one who, because of his likeness to us, has been tested every way, only without sin. Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help” (Heb 4:14-16, NEB).

Prophetic Portrayals of Priesthood

King-Priest Like Melchizedek (Ps 110:1, 4). While the Levitical system foreshadowed the priesthood of Christ, certain OT prophecies plainly stated the fact. David wrote the most ancient of these predictions in Psalm 110, the same prophecy that foretold the enthronement of the Messiah at God’s right hand (vs. 1). After this opening statement, God continues speaking to the Messiah: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek’” (vs. 4).

This divine commission provides the biblical argument for the apostolic author of Hebrews to prove that the typical, Levitical priesthood with its sacrificial rituals and festivals had come to an end with the Father’s appointment of Jesus Christ to a priesthood like Melchizedek’s. “Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, . . . ‘Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek’” (Heb 5:5-6; cf. 7:11-19).

Melchizedek was an Amorite king whom Abraham met during his sojourn in the land of Canaan sometime during the first quarter of the second millennium, B.C. Evidently, the king ruled over a city-state, Salem (known later as Jerusalem, cf. Ps 76:2). Melchizedek was a priest of “God Most High” as well as a king (Gen 14:17-21). This brief allusion to the Deity indicates that the worship of the true God, originally held by all the immediate descendants of Noah, had not died out entirely. Apparently a genuine faith in the Creator still existed in some family lines other than Abraham’s, and the patriarch did not hesitate to give this priestly believer a tenth (tithe) of the spoils of war (vs. 21; Heb 7:14).

Several hundred years later the Holy Spirit selected the Salem king as a type of the coming Messiah, bidding David to write: “You [the Messiah] are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4, emphasis added). The focus of the prediction is on “the order” or the “nature of” (taxis, Heb 5:6) the ruler’s priesthood.
That is, the Messiah would assume a priesthood similar to Melchizedek’s. Thus, approximately a thousand years before Christ’s first advent, Inspiration foretold that the Messiah would rule from God’s throne as a king-priest! Christ would unite in His person the roles of kingship and priesthood and would rule and minister in this double capacity at His Father’s side.

Ministry of Intercession (Isa 53:11-12). The 8th century B.C. Isaiah, often referred to as the “Gospel Prophet,” wrote of the Messiah’s priestly ministry. The reference is recorded among what are commonly known as the “Servant Songs.” The central personage in the fourth song (Isa 52:13-53:12) is sometimes designated “the Suffering Servant.” He graphically portrays the Saviour’s substitutionary death for the sins of humanity.

Liberal scholarship rejects the identification of the “Suffering Servant” with Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus applied the prophecy to Himself on the night of His betrayal. Citing a key line in Isaiah 53:12, He said: “I will tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, “And he was reckoned with the transgressors”; for what is written about me has its fulfillment” (Luke 22:37). The early Christians were in full agreement with this identification (cf. 1 Pet 2:24; Acts 8:30-35).

Although the main focus of the song is on the Messiah’s substitutionary sufferings, the last two verses make a clear reference to His future, priestly intercession.

“He [the Messiah] shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant [the Messiah], make many to be accounted righteous (ṣdq);12 and he shall bear (sbl) their iniquities. . . [H]e poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore (ns) the sin of many, and made intercession (προσευχή)13 for the transgressors” (Isa 53:11-12).

When joined together, the last lines of each verse (vss. 11, 12) seem to form a literary chiasm in themselves:

A The righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous;
B He shall bear their iniquities (vs. 11).
B’ He bore the sin of many,
A’ [He] made intercession for the transgressors (vs. 12).
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In this arrangement the statements of A and A’ and B and B’ form two couplets, the lines of each couplet being parallel. Lying at the center, B and B’ emphasize the sin-bearing aspect of the Messiah’s death. On the other hand, the intercession of the Messiah stated in A’ explains how he intercedes the merits of His sinless life and death to cause repentant sinners “to be accounted righteous” as stated in line A.

These verses describe the ministry of a priest. It is the work of a priest (1) To bear sin (Lev 10:17) and to make atonement/expiation for it (Heb 2:17), and (2) To intercede in behalf of repentant sinners who seek forgiveness and acceptance with God (cf. Heb 7:25; 9:24) on the basis of the merits of that atonement/expiation.

Tucked away in this ancient prophecy was the most marvelous truth: One day a righteous Messiah would bear the penalty “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2) by dying in behalf of humanity, and in His priestly intercessions for repentant sinners would secure for them not only forgiveness, but would cause (Hebrew hiphil-causative) His own righteousness to be accounted to them so that they would stand fully accepted before God!

Crowned High Priest (Zech 6:9-15). A third announcement of the Messiah’s priesthood was made in Judea after the return of the exiles from Babylon in the last quarter of the sixth century, B.C. Sixteen difficult years had ensued and the building on the Temple eventually was suspended. However, in the second year of the Persian king, Darius I (520 B.C.), the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the leaders and people with promises from the Lord to start the work again on the Temple and to complete the project (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14-15).

During this renewed building spurt, three exiles arrived from Babylon with an offering of silver and gold. Directed by God, the prophet Zechariah crafted a crown from these materials, and taking the high priest Joshua with him, acted out a prophecy in the house where the visitors were staying:

The word of the Lord also came to me saying, “Take an offering from the exiles... [M]ake an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadek, the high priest. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch [se-mah], for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple

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According to other OT passages the expression, “Branch” (semah), is a technical term for the Messiah (a branch from the house of David). By declaring the crowned Levitical high priest to be “the Branch,” Zechariah also foretold the double offices of kingship and priesthood the Messiah would take under God’s direction.

Twice the prediction underscores the fact that the Messiah will “build the temple of the Lord.” Since the Messiah’s priestly rule was yet future, the prophecy obviously transcended the local temple construction that was in the process of being completed by Zerubbabel (Zech 4:9). During His reign as King-Priest, the Messiah would build another and more important Temple: the Church! He alone could accomplish this aspect of the plan of salvation.

Furthermore, the Messiah would both “sit and rule on His throne” and would be “a priest (kohen) on His throne” (vs. 13). This is a remarkable announcement—that the messianic Branch of the Judaic house of David would assume the functions of the priesthood of the house of Levi by Divine direction! The apostolic author of Hebrews himself comments on this point: “It is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.” “Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law” (Heb 7:14; 8:4, emphasis added). Thus, this enacted prediction implicitly pointed towards a further revelation that the Messiah’s reign as a king-priest would take place in heaven and not on the earth!

The last part of vs. 13—”Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices” (NASB)—is understood by scholars in two different ways. Literally, the last phrase reads: “And the counsel of peace shall be between the two of them.” Thus, the American Revised Version (ARV) renders the phrase: “And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both” (emphasis added). The question is whether the prophet is referring to two offices/roles (kingship/priesthood) or to two Persons (the Messiah and Yahweh)?
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In the history of Israel the offices of king and priest were kept separate by Divine arrangement. Priesthood belonged to the Aaronic house of the Levites, whereas kingship belonged to the Davidic house of the tribe of Judah. Since Zechariah’s prophecy plainly indicates that the Messiah would unite the roles of kingship and priesthood, many scholars opt for the interpretation that the Messiah would simply unite these two offices in a harmonious manner in His personal reign (as reflected in the NASB version cited above).

However, the echoes of Psalm 110:1, 4 (that the Messiah will sit on Yahweh’s throne as a king-priest) are so strong that others, we think more correctly, take the literal expression, “the two of them,” to refer to Yahweh and the Messiah, co-ruling in the kingdom of grace to carry out the plan of salvation. Hence, the ARV rendering: “And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.”

Inauguration of Messiah’s Priesthood (Dan 9:24). Although brief, the three prophecies reviewed above clearly announced the future priestly ministry of the Messiah. But priests do not function apart from temples or other sacred places. But since the Mosaic ritual laws prevented a Messiah of Davidic origin (tribe of Judah) from serving in the Jerusalem temple (cf. Heb 7:13-14; 8:4), where would He minister? Does any prophecy foretell of the Messiah’s ministry in a heavenly temple/sanctuary? We believe the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 points in that direction.

In this famous prophecy the angel Gabriel announced the time for the Messiah’s long-awaited appearance. The prophecy centers largely upon His sacrificial death that would “put an end to sin,” would “atone for iniquity,” and would “bring in everlasting righteousness” (vss. 24, 26). But the final event in the Messiah’s three and one-half year ministry on earth would be “to anoint a most holy place (qôdeš qôdāšîm)” (RSV).

The expression, qôdeš qôdāšîm, literally, “holy of holies” and its variants (the holy of holies, holies of holies) occurs 43 times in the OT. Apart from this single reference in Daniel, every instance of this expression found elsewhere (with the possible exception of 1 Chron 23:13) is applied to some aspect of the sanctuary Tabernacle/Temple and its rites.
Since the phrase quite often carries an adjectival force, it is commonly rendered “most holy.” For example, the golden altar is described as being “most holy to the Lord” (Exod 30:10). On occasion the phrase can be rendered (with the definite article) as a substantive: “the Most Holy [Place]”; that is, the second apartment of the sanctuary (Exod 26:33-34). The sanctuary tent, its several pieces of furniture, altars, and utensils were all regarded as “most holy qôdeš qôdâšîm,” Exod 30:26-30) as were also the incense, sin, and guilt offerings (Exod 30:36; Lev 6:14-17 cf. 6:25, 7:1, 10:12), and any “devoted thing” (Lev 27:28). The evidence is abundant that qôdeš qôdâšîm is a sanctuary/temple expression.

Although past Jewish and Christian expositors have identified the Daniel 9:24 phrasing (literally, “to anoint holy of holies”) with the anointing of the Messiah, the overwhelming use of the expression in the OT suggests that it refers to a sanctuary/temple and should be translated in the manner indicated by the translators of the RSV: “to anoint a most holy place.”

But where would such a hallowed place be found? And what would its anointing signify? Moses anointed the Tabernacle-sanctuary in a ceremony which inaugurated the Levitical priestly ministry (Exod 40:9-15). Although no record is left of a formal anointing of the later temples, we may safely assume that such was the case. The only sanctuary-Temple that could have been “anointed” by the Holy Spirit at Christ’s inauguration as King-Priest would have been the heavenly one attested to in the NT (Hebrews/Revelation). “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 8:1-2, emphasis added).

Some have suggested the anointing of the qodes qodasim in Daniel 9:24 indicates that only “the Most Holy place”—the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary is functional in heaven. In other words, the “Holy Place” (first apartment) of the Israelite sanctuary is thought to represent the Mosaic era, while the Most Holy Place (second apartment) represents Christ’s ministry in heaven during the Christian era. In this manner, Christ has only one phase of ministry, namely, intercession, in “the Most Holy place.”
However, such reasoning does violence to the Daniel text and Israelite understanding as well as to the typology undergirding the sanctuary system. The usual way to designate the second apartment was to turn the adjectival construct into a substantive construct by adding the definite article: “The Most Holy [place]” (i.e. Exod 26:33-34; 2 Chron 5:7). Without the definite article the expression seems to carry only an adjectival thrust, meaning that some object is very sacred, that is, most holy. Since the expression in Daniel 9:24 appears without the definite article, the force of the expression is that a very sacred [place]—a most holy [place]—would be anointed for the Messiah’s priestly service. The intent is simply that the heavenly sanctuary—a very sacred place—was to be inaugurated in the sense that a new phase in the divine plan of salvation was to begin with Christ’s priesthood.

The Israelite mind would have regarded the two-apartment sanctuary as the single house of God, His dwelling (cf. Exod 25:8) and could not have imagined a separation of the apartments. The priestly ministration in each apartment was inextricably locked into each other. Furthermore, the suggested, different fulfillments of the two apartments turns the sanctuary typology on its head. The daily ministry in the first apartment was as symbolic of certain aspects of Christ’s priestly ministry as was the yearly priestly ministry in the second. The notion that Christ has only a “Most Holy Place” ministration in heaven in the Christian era leave out all fulfillments of the priestly type associated with the first apartment.

We may safely conclude, therefore, that the prophecy of Daniel 9:24 foretold the anointing or inauguration of the heavenly temple in a new sense. Now would begin the priestly mediatorial ministry of Christ based on the merits of His actual sinless life and atoning death. The Divine plan of salvation would now move from the realm of promise to the realm of fact (cf. Heb 9:15; Rom 3:23-26).

Summary

Exalted Victor and glorified Redeemer, Christ presently reigns as King-Priest from His Father’s universal throne.

Both OT prophecies and NT statements affirm the truth that Christ serves as humanity’s High Priest before God in heaven.
Moreover, we may assert as an unchallenged, scriptural truth that Christ’s priestly ministry is as essential to the plan of salvation as was (and is) His vicarious death. Without Christ’s priestly mediation, Calvary would have been in vain. While the cross is a perfect atonement for sin, it requires both the sacrificial death and the priestly application of the merits of that sinless Offering to achieve the full objectives of the plan of salvation as Heaven designed it.

Calvary fully paid the debt of the world’s sin (1 John 2:2). Christ died “once for all time” (ephapax, literal reading, Heb 7:27) and will never die again. But the objective atonement accomplished by the Godhead at the cross saved none automatically (Rom 3:24-26, 5:18-19). Divine grace extended to the repentant sinner on the basis of the cross must be individually accepted, and its merits must be accounted to the believer individually through the priestly intercession of Jesus Christ. His priesthood is as central to the salvation process as is His death which activates and requires it. In the following chapters we will explore the scope and significance of our Lord’s present priestly activity in the heavenly sanctuary which began at the time of the festival of Pentecost (A.D. 31).

Endnotes

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, 1946, 1952 editions.


8 From the very first promise (Gen 3:15) God’s people began to look forward
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to the coming of a Redeemer to save humanity from its sinful condition. Sacrificial ritual and Divine prophecy increasingly filled in the features of the Messiah and His ministry. From the OT perspective, which the NT writers adopt, the long-hoped-for appearing of the Messiah would mean that “the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11, NASB), or “the end of the times” (1 Pet 1:20, RSV). Thus, the NT writers regard the present age or time, that is, the Christian era, as “these last days” (Heb 1:2). However, they see this present era of the Messiah’s reign from heaven as also having “last days” or a “last time” (cf. 1 Pet 1:5; 2 Pet 3:3; 2 Tim 3:1; Jude 18). Jesus likewise speaks of “the close of the age” (Matt 13:39, 40, 49; 28:20).

9 See Hebrews 5:10; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17 and the reasoning that runs through Hebrews 7 as the priesthoods of Levi and Melchizedek are compared.

10 Much fruitless speculation has been spent on endeavors to identify Melchizedek. He was simply a God-fearing ruler who lived in Abraham’s time and whose royal, priestly, and unrecorded genealogy made him an ideal messianic type. Responding to some who argued that the Amorite king was a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ, Ellen White wrote: “It was Christ that spoke through Melchizekek, the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father” (RH, Feb. 1890, cited in SDABC, 1:1093).

11 AG, p. 811.


13 In its hiphil form, the verb pg' carries the nuances: “make entreaty,” or “interpose,” or interpose in behalf of someone. See BDB, p. 803.

14 Says Alec Motyer, “Isaiah 53:11 is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned. (i) The servant knows the need to be met and what must be done. (ii) As ‘that righteous one, my servant’ he is both fully acceptable to the God our sins have offended and has been appointed by him to his task. (iii) As righteous, he is free from every contagion of our sin. (iv) He identified himself personally with our sin and need. (v) The emphatic pronoun ‘he’ underlines his personal commitment to this role. (vi) He accomplishes the task fully. Negatively, in the bearing of iniquity; positively, in the provision of righteousness.” The Prophecy of Isaiah (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 442.


16 Cf. Matthew 16:18, “I [Christ] will build My church”; 2 Corinthians 6:16, “We [Christians] are the temple of the living God”; 1 Peter 2:4-5, “Like living stones by yourselves built into a spiritual house.”

17 During the Hasmonean rule (143-63 B.C.), the roles of political leadership and priesthood merged.

18 Commenting on Zechariah 6:9-15, Ellen G. White writes: “As a priest,
Christ is now set down with the Father in His throne. Upon the throne with the eternal, self-existent One, is He who 'hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,' . . . His intercession is that of a pierced and broken body, of a spotless life. The wounded hands, the pierced side, the marred feet, plead for fallen man, whose redemption was purchased at such infinite cost. 'And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.' The love of the Father, no less than the Son, is the foundation of salvation for the lost race . . ." GC, p. 416.

19 We will examine this prophecy later in more detail.

20 My count.

21 1 Chronicles 23:13 can be translated to read: "'Aaron was separated to sanctify him as most holy,' etc. If it be so, this is the only place where the forcible term, 'holy of holies' (most holy) is used of Aaron." Philip C. Barker, "Exposition," 1 Chronicles. The Pulpit Commentary (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Company, Publishers, nd), 13:376. Other translations render the phrasing: "Aaron was set apart to consecrate the most holy things, . . ." (RSV).


23 "The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the Forerunner is for us entered.' . . . Jesus has opened the way to the Father’s throne, and through His mediation, the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God." Ellen G. White, GC, p. 489.