

A Definition and Short History of Historicism as a Method for Interpreting Daniel and Revelation

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The main approach Adventists have taken to the books of Daniel and Revelation, the so-called *historicist* method of prophetic interpretation,¹ was no invention of Adventists. It was the most commonly used approach throughout most of church history. Yet today few outside the denomination share the approach, and it seems hard even to get others to understand the Adventist position.

This article will reflect on ways the term historicism has been understood and communicated by Adventists. I will suggest some elements that might be useful to share in conversations with non-Adventist interpreters—namely a definition of historicism and a brief history of its prominent usage throughout church history. Follow-up articles by Jon Paulien will reflect on and evaluate the historicist method in light of recent scholarship (this issue)² and some select cases from the biblical data (forthcoming).

The Nature of Historicism

Historicism as “School-of-Interpretation.” The traditional way Adventists use the term historicism (in relation to interpretation of biblical prophecy) is

¹The essence of the historicist approach is part of the official faith of the Seventh-day Adventist church, last confirmed in a report by the Methods of Bible Study Committee approved by the 1986 General Conference Annual Council: “apocalyptic [prophecy] emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His control over history,” “apocalyptic prophecy presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end of the world.” “Actions of General Interest From the 1986 Annual Council—1,” *Adventist Review* (Jan 22, 1987): 19.

²Jon Paulien, “The End of Historicism?: Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic—Part One,” *JATS* 14/2 (Fall 2003): 15–43.

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as a comprehensive system or school of interpretation. Historicism is here seen as exclusive (an interpreter using historicism for some parts of Daniel or Revelation cannot use another approach, like preterism or futurism, for other parts) and personal (it presupposes a one-to-one relationship between interpreter and method, so that an interpreter uses only one approach and thus can be identified as a historicist, preterist, or futurist).

William Shea represents many Adventists in his usage of the term historicism when he writes:

Through the ages several different methods of interpreting Daniel and Revelation have been proposed. The *historicist* method sees these prophecies as being fulfilled through the course of human history beginning at the time of the prophets who wrote them. *Preterism* sees Daniel as focusing on the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and it sees the book of Revelation as focusing especially on the reign of the emperor Nero. Thus the preterist school focuses upon the past. In contrast to this, the *futurist* school places the major emphasis of these two books in the future, yet to be fulfilled. A specially prominent branch of futurism is *dispensationalism*, which narrows this future fulfillment to the last seven years of earth's history.³

³William H. Shea, "Historicism: The Best Way to Interpret Prophecy," *Adventists Affirm* (Spring 2003): 22. Here are some other examples:

"The Preterist finds only the contemporary meaning of the Revelation as applicable to the early church, and the Futurist sees the prophecy as projected into a remote age to come, but the Historicist sees that the Revelation had its function first in counseling and encouraging the early Christians in the vicissitudes through which they were passing, while at the same time extending its prophetic pictures beyond their range of vision to the final victory." LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1950), 1:89.

"Three main systems have marked the history of interpretation. 1. The 'preterist' approach interprets prophecy by reference to past events. . . . 2. The 'futurist' approach is practically the reverse of the former and projects all prophecies into the future, hence beyond our control. . . . 3. The 'historicist' approach interprets prophecy with regard to historical events from the time the prophecy was uttered down to the end of time." "Actually the three systems cannot be used together. A single prophecy does not have several applications." Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1987), 7–8, 9.

"Once we accept the unity, exilic origin, and apocalyptic nature of the book of Daniel, the only consistent method of interpreting the prophetic chapters of Daniel is that suggested by the historicist school. Historicism . . . suggests that the prophetic portions of the book of Daniel take the reader from Daniel's own day, in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C., to the ultimate setting up of God's eternal kingdom at the end of the world." "Modes of interpretation that consider the fulfillment of these chapters to have occurred totally in the past (such as the historicocritical [preterist] interpretation), or that apply their fulfillment entirely or primarily to the future (such as futurism), or that see in these chapters no more than the eternal confrontation between the forces of good and evil (such as idealism) fail to do justice to the thrust of these chapters." Arthur J. Ferch, *Daniel on Solid Ground* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1988), 83–84, 85–86.

"Commentaries on the Revelation are classified generally into several major categories: historicism, preterism, and futurism. . . . [In the *historicist* method] the prophecies are understood to meet their fulfillments in historical time between the days of John and the establishment of the eternal kingdom. *Preterism*. On the other hand preterism has tended to interpret either the entire book of

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In Shea's understanding of the term, historicism cannot be used alongside other approaches. The interpreter must choose one method and stick with that for all of Daniel and Revelation.

No combination of these three methods has ever been successful. A brief flirtation with such an attempt was contemplated in the 1980s under the claim that "interpreters are correct in what they advocate and wrong in what they deny," but it did not work.⁴

Shea shows how interpreters with historicist, preterist, and futurist approaches have arrived at conflicting positions on many prophecies. Thus, he argues, choosing the historicist approach entails denying other approaches.

Both of these schools [historicism and futurism] use the same prophecies but see their fulfillment in different places. . . . These suggested fulfillments are so very different there is no way they can be combined.⁵

Historicism and futurism claim that much in these prophecies goes beyond those preterist end points, so there is no way to combine these systems.⁶

The interpreter has to choose among these three methods.⁷

The reader might wonder why it is not conceivable that Daniel and Revelation might consist of different types of prophecies, so that some sections were intended by the ancient author to be understood with the preterist approach (the author writing about events from his own day and earlier), another section to be read with the historicist approach (a prediction of events between the author and the eschaton), and another section intended to be read with the futurist approach (predicting events surrounding the Parousia). Behind this all-or-nothing logic is an important assumption seldom stated: historicism should be understood to include the time-periods of preterism (the ancient author's own time) and futurism (eschatological events). Whenever we read a section of Daniel or Revelation that seems to be referring to events contemporary with the author, the interpreter who favored the historicist approach for another prophecy cannot now claim the

Revelation or virtually all of it as ancient history. . . . *Futurism*. The futurist system of interpretation sees the fulfillment of most of Revelation restricted to a short period of time still future to our own day." Kenneth A. Strand, "Foundational Principles of Interpretation," *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series [hereafter DARCOM], vol. 6 (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference, 1992), 4–5. See also Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976), 11–16.

⁴Shea, 22.

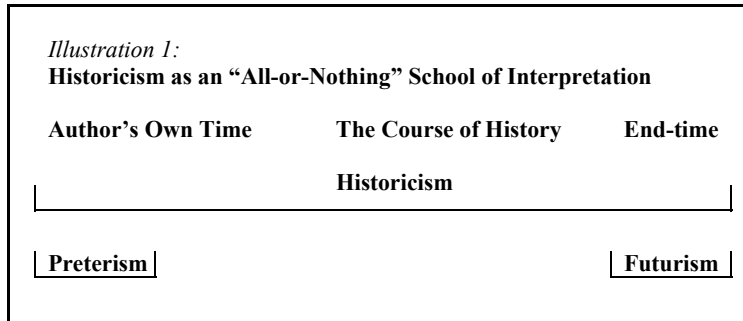
⁵Ibid., 23.

⁶Ibid.

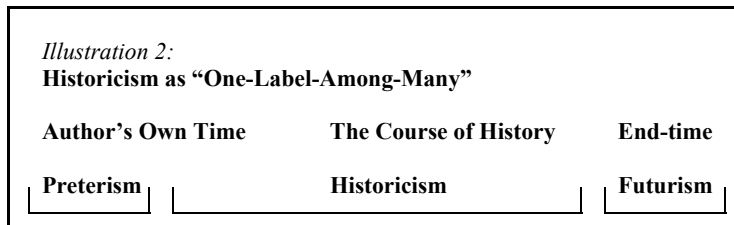
⁷Ibid., 24.

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label of preterism in this case. Once you use the historicist method, everything else you do is by definition also historicism.



Historicism as “One-Label-Among-Many.” A quite different way of using the term historicism sees it as one approach among many that one and the same interpreter might use. Historicism is here an appropriate label for the way the interpreter reads one section of a prophecy, but the way the interpreter reads other sections might receive other labels (preterism, futurism).



Ranko Stefanovic argues that not all sections of John’s Apocalypse are suited for the historicist approach.

A good commentary on Revelation does not favor any particular one of the traditional approaches. The method of interpretation an author chooses normally governs the way he or she reads and interprets the text. It usually results in forcing an interpretation into the framework of a predetermined idea, regardless of whether or not it fits the context.⁸

The exposition of the text must be controlled by the intent of its author, who should tell us what we are supposed to find in it. If the message of the studied text was primarily for John’s day, then it calls for the preterist or idealist approach. On the other hand, if it discusses

⁸Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2002), 11–12.

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the very end times, then its interpretation calls for a futurist approach. If the studied text presents the events occurring throughout the course of history, however, a sound interpretation calls for a historicist approach to the text. Strong evidence must demonstrate that the scenes and symbols in the text point to events throughout all of history, rather than those primarily in John's time or the time of the end.⁹

It is important to notice that this is not the same as a multiple fulfillment approach. Stefanovic, as I understand him, does not suggest that one and the same section of Daniel or Revelation has more than one fulfillment in history. Each prophetic prediction addresses only one place (long or short) on the "timeline" of history.¹⁰ The placement on this timeline determines the label (preterism, historicism, futurism).

Evaluation. Both ways of understanding the term historicism have their strengths and weaknesses.

The first and traditional use of the term, historicism as an all-or-nothing school, has the benefit that it emphasizes the important distinctions of the Adventist approach. Belief in the possibility of true predictive prophecy is an important aspect not shared with all interpreters. Historicist interpretations give the message of a God who is in control of history and able to foretell events before they take place.

By personalizing the definition (talking about historicist and preterist interpreters, rather than merely about historicist and preterist methods), the reader of Adventist expositions of prophecy is called upon to take a stand and choose a side. This us-versus-them language has probably contributed to a positive sense of identity and fellowship among Adventists.

On the negative side, by linking the method so completely with the interpreter and demanding exclusive loyalty to one method, this traditional way of defining historicism has also contributed to a more difficult dialogue with the rest of the Christian world. Because Adventists raised the fence and offered a take-it-or-leave-it approach, interpreters outside Adventism mostly stopped listening. The package could not be sold *in toto*, and so the non-Adventist audience dwindled even on limited exegetical case-studies (particularly for the book of Revelation).

The second approach, the more limited way of using the term historicism as a label only for some parts of the prophecy, might improve matters in this area. A dialogue with someone of a different opinion usually improves by beginning with shared ground and building the dialogue about differences from that common foundation, rather than claiming unbridgeability up front. By demonstrating how both conversation partners read certain sections as related to events in the

⁹Ibid., 12. So also Jon Paulien, *The Book of Revelation*, Bible Explorer Series (Harrisburg: Ambassador Group, 1996), audio cassettes, vol. 1, "Keys to the Code."

¹⁰As Gerhard F. Hasel argues in "Fulfillments of Prophecy," *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, DARCOM, vol. 3 (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 312–322.

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ancient author's time, and how both read some as describing events surrounding the Parousia, the Adventist interpreter will more likely have an attentive audience when he or she goes on to show the sections of prophecy where events in history are predicted; at least if one carefully states the reasons for seeing history predicted there. The Adventist is not trying to sell an all-or-nothing package, but can present arguments for having chosen the historicist approach in each individual case.

A second advantage of this limited definition of historicism is for "internal" research. To the degree that many Adventist laypeople have begun to see larger parts of Revelation as still unfulfilled (in comparison with traditional Adventist interpretation), they might find it more convincing that Adventist scholars argue for the appropriateness of historicism for each individual disputed section, rather than branding them as being in error on a general, abstract level (as in "they are futurists instead of historicists, and since Daniel 2 clearly demands a historicist reading, they are wrong in seeing the future in Revelation chapter so-or-so").

The seven years of Daniel chapter 4 and the seven churches of Revelation chapters 2–3 are examples of sections where some have applied historicism and seen predictions of future history, while others (including most Adventist scholars today) are not so convinced. The mentality must be to argue for every section one by one, and not assume the appropriateness of historicism for a certain section without convincing arguments. It is not unlikely that historicism as one label among many may foster this important attitude better than the traditional historicism.

The advantage of the traditional historicism as a school is the disadvantage of this second way of using the term. Since preterism, historicism and futurism have histories as rich terms conveying many underlying values and assumptions, by choosing to view historicism only as one label among many it is easy to overlook many important differences between Adventist and non-Adventist approaches to prophecy. We usually assume that scholars who read most of Daniel and Revelation with the preterist approach do so because they do not believe in the possibility of true, predictive prophecy. Adventists emphatically and uncompromisingly hold that predictive prophecy has taken place in sections of Daniel and Revelation. If historicism is redefined into one label among many and Adventists begin conversations with non-Adventists on points of agreement (for the benefits we saw above), one should not neglect to point out the real and important differences that do exist.¹¹

My personal judgment is that the traditional definition of historicism works better for discussions of Daniel than for Revelation. For Daniel chapters 2, 7, and 8, most interpreters will agree with the Adventist historicist that the text intends to describe events throughout history (events between the time of the intended author and the eschaton). The disagreement narrows down to belief in

¹¹Stefanovic is also carefully doing this; cf. Stefanovic, 9–12.

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the possibility of true, predictive prophecy and the dating of the book. By describing the Adventist approach as an all-or-nothing school, the important issues of the debate are clarified.

For the book of Revelation, however, I fear the pedagogical effect is the opposite. Most interpreters will *not* agree with Adventists that the text in some places intends to describe events throughout history.¹² By Adventists appealing to historicism (as a school), the non-Adventist interpreter thinks “Millerism,” recalling the heyday of the early 19th century, and conjures up images of the most creative and excessive kind of historicism. I find the proposal of Stefanovic and others appealing: they say that for John’s Apocalypse it is better to “cut up the pie in smaller pieces,” showing which sections Adventists agree on placing in John’s own day, noting in which sections eschatological Parousia-related events are described, and then going on to argue for historicism only in the very sections where Adventists find predictions of the course of history.

A Definition of Historicism

In the rest of this article I will suggest some elements Adventists might include in conversations with non-Adventist interpreters. In this section I propose a definition of historicism in the more narrow sense of the term. Thereafter I sketch a short history of the use of the historicist approach (as I have defined it) throughout church history, so dialogue partners can know that Adventists stand in a long line of interpretation.

Here is my proposed definition of historicism: *Historicism reads historical apocalyptic as prophecy intended by its ancient author to reveal information about real, in-history events in the time span between his day and the eschaton.*

No part of this definition is novel, but some comments may be valuable.

“*Historicism reads.*” Notice that the subject of the definition is ‘historicism’ (the approach) and not ‘historicist’ (the interpreter using the approach), the advantage of which we discussed above.

The next part of the definition, “*historical apocalyptic,*” deals with the jurisdiction: historicism is a method limited to certain types of apocalyptic literature. Most genres found in the Bible are excluded, as are apocalyptic writings where other, heavenly realms are revealed,¹³ rather than future historical events in this world. It is the task of the interpreter to argue the case for historical apocalyptic in each individual section. One may hold one section or chapter of Daniel or Revelation to be historical apocalyptic without automatically assuming that all the rest of the material in Daniel and Revelation is likewise intended to describe future history.

“*Intended by its ancient author.*” Given the growing scholarly interest in reader-oriented approaches, it is worth noting that a historicist interpretation is

¹²Again, see Paulien’s companion article in this issue about recent scholarship on Revelation.

¹³Sometimes labeled “mystical apocalyptic”; see Paulien, 26–27.

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an exegetical task that aims at saying something about the *intent of the author* behind the prophecy. Divine inspiration and revelation behind the text and future events truly predicted—as Adventists believe of the biblical apocalypses—need not mean the ancient human authors understood every detail of what they were inspired to write. But if one uses the historicist approach, one must assume that the authors somehow understood they were referring to future history.

Because many interpreters in the past combined historicism with unchecked creativity and read many imaginary prediction-fulfillments into the apocalyptic text, readers have got the false impression that historicism conveys merely what is in the eye of the modern beholder. Interpreters using the historicist method aim for more than expressing what is in their own minds; they hope to comment on something that is really in the text, as intended by whatever human and divine agents produced the text.

“*Reveal information about real, in-history events.*” Historicism not only looks for the meaning implied in the text and intended by the author (as opposed to meaning created in the mind of the reader), but claims to find authorial attempts at describing *real, historical* events and developments.

The Apocalypse Group of the SBL Genres Project has defined an apocalypse as “revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent *reality* which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”¹⁴ Although we might not believe in all the realities depicted in all the various apocalyptic writings from antiquity, few scholars today dispute that the ancient authors often intended to describe real events. When the ancient author intended to describe travels into heavenly realms or write timeless, a-historical fiction, historicism is not a suitable method to use to understand it.

“*In the time span between his day and the eschaton.*” The elements in our definition up to this point would fit equally well for the preterist and other approaches to apocalyptic literature within the historical-critical and historical-grammatical frameworks. What sets historicism apart is this last phrase. Did the ancient author intend to describe events to take place in the time span from the writing up until the eschaton? If we believe so about a passage, historicism is the approach we take.

If the author of Daniel intended to describe events after his time—i.e., after the 6th century (early dating of the book) or after the 2nd century (late dating), yet before the eschaton, then we have a case calling for a historicist approach; likewise if John the Revelator set out to predict events in a span of time after his days and up to the Parousia.

It is worth observing that one does not have to believe in divine foreknowledge and revelation in order to read a prophecy with a historicist approach. As I

¹⁴John J. Collins, “Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9, emphasis mine.

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have defined it, historicism is not just for the believer. There are several ancient apocalypses around, and none of us believe in the truthfulness of all these attempted predictions. Historicism as a scholarly method only asks for a likely reconstruction of the original *authorial intent* of the writing. Whenever we think we see an author of an apocalypse attempting to foretell events placed in the future yet before the end of the world, we take the historicist approach—whether we consider those predictions to be true or not.

History of Historicism

In the traditional way of defining historicism, as an all-or-nothing school of interpretation, appeals to the history of prophetic interpretation often tried to show how details from current Adventist expositions were shared by interpreters in the past. The “whole school” had to be justified from history, so to speak.¹⁵

If we reduce historicism to one label among many and use it only about events between (not including) the author’s day and the Parousia, all we have to show by appealing to the history of interpretation is that many have believed in the possibility of true predictive prophecy and found it in parts of Daniel and Revelation. When the popularity of that has been demonstrated, the interpreter can turn from the history of prophetic interpretation to exegetical studies to show which parts of Daniel and Revelation he thinks specifically predict history.

The list of prominent interpreters using the historicist approach for at least some part of Daniel or Revelation is quite impressive. Throughout most of history since the writing of Daniel, historicism has been widely used.

Jewish Apocalyptic Writings. Many Jewish apocalypses were written in the period 200 BC to 100 AD. Whether we see them as influenced by and commenting upon the biblical book of Daniel or see them merely as being written at the same time and in the same environment as Daniel, the nature of these apocalypses throw great light on Daniel. Interestingly, several of these apocalyptic writings clearly attempt predictions of the future—the time between their writing and the end of the world (historicist prophecies).

In chapters 91 and 93 of the fifth book of *I Enoch* we find a prophecy of ten consecutive periods, each lasting one “week.”¹⁶ The weeks are obviously symbolical, since events that take longer time than a literal week are mentioned, like the building of a house and a kingdom in week five (verse 7). John Collins comments: “The substance of this apocalypse is made up not of heavenly cosmology but of an overview of history. The history is highly schematized and

¹⁵See the grand and truly impressive project behind Le Roy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1946–1954).

¹⁶James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:74

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organized into periods of ‘weeks.’”¹⁷ “This division into a set number of periods is a common feature of the ‘historical’ type of apocalypse.”¹⁸

Where does the ancient author see himself in this series of ten periods? Collins thinks that the author saw six of the periods in the past. “In the case of the Apocalypse of Weeks, the time of the real author is evidently to be situated in the seventh week.”¹⁹ If Collins is correct in this, these last periods call for the historicist approach. In the seventh period the text mentions coming oppression, the Gentiles to be conquered, towers or castles to be overthrown, and many sinners to be destroyed (91:8–11). In the eighth period, the “week of righteousness,” the righteous will prosper over against the oppressors and sinners (91:12–13). In the ninth period, sin will disappear from the earth and moral perfection or uprightness take over (91:14). Finally, in the tenth period, the day of God’s final judgment takes place, executed by the angels, the first heaven departs and a new heaven appears, and eternity replaces temporality (91:15–17).

In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* chapters 29–30, the writer receives a vision of twelve periods or “hours” of history that are to take place before the eschaton (29:1–3, 9).²⁰ The events of each period are listed in chapter 30, and the end of the world takes place in chapter 31. “The historical axis is divided into twelve hours, a form of periodization that is also found in *2 Baruch*’s vision.”²¹ Where in the series of twelve the author of Abraham saw himself is hard to determine. If he intended the twelve periods to be in his future, we need to interpret this apocalypse with the historicist approach.

In *2 Baruch* chapter 27 we also find twelve periods of history with different events taking place,²² but it is not clear whether these are meant to cover the time span from the author to the eschaton, or are all part of the immediate events surrounding the end of the world itself.

In the fifth vision in chapters 11–12 of *4 Ezra*, a symbolic vision of an eagle is given where different parts of the bird’s body represent different time periods and reigning kings.²³ The vision itself is in chapter 11, and the interpretation is given in chapter 12. This writing is clearly meant as an interpretation and elaboration of the biblical book of Daniel. In 12:11–15 the eagle is said to be a more detailed prophecy of the fourth kingdom in Daniel. First “twelve kings will reign, one after another” (12:14), then another eight kings (v. 20), of which the last two will reign until the end (v. 21), when three more kings will appear

¹⁷John J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 63.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Charlesworth, 1:703–705.

²¹Collins, 229.

²²Charlesworth, 1:630.

²³Charlesworth, 1:548–551.

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(v.23). Then a lion will appear—God’s Messiah—and make an end of the eagle with its many kings.

This eagle, explained by Ezra to be the fourth kingdom in Daniel, is interpreted by most scholars, including Collins, as Rome.²⁴ So the author of 4 Ezra clearly interprets Daniel with the historicist method, reading Daniel as a predictive prophecy about times beyond the days of Daniel. Where in his series of Roman kings does the author of 4 Ezra see his own time? Does he believe the end is imminent, or that many more kings are to come first? If the latter, then even the prophecy of 4 Ezra itself demands a historicist interpretation.

Other Early Jewish Interpretations. The translators behind the Alexandrian *Septuagint* (the early version, not the later Theodotian translation) read Daniel with the historicist approach, believing Daniel to contain predictions about future history. For instance, in Daniel 11:30 the “ships of Kittim” are interpreted and translated with *Ρωμαῖοι*—“the Romans.”²⁵

The Jewish historian Josephus seems to interpret the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 as the Roman empire and the stone kingdom as a future power that would overthrow the Romans.²⁶

Jesus and the Synoptics. In Matthew 24:15 Jesus is said to refer to a prediction by “Daniel the prophet,” interpreting it as a future event. Mark 13:14 contains the same saying, but here only the prediction (clearly taken from Daniel) is given; the reference to Daniel is omitted. In the parallel account in Luke 21:21, Jesus also interprets the prophecy in Daniel as a future event and gives an even more detailed interpretation of it.

Whether one takes these sayings as authentic (as most Adventist scholars do) or as a product of the early Christian tradition, they are in any case evidence of early historicist readings of Daniel. Some in the early Christian church believed that Daniel had predicted events that were to take place after Daniel’s time and before the end of the world.

Early Church Fathers. The early Christian interpretations from the first three hundred years seem to agree on seeing prophecies in Daniel as reaching past Daniel’s time and into the Roman era.

The first chapter of the *Epistle of Barnabas* appeals to the reader to consider the seriousness of the “present circumstances” because “the last stumbling block is at hand” and cites the fourth beast and the ten horns of Daniel 7.²⁷

Irenaeus likewise interpreted the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 and 7 as the present-day Roman empire and believed that Rome in Irenaeus’ future was

²⁴Collins, 196; Froom, 1:288. Since Froom is still widely consulted by many Adventists, I have included the references to each of his discussions for the convenience of the reader.

²⁵Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

²⁶Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:10, in William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 280; cf. Froom 1:199.

²⁷*Epistle of Barnabas* 1:1–5, in Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 279, 281. Cf. Froom 1:210.

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going to be divided up into smaller kingdoms, as suggested by the iron mixed with clay (Dan 2) and the ten horns of the fourth beast (Dan 7, Rev 13).²⁸

Tertullian asked his readers to pray for the stability and unity of the Roman empire in order to delay the prophesied breakup of Rome and thus the coming of the antichrist.²⁹

Clement of Alexandria provided one of the first documented interpretations we have of Daniel 9 predicting the time of Jesus Christ's arrival.³⁰

Eusebius followed the other early Christian writers in identifying the four kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7 as Assyria/Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The seventy weeks of Daniel 9 Eusebius saw as a 490 year prediction of the timing of Messiah, stretching from the Persian period to the time of Jesus.³¹

Cyril, the fourth century bishop of Jerusalem, wrote that the fourth kingdom being Rome was a well-established tradition in the church. "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall surpass all kingdoms. And that this kingdom is that of the Romans, has been the tradition of the Church's interpreters."³²

Jerome took the prediction-fulfillments a step further, claiming that the time of the break-up of Rome, as he saw predicted in Daniel 2 and 7, had begun to take place in his time.³³ He refuted the Pagan Porphyry's proposal that Daniel was written in the second century as an after-the-events-took-place narrative about Antiochus Epiphanes.³⁴

More names could be mentioned. The unified voice of the early Christian church, from the Synoptic Jesus to the leading church historians and scholars of the formative years, was that the biblical apocalypses had in certain sections predicted events to take place in history from the time of their writing down to the end of the world. Historicism reigned.

Middle Ages. Historicist expositions were less common in the middle ages, due possibly to an increasing use of allegorical, ahistorical interpretations of Scripture in general and Augustine's downplay of a literal second Parousia

²⁸Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chap. 26, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885 [reprint 1989]), 1:554–555; cf. Froom 1:244–245, 407.

²⁹Tertullian, *Apology*, ch. 32, as found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:42–43. See also the other references to Tertullian in Froom 1:258.

³⁰Clement, *Stromata*, book 1, chap. 21, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 2:329; cf. Froom 1:265–266.

³¹Eusebius, *Church History*, 1:6, in Paul L. Meier, *Eusebius: The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 35. See also Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, 8:2; *Selections from the Prophets*, 3:45; cf. Froom 1:363–364.

³²*The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, 15:13, as found in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, 7:108. Cf. Froom 1:413.

³³Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 2:40, as found in Gleason L. Archer, trans., *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 32; cf. Froom 1:442–443.

³⁴Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, prologue (Archer, 15–16).

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(which the early church had seen in the stone-kingdom replacing the Roman empire in the prophecies of Daniel).

Though no longer in the majority, the list of interpreters using the historicist approach to Daniel and Revelation is also long for the medieval period. One of the best known is Thomas Aquinas, who held the four kingdoms predicted in Daniel 2 and 7 to be Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome, the ten horns as ten future kings to come in the time of antichrist, and the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 as 490 (lunar) years predicting the coming of Jesus.³⁵

According to Froom, other lesser known medieval interpreters using the historicist approach were Bruno of Segni, Anselm of Havelberg, Rupert of Deutz, Andreas of Caesarea, Sargis d'Aberga, Berengaud, Pseudo-Methodius, Bede, Robert Grosseteste (identifying the papacy as the antichrist), Peter Comestor, Albertus Magnus, Joachim of Floris (seven seals and seven trumpets cover the Christian era), Villanova (urging fellow preachers to preach more on the prophecies, including Daniel 9, which he believed foretold the time of Jesus' first advent), Olivi (who believed the Christian church had become corrupt, as prophesied in the symbol of Babylon in Revelation, and that the seven seals and seven trumpets are seven periods of church history), Emperor Frederick II (who held the pope to be the predicted antichrist), Eberhard (who claimed the papal system was predicted in the little horn of Daniel), Dante, Francesco Petrarch, John Milicz, and the Waldensian Christians (who believed the corruption of the Christian church was predicted in the symbols of the harlot and Babylon of Revelation).³⁶

Renaissance and Reformation. With the Protestant Reformation we return again to a period of dominance for the historicist approach. I mention here only two major early writers.

The English "Morning Star of the Reformation," John Wyclif (1324–1384), believed strongly that the corruption of the papacy was the event predicted in the prophecies of the antichrist, the little horn of Daniel 7, and the harlot woman of Revelation 17. The four kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7 were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.³⁷

When Martin Luther (1483–1546) saw what he considered as the hopelessness of reforming the Church of Rome, he became increasingly convinced that it was apostate and that this apostasy was predicted in Daniel and Revelation.

³⁵Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in Daniele*, chap. 2, 7 and 9; cf. Froom 1:656–657.

³⁶See the references for these twenty interpreters respectively in Froom 1:559, 562, 568, 569, 574, 579, 583, 612, 624, 653, 654, 688, 760, 765–772, 795, 798, 876, 2:21, 29, 31.

³⁷Rudolf Buddensieg, ed., *John Wyclif's De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (London: Trüber, 1907), 262–272. Parts of this work, including some but not all of this section on Daniel, has recently been translated into English: Ian Christopher Levy, *John Wyclif: On the Truth of Holy Scripture* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 349–352. The rest is not too inaccessible in the Latin; cf. Froom 2:54–58.

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When Luther burned the pope's bull of excommunication, he burned it as the bull of the prophesied antichrist and Babylon.

Luther's view on Daniel was the traditional one. The fourth kingdom was the Roman empire, while the break-up of iron into clay in the feet (Daniel 2) predicted the break-up of the Roman empire into smaller nations. Luther wrote that it was common knowledge that the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 should be interpreted with a day for a year and that it predicted the death of Christ.³⁸

This historicist approach to prophecy remained the common and accepted approach among Protestants for the next three hundred years, to such a degree that scholars sometimes define historicism simply as the approach to prophecy of Protestants up until the mid-19th century.³⁹

Today the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only major denomination officially using the historicist approach—the most common approach during two millennia of biblical apocalyptic interpretation. If Adventists wish to see the use of historicism increased among other interpreters, it might be necessary to change the way the approach is communicated. Many scholars do not believe in the possibility of true, predictive prophecy, and the gap between Adventists and these interpreters cannot be closed. The community of believers who are open to this possibility is large, however—in our days as it has always been. To these people Adventists should demonstrate carefully from the biblical text, case by case, where and why one sees history in advance.

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³⁸See extensive references in Froom 1:21; 2:252–277.

³⁹E.g. Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism: Millerite Hermeneutic of Time Prophecies in the Old Testament* (Sigtuna: Datem, 1990), 28: “For the purposes of this research historicism is defined as the method of prophetic interpretation which dominated British and American exegesis from late seventeenth century to the middle of nineteenth century.” Cf. Froom, vol. 3.

The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic—Part One

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church derives its unique witness to Jesus Christ from a historicist reading of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Historicism understands these prophecies to portray a relentless march of God-ordained history leading from the prophet's time up to a critical climax at the end of earth's history.¹ The interpretation of biblical apocalyptic was at the center of Adventist theological development in the formative years of the Adventist Church and its theology.²

There were many reasons for this emphasis on apocalyptic. 1) Daniel and Revelation provided much of the content that makes Adventist theology unique in the Christian world. 2) These apocalyptic books furnished the core of Adventist identity and mission, leading to the conviction that the Advent movement was to play a critical role in preparing the world for the soon return of Jesus. 3) The apocalyptic sense that God was in control of history supplied confidence to go on even when the movement was small and difficulties were large. 4) The sense of an approaching End fostered by the study of Daniel and Revelation motivated Adventists to take their message to the world at once. While many Christians, including some Adventists,³ disagreed with the conclusions that the Adventist pioneers drew from Daniel and Revelation, few in the early years

¹The Adventist definition of "historicism" does not bear the usual literary and historical meaning common in scholarship today, but goes back to a more traditional usage, in relation to the way biblical prophecy is applied in today's world. See Reimar Vetne, "A Definition and Short History of Historicism as a Method for Interpreting Daniel and Revelation," *JATS* 14/2 (Fall, 2003), 1–14.

²By "formative years" I mean the mid-1840s through the end of the 19th Century.

³These included the "first-day" remnants of the Millerite movement as well as individuals who separated from the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers over these issues, such as D. M. Canright.

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challenged the historicist pre-suppositions⁴ behind those conclusions, as they were widely held within Protestant scholarship in North America through at least the mid-1800s.

In the 20th Century, however, the historicist approach to apocalyptic has been increasingly marginalized in the scholarly world. A book charting that marginalization was written as a doctoral dissertation by Kai Arasola, an Adventist church administrator in Sweden.⁵ Arasola points out that before the time of William Miller (1782–1849), the founder of the movement that spawned the Seventh-day Adventist Church, among others, nearly all Protestant commentators on apocalyptic utilized the historicist method of interpreting prophecy. In his book Arasola discusses the excesses of Miller’s historicist hermeneutic that caused historicism to be generally discredited among scholars. Within a few years of the Great Disappointment,⁶ the “centuries-old, well-established historical method of prophetic exposition lost dominance, and gave way to both dispensationalist futurism and to the more scholarly preterism.”⁷ Extremely well-written and carefully nuanced, the book is not a diatribe against historicism, as some have suggested from its title, but is rather a historical documentation of the process by which historicism became sidelined within the scholarly debate on apocalyptic.

According to Arasola, historicism as an interpretive method became generally discredited in large part because the followers of Miller shifted, in 1842 and 1843, from a general anticipation of the nearness of the Advent to an attempt to determine the exact time.⁸ With the passing of the time set by the “seventh-month movement” under the leadership of Samuel Snow, the methods of

⁴See Vetne, who offers the following definition of historicism as a method for interpreting biblical apocalyptic: “Historicism reads the literature of biblical apocalyptic as prophecy intended by its ancient author to reveal information about real, in-history events in the time span between his day and the eschaton” (7).

⁵Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism: Millerite Hermeneutic of Time Prophecies in the Old Testament*, University of Uppsala Faculty of Theology (Sigtuna: Datem, 1990).

⁶The “Great Disappointment” is the term given by Adventists to the Millerite experience in the year 1844. The Millerites came to believe, on the basis of their understanding of Daniel 8 and 9 combined with calculations based on the Karaite Jewish calendar, that the return of Jesus would occur on October 22, 1844. The failure of this calculation was devastating to the movement. For a detailed and sympathetic review of Millerite prophetic interpretation, see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1954), 4:429–851. Briefer, more critical reviews can be found in Stephen D. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994), 93–133; and Kenneth G. C. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), 150–171.

⁷Arasola, 1.

⁸Ibid., 14–17.

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Millerism and Miller himself became the object of ridicule,⁹ a ridicule that continues in some scholarly circles to this day.¹⁰

In conclusion, Arasola soberly suggests that Miller's heritage is two-fold. "On the one hand, he contributed to the end of a dominant system of exegesis, on the other he is regarded as a spiritual father by millions of Christians who have taken some parts of the Millerite exegesis as their *raison d'être*."¹¹ While historicism has been replaced in the popular consciousness by preterism and futurism, it is not, in fact, dead. It lives on in a modified and partly renewed form in the churches that built their faith on Miller's heritage.

The purpose of this article is to take a candid look at the current scholarly debate over apocalyptic and its implications for Seventh-day Adventist study of Daniel and Revelation. The particular focus is the degree to which the historicist approach is still appropriate to the biblical apocalypses of Daniel and Revelation. I begin with a brief look at how the process Arasola described is beginning to erode confidence in historicism among the "millions" of Miller's spiritual descendants. I will then review the current state of the scholarly debate over apocalyptic and how that impacts the Seventh-day Adventist (hereafter SDA) perspective. After suggesting some guidelines for appropriate interpretation of biblical apocalyptic, I will argue that a historicist approach, in spite of the scholarly consensus against it, is in fact the most appropriate approach to certain passages within biblical apocalyptic.

I. Recent Developments Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church

A. Speculation. Within the last generation, a number of challenges have damaged the SDA consensus that the historicist understandings of Daniel and Revelation offer a solid foundation for Adventist faith. One source of damage, ironically, arises from among those who are most committed to the method. As various interpretations put forth by the SDA pioneers fail to connect with today's generation, some supporters of historicism have tried to update the relevance of historical apocalyptic to connect various prophecies with recent history or even the current world scene.¹² An example of the kind of interpretation I have in mind here is where some SDA evangelists have tried to see the fifth trumpet of Revelation as a prophecy of the Gulf War, with the locusts of 9:7–10

⁹Ibid., 17–19; 147–168. While most Adventists today still appreciate Miller and Snow's outline of the 2300 days leading to 1844, most are not aware that Miller had fifteen different methods for arriving at the date of 1843–1844, most of which no SDA would find credible today. See *ibid.*, 90–146.

¹⁰I recall a scholarly panel discussion around 1990 in which all popular attempts at interpreting prophecy were ridiculed as "Millerism." I doubt the leaders of the session were aware how many theological descendants of Miller were in the audience on that occasion!

¹¹Arasola, 171–172.

¹²SDAs are not alone in this tendency, as Paul Boyer points out at length in *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Studies in Cultural History (Cambridge: Belknap, 1992).

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corresponding to the Marine helicopters with their gold-tinted windshields! Others, usually on the fringes of the SDA Church, have sought to use apocalyptic as a basis for determining the date of Jesus' Coming or of other end time events, mistakenly focusing on dates such as 1964, 1987, 1994, and the year 2000.¹³ Even the SDA pioneers were not always attentive to the biblical text in making applications to history.¹⁴ Awareness of these speculative tendencies has caused many thoughtful SDAs to question the entire validity of historicist interpretation of apocalyptic. Such SDAs have found two other interpretive options increasingly attractive.¹⁵

B. Alternative Approaches. 1. Preterism. A number of SDA thinkers, particularly those educated in religion and history, have seen increasing light in the preterist approach to biblical apocalyptic. This approach, the primary one among professional biblical scholars, treats books like Daniel and Revelation as messages to their original time and place, not as divinely-ordained chains of future historical events. According to this approach, believers benefit from these books not by seeing where they stand in the course of history, but by applying spiritual principles drawn from the text to later situations.

This approach should not be automatically treated as an abandonment of faith. It is, in fact, the approach that believing Jews and Christians (including Adventists) take to the bulk of the biblical materials. The letters of Paul, for example, must be understood as the products of a human writer's intention reflecting a specific purpose and aimed at a particular audience. To read such letters as if they were philosophical treatises with a universal purpose is clearly inappropriate.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in recognizing God's purpose in including these letters in the Bible, believers feel free to draw principles from Paul's letters and apply them to their own time and place as the Word of God. When done with sensitivity to the original context, this is entirely appropriate for Paul's letters and also for parts of Daniel and Revelation.¹⁷

¹³I have described some of these date-setting speculations in *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1994), 19–24, and *The Millennium Bug* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1999), 39–40.

¹⁴For an easily verifiable example, see the work of Uriah Smith on the seven trumpets of Revelation (*Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel and the Revelation*: [Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1883], 596–636). In the course of forty pages of interpretation there is but one exegetical statement. Verses are printed according to the King James Version followed by pages of historical detail without a single reference back to the text or its background in the Old Testament.

¹⁵See the helpful discussion in Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2002), 9–12.

¹⁶I am aware of no evidence that Paul ever thought he was writing Scripture when he caused these letters to be written. His purpose was very much concerned with the time and place of writing.

¹⁷I think here of the many preterist/idealist uses of the seven letters of Revelation and of the narratives of Daniel 2–6 in Adventist preaching and writing. For example, Mervyn Maxwell sees value in a preterist/idealist approach to the seven letters of Rev 2–3 in *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1985), 2:90–91. The very title of Max-

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What preterism as an approach to apocalyptic does is treat all of Daniel and Revelation as if these books were little different than Matthew or Romans. While such an approach is certainly appropriate to the narratives of Daniel and the seven letters of Revelation 2 and 3 (Rev 1:11; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, etc.), I will argue below that preterism alone is not an adequate approach to the symbolic visions of Daniel and Revelation. I will offer evidence in a future article that certain texts in Daniel and Revelation belong to the genre of historical apocalyptic and should, therefore, be interpreted in terms of historical sequence. I believe that to ignore this evidence on philosophical or other grounds is to impose an external system on the exegesis of the text.

2. *Futurism.* A very different alternative to historicism sees apocalyptic as concerned primarily with a short period of time still future from our own day. In my experience this alternative has attracted a larger number of SDAs than the preterist one, particularly those educated in law and various branches of medicine, or those who have not had the opportunity of higher education. While rejecting the dispensational form of futurism popularized by the *Left Behind* series, such SDA Bible students are seeking end-time understandings in every corner of Daniel and Revelation.

A major motivation toward a futurist approach is “relevance.” Many SDAs feel that both the preterist and historicist approaches confine interpretation to the dusty past. They are seeking cues in the text that would enable them to speak more directly to current issues in the world than traditional SDA applications or scholarly exegesis appear to do. And it seems clear that many aspects of Daniel and Revelation were intended to portray events that the biblical authors perceived as distant from their time (Dan 8:26; 12:13) or directly concerned with the final events of earth’s history and beyond. (Dan 2:44–45; 7:26–27; 11:40; 12:4; Rev 6:15–17; 7:15–17; 19:11–21; 21:1–22:5). So an examination of Daniel and Revelation without an openness to a future understanding would be an inappropriate limitation of the divine supervision of these books.

Approaches to Daniel and Revelation that limit the meaning of most of the text to end-time events, however, have consistently proven to claim more than they can deliver. In my experience Adventist forms of futurism tend toward an allegorism of dual or multiple applications that loses touch with the original meaning and context of these apocalyptic works. The futurist applications are of such a nature that they tend to be convincing only to a limited number who share the same presuppositions as the interpreter.

C. Post-Modernism. One challenge to historicist understandings of Daniel and Revelation arises from a major philosophical shift in Western experience,

well’s commentaries shows his desire to draw timeless applications from all the passages in Daniel and Revelation. His father, “Uncle Arthur,” had already pursued this approach years before with regard to the narratives of Daniel in his books for children.

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sometimes called post-modernism.¹⁸ Beginning with “Generation X,” younger people have tended to reject sweeping solutions to the world’s problems. They question both the religious certainties and the scientific confidence of their elders. The apocalyptic idea that there could be a detailed and orderly sweep to history seems hard to grasp and even more difficult to believe. While post-modernists are more likely to believe in God than their baby boomer elders, they have a hard time imagining that anyone has a detailed hold on what God is actually like. While everyone, to them, has some handle on “truth,” no one has a full grasp of the big picture. The confidence Adventist pioneers had about their place in history seems, therefore, out of step with the times.

Post-modernism raises some valid concerns about the “modernistic” confidence with which SDA evangelists and teachers have trumpeted questionable interpretations of prophecy in the past. Many have been all too quick to promote personal viewpoints as absolute truth. But while it is healthy to acknowledge that everyone, including SDAs, is ignorant about aspects of the “big picture,” there is no reason to deny that a big picture exists. While we may never grasp truth in the absolute sense, the Bible teaches that absolute truth was embodied in Jesus Christ and revealed sufficiently in His Word that we can have a meaningful relationship with Him. I will argue below that one aspect of that revelation is apocalyptic of a historical variety.

D. Conclusion. As a result of these and other challenges, SDAs today are paying less and less attention to the historic Adventist approach to apocalyptic. Liberal, conservative, old, and young alike are experimenting with alternative approaches and questioning traditional ones. But this lack of attention is not a neutral matter. It is creating a radical, if unintentional, shift in the core message of the Adventist Church. Prophetic preaching and interpretation is increasingly left to the evangelists, while weekly sermons focus more on social scientific insights and story telling. The result is, in my opinion, a crisis in Adventist identity.

Biblical interpretation is often subject to pendulum swings. The excesses or mistakes of those who follow one approach may cause the next generation of interpreters to swing to the opposite extreme, albeit for good reason. But balanced biblical interpretation draws its impetus from the biblical text rather than fashion or external assumptions. Historicism *has* been prone to excesses. It *has* been applied to texts where it probably doesn’t belong (like the seven churches of Revelation). But I will nevertheless argue that it offers the best way to read many texts in Daniel and Revelation, texts supportive of the historic Adventist

¹⁸Some outstanding analyses of post-modernism from a Christian perspective include Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); idem, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001); and J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995).

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identity. Totally abandoning the method would cause us to misinterpret these portions of the biblical message.

In the next section of this article I will examine some recent trends in apocalyptic scholarship, in general first, and then with particular focus on Adventist concerns and issues. I conclude the section with a proposal for re-invigorating Adventist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation.

II. Recent Developments in Apocalyptic Scholarship

A. The Definition and Genre of Apocalyptic. Over the last three decades apocalyptic scholarship has focused intently on issues of genre and on the definitions of terms like apocalypse and apocalyptic.¹⁹ The leading figures during this period of study have been John J. Collins and his mentor Paul Hanson.²⁰ Working with a team of specialists under the auspices of the Society of Biblical Literature, Collins has helped shape the definitions that are in working use today.²¹

¹⁹While the last thirty years have been formative for the current discussion, apocalyptic study prior to 1970 is helpfully reviewed in Paul D. Hanson, "Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 389–413.

²⁰Interest in the topic was awakened by Klaus Koch, who wrote *Ratlos vor der Apokalypik* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1970), trans. Margaret Kohl as *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* [Naperville: Allenson, n.d., but probably 1972]) in 1970. The significance of the work of Collins and Hanson for evangelical scholars is recognized by the choice of Collins to write the article "Apocalyptic Literature" in the *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 40–45. While Collins has had the most prominent role in the scholarly discussion over the last thirty years, he affirmed his debt to Hanson in a personal conversation on November 19, 2000, in Nashville, Tennessee.

The book that more than any other launched the current debate was Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975). See also Hanson's *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). The contributions of John J. Collins are too numerous to list here. Some of the most significant works are: (as editor) *Semeia* 14 (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), entire issue; (along with Bernard McGinn and Stephen J. Stein) *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 3 volumes (New York: Continuum, 1998); (as author) *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997); and *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

²¹Other works of importance over the last half century on the subject of apocalyptic include Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 50 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); idem, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 61–121; and the following: David Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65–96; Johann Christian Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); David Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983); Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

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The term “apocalypse” is drawn from the introductory phrase of the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:1) and means “revelation” or “disclosure.”²² From the 2nd Christian Century onward it became increasingly used as a title or “genre label”²³ for extra-biblical works of a character similar to Daniel and Revelation in the Bible. As modern scholars took note that a whole collection of similar works existed in ancient Judaism, they applied this later label also to books like Daniel, Ethiopic Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and other works produced before and contemporary with Revelation.²⁴

Paul Hanson was among the first to distinguish between the terms apocalypse, apocalyptic eschatology, and apocalypticism.²⁵ For him as for most others, “apocalypse” designates a literary genre, which has since been given a scholarly definition (see below).²⁶ Hanson defines apocalyptic eschatology, on the other hand, as the worldview or conceptual framework out of which the apocalyptic writings emerged.²⁷ Apocalyptic eschatology was probably an outgrowth of prophetic eschatology.²⁸ “Apocalypticism” occurs when a group of people adopt the worldview of apocalyptic eschatology, using it to inform their interpretation of Scripture, to govern their lives, and to develop a sense of their place in history.²⁹

There is a general consensus among the specialists that the genre of apocalypse should be defined as follows:³⁰

²²Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., trans., rev. and adap. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Bauer’s 5th German ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979), 92.

²³Michael Smith, “On the History of *Apokalypso* and *Apokalypsis*,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, 9–20.

²⁴John J. Collins, in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 41.

²⁵John J. Collins, on the other hand (“Early Jewish Apocalypticism,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. [Garden City: Doubleday, 1992], 1:283), does not seem to distinguish between apocalyptic eschatology and apocalypticism, using the later term in the same way Hanson uses the former, as an expression of worldview or, to use Collins’ terms, a “symbolic universe.”

²⁶Paul D. Hanson, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1: 279.

²⁷Hanson, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:280.

²⁸In another place I have outlined this development briefly (*What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, 55–71). There I point out that the prophetic view of the end involved an inbreaking of God into the present system of history without overturning it. The apocalyptic view of the end contains a more radical break between the present age and the age to come, usually including the destruction of the old order before the creation of the new.

²⁹Cf. Hanson, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:281; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2–14.

³⁰According to Hanson (*ibid.*, 1:279), Collins’ team of scholars analyzed all the texts classifiable as apocalypses from 250 BC to 250 AD and based the definition on the common characteristics. There are occasional voices of protest, however. J. Ramsey Michaels, for example, writes that “Definitions of this kind are almost inevitably circular. Scholars assemble a group of documents suspected of belonging to a genre called *apocalypse* and list the common features of these documents to define the genre. For example, the definition quoted above appears to be tailored to fit the

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An apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.³¹

As I understand this definition, an apocalyptic work like Daniel or Revelation is revelatory literature, which means it claims to directly communicate information from God to humanity. This is accomplished in the form of a story, a “narrative framework,” rather than poetry or some other form. The revelation is communicated to a human being by “otherworldly beings” such as angels or the twenty-four elders of Revelation. The revelation discloses “transcendent reality,” that which is beyond the ability of the five senses to apprehend, about the course of history leading up the God’s salvation at the End and about the heavenly, “supernatural” world.³²

While this definition is general enough to seem a fair description of books like Daniel and Revelation, I find what it does not say extremely interesting. For one thing, it does not insist that pseudonymity is a necessary component of apocalyptic literature.³³ This is very significant for Adventists, whose view of

Book of Revelation, or at least to make sure of its inclusion” (J. Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, Guides to New Testament Exegesis, Scot McKnight, gen. ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 26). Below I note a number of ways in which Revelation does not quite fit the genre of apocalypse as defined above.

³¹John J. Collins, “Introduction: The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 14. While this definition is widely disseminated to this day, an expansion of the definition was suggested a few years later: “. . . intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.” Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, “Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism,” *Semeia* 36 (1986): 7. Interestingly, John J. Collins, Yarbro Collins’ husband, ignores her suggested addition in his summary article in *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds*, 41, published in 2000, and in the second edition of his *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5, published in 1998.

³²According to Angel Manuel Rodriguez (*Future Glory: The 8 Greatest End-time Prophecies in the Bible* [Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2002], 9–14), further distinguishing characteristics of apocalyptic include the use of visions and dreams, the abundant use of symbolic language and images, and a focus on the centrality of the cosmic conflict.

³³If one does not believe in the possibility of predictive prophecy, Daniel’s startlingly accurate depiction of the Persian and Greek periods in Dan 11 suggests that the book was written after the events prophesied, around 165 BC. The implied author of the book, “Daniel,” would then be a pseudonym (false name) for the real writer, who lived not at the time of Nebuchadnezzar but at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV.

Pseudonymity does not necessarily imply a conscious or even unconscious deception. A later uninspired writer believes that he or she has genuinely understood and expressed what the earlier inspired writer would have said to the later writer’s situation. An analogy within Adventist thought today is the genre of selections compiled from Ellen White’s writings with the intent of expressing what she would have said to today’s situation. Compilers are often unconscious of the degree to which their selection and placement of her statements reflect their own theological opinions. There is no intent to deceive, but rather to put together what Ellen White might have said in response to the

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God-ordained prophetic history is dependent on the possibility of predictive prophecy.³⁴

While not present in the above definition of “apocalypse,” scholars also distinguish between two types of apocalyptic literature, the historical and the mystical.³⁵ The historical type, characteristic of Daniel, gives an overview of a large sweep of history, often divided into periods,³⁶ and climaxing with a prediction about the end of history and the final judgment.³⁷ Historical apocalyptic visions tend to be highly symbolic; the images themselves are not intended to be literally true, but they refer to heavenly and earthly beings and events.³⁸ While the prophetic visionary views this symbolic sweep of history, he does not usually play a role in the visionary narrative itself.³⁹

later situation. I suspect that ancient apocalyptic writers who used pseudonyms were operating with similar motivations.

³⁴More on this later. A vigorous expression of this view can be found in Gerhard F. Hasel, “Fulfillments of Prophecy,” in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series [hereafter DARCOM], vol. 3 (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 291–316.

³⁵John J. Collins, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 41. As examples of historical apocalyptic Collins lists Daniel 7–12, the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 83–90), the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 93 and 91), Jubilees 23, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch (cf. “Introduction,” *Semeia* 14 [1979]: 14). As examples of mystical apocalyptic he lists 1 Enoch 1–36, the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71), the Apocalypse of Esdras, the Ascension of Isaiah 6–11, 3 Baruch, the Testament of Abraham, and the Apocalypse of Zephaniah (ibid., 15). In what may be a slip-up, Collins later includes Revelation along with Daniel in the category “historical apocalypse.” John J. Collins, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Supplement Series 9, ed. John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 16.

Martha Himmelfarb has argued unsuccessfully that the two types reflect distinct genres. See *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia, 1983) 61. The original distinction of each into three sub-types (in *Semeia* 14) has not proven as useful. See John J. Collins, *idem*, 14.

³⁶Hence the scholarly term for this has become “periodization of history.”

³⁷*Ibid.* This kind of apocalypticism is often called millenarianism, from the expectation of a thousand-year reign of God at the end of time. For John J. Collins, the book of Daniel is a review of the history of the Persian and Greek periods after the fact, with the (failed) prediction of the last events being the only genuine part of that prophecy.

Within the Adventist context, the historical type of apocalyptic is addressed by Kenneth Strand in terms of “horizontal continuity.” He states that “Apocalyptic prophecy projects into the future a continuation of the Bible’s historical record. . . . apocalyptic prophecy’s *horizontal continuity* [my emphasis] is a characteristic that stands in sharp contrast to the approach to history given in classical prophecy.” See Kenneth A. Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, DARCOM, vol. 3 (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 19.

³⁸Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 11. Collins notes the visions of Daniel 2 and 7 as examples.

³⁹In passages like Daniel 2, of course, the visionary is part of the narrative that includes a description of the vision.

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The mystical type of apocalypse, on the other hand, describes the ascent of the visionary through the heavens, which are often numbered.⁴⁰ This journey through the heavens is usually a sustained and straightforward narrative involving the author or the implied author of the apocalypse.⁴¹ While symbolism may be used in mystical apocalyptic, there is more of a sense of reality in the description, the visionary ascends into a real place where actions take place that affect the readers' lives on earth.⁴²

There is some debate among scholars whether these two types of apocalypse should be viewed as distinct genres. Both types, however, can clearly occur in a single literary work.⁴³ Both types, the historical and the mystical, convey a revealed interpretation of history, whether that history is past, present (heavenly journey), or future.⁴⁴ For SDAs, as we have seen, the historical type of apocalypse has traditionally been of primary interest.

Some scholars believe that the historical type of apocalyptic thinking began with Zoroaster, a pagan priest of Persia, but the relevant Persian documents are quite late and may be dependant on Jewish works rather than the other way around.⁴⁵ It is more likely that the "dawn of apocalyptic" can be traced back to the prophetic works of the Old Testament, like Isaiah 24–27, 65–66, Daniel, Joel, and Zechariah.⁴⁶ When the prophetic spirit ceased among Jews during the

⁴⁰For a significant overview of this type of apocalypse, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993). A more recent example of this type of apocalypse can be found in the work of Dante.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 104.

⁴²Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 12.

⁴³John J. Collins, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 41. An example Collins mentions is the Jewish Apocalypse of Abraham (cf. "Introduction," *Semeia* [1979]: 14). While Collins seems to disagree, I think Revelation is another example, as I will attempt to demonstrate in a future article.

⁴⁴Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 15.

⁴⁵Hanson, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:281; John J. Collins, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 41–42; *idem*, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 29–33; David E. Aune, "Apocalypticism," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 46. The evidence for a Persian origin of apocalyptic is presented in Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).

⁴⁶Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*; see also Aune, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 47. Hanson, of course, would not include Daniel in this list, but is responsible for convincing Collins and others that the prophetic background to Jewish apocalyptic is primary.

Although Hanson's view (originally stated by Luecke, according to Aune, 46) that apocalyptic is a natural outgrowth of OT prophecy seems to be a general consensus among scholars today, other views of the origin of apocalyptic are worthy of mention here. Gerhard von Rad sees the "clear-cut dualism, radical transcendence, esotericism, and gnosticism" of apocalyptic mirrored in the wisdom literature of the OT (Aune, 47; cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, [New York: Harper and Row, 1962–1965], 2:301–308). While these links are considered undeniable, von Rad's proposal has garnered little support among scholars (Aune, 47–48).

Kenneth Strand has made the intriguing proposal that the origin of apocalyptic should instead be traced to the historical narratives of the OT; Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles (Kenneth A. Strand, "Foundational Principles of Interpretation," 18). As mentioned earlier, he argues that apocalyptic prophecy projects into the future a continuation of the Bible's historical record. "God's sovereignty

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Persian period (6th to 4th centuries BC),⁴⁷ pseudonymity became a way that uninspired writers sought to recapture the spirit of the ancient prophets and write out what those ancient prophets might have written had they been alive to see the apocalypticist's day.⁴⁸ How the book of Daniel fits into this larger historical picture will be taken up below.

B. The Apocalyptic Worldview. The term "apocalypticism," as noted earlier,⁴⁹ designates the worldview that is characteristic of early Jewish and Christian apocalypses, such as Daniel and Revelation.⁵⁰ The worldview of apocalypticism centered on the belief that the present world order is evil and oppressive and under the control of Satan and his human accomplices. The present world order would shortly be destroyed by God and replaced with a new and perfect order corresponding to Eden. The final events of the old order involve severe conflict between the old order and the people of God, but the final outcome is never in question. Through a mighty act of judgment God condemns the wicked, rewards the righteous, and re-creates the universe.⁵¹

The apocalyptic worldview, therefore, sees reality from the perspective of God's overarching control of history, which is divided into a series of segments or eras. It expresses these beliefs in terms of the themes and images of ancient apocalyptic literature.⁵² Although this worldview can be expressed through other genres of literature,⁵³ its fundamental shape is most clearly discerned in apocalypses.

While many consider the apocalyptic worldview inappropriate for a post-scientific world, many fundamental SDA beliefs are grounded in biblical apocalyptic. In other words, for Adventists the books of Daniel and Revelation

and constant care for His people are always in the forefront of the Bible's portrayal of the historical continuum, whether it is depicted in past events (historical books) or in events to come (apocalyptic prophecy). Both Daniel and Revelation reveal a divine overlordship and mastery regarding the onward movement of history beyond the prophet's own time—a future history that will culminate when the God of heaven establishes His own eternal kingdom that will fill the whole earth and stand forever (Dan 3:25, 44–45; Rev 21–22)" (ibid.). Since Strand never went beyond this brief suggestion, and since this view of origin does not cover all forms of apocalyptic (such as the mystical), the view has not attracted much scholarly attention.

⁴⁷See D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 73–82, for a review of the ancient evidence regarding the decline of prophecy in the Persian and Greek periods (539 to 63 BC in Palestine).

⁴⁸Ibid., 178–202.

⁴⁹See pages 13–14.

⁵⁰David E. Aune, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 46.

⁵¹Ibid., 48–49.

⁵²Ibid., 46. See also the elaborated listing on page 48.

⁵³John J. Collins, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 43. Collins notes the apocalyptic worldview in such non-apocalypses as the Community Rule found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. Collins goes on to note that the apocalyptic worldview is widespread throughout the New Testament and can be clearly seen in such non-apocalypses as Matthew (chapter 24 and parallels in Mark and Luke), 1 Corinthians (chapter 15), the Thessalonian letters (1 Thess 4 and 5, 2 Thess 1 and 2), and Jude.

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are not marginal works; they are foundational to the Adventist worldview and its concept of God. Rejecting the apocalyptic worldview would inaugurate a fundamental shift in Adventist thinking. The purpose of this article is not to settle whether such a shift would be a good thing, but to examine whether careful biblical scholarship is capable of sustaining the biblical basis for the Adventist worldview.

C. Recent SDA Scholarship on Apocalyptic. In reaction to the work of Desmond Ford,⁵⁴ an earlier generation of Seventh-day Adventist scholars sought to distinguish the genres of prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology.⁵⁵ “Prophetic” literature was divided into two major types; 1) general prophecy, represented by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and others, and 2) apocalyptic prophecy, represented by Daniel and Revelation.⁵⁶ General prophecy, sometimes called “classical prophecy,” was seen to focus primarily on the prophet’s own time and place, but with glimpses forward to a cosmic “Day of the Lord” culminating in a new heaven and a new earth. Apocalyptic prophecy, on the other hand, was seen to focus on history as a divinely guided continuum leading up to and including the final events of earth’s history.⁵⁷ William Shea, for example, felt that general prophecy focuses on the short-range view, while apocalyptic prophecy includes the long-range view.⁵⁸

It was argued that general prophecy, because of its dual dimensions, may at times be susceptible to dual fulfillments or foci where local and contemporary perspectives are mixed with a universal, future perspective.⁵⁹ Apocalyptic prophecy, on the other hand, does not deal so much with the local, contemporary situation as it does with the universal scope of the whole span of human history, including the major saving acts of God within that history. The greater focus of

⁵⁴Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* (Casselberry: Euangelion, 1980).

⁵⁵The anonymous document “The Nature of Prophecy” in *Ministry* (October, 1980): 28–33, seems to be a summary of discussions on the topic at the Glacier View Conference in August of 1980, where the views of Desmond Ford were examined by a large committee of church leaders, pastors, and scholars. The Daniel and Revelation Committee subsequently (1982–1985) took up the issue and dealt with it at greater length in the third volume of the Daniel and Revelation Committee Series. See particularly William G. Johnsson, “Conditionality in Biblical Prophecy with Particular Reference to Apocalyptic,” in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, 259–287 and Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 16–19.

⁵⁶*Ministry* (1980): 28. While not utilizing this exact terminology, Gerhard Hasel seems to have been working with a similar distinction in mind in his DARCOM article, “Fulfillments of Prophecy,” 291–322.

⁵⁷Johnsson, 269; Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 16. SDA scholarship has not until now dealt with the distinction between historical and mystical apocalypses addressed above.

⁵⁸William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, DARCOM, vol. 1 (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), 59.

⁵⁹Hasel, “Fulfillments of Prophecy,” 306–307; Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 16.

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general prophecy is on contemporary events; the greater focus of apocalyptic prophecy is on end-time events.⁶⁰ While general prophecy describes the future in the context of the prophet’s local situation, apocalyptic prophecy portrays a comprehensive historical continuum that is under God’s control and leads in sequence from the prophet’s time to the End.

General prophecies, which are written to affect human response, tend to be conditional upon the reactions of peoples and nations.⁶¹ On the other hand, apocalyptic prophecies, particularly those of Daniel and Revelation, tend to be unconditional, reflecting God’s foreknowledge of His ultimate victory and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.⁶² Apocalyptic prophecy portrays the inevitability of God’s sovereign purpose. No matter what the evil powers do, God will accomplish His purpose in history.⁶³ These distinctions are summarized in the box below:

Characteristics of General and Apocalyptic Prophecy

General Prophecy	Apocalyptic Prophecy
Present and End-Time Events Mixed	Series of Historical Events
Short-range View	Long-range View
Dual Fulfillment	Single Fulfillment
Immediate Focus	End-Time Focus
Local Situation in View	Whole Span of History
Conditional	Unconditional

I believe that insights from both general and SDA scholarship can be combined in a useful way. When dealing with Daniel and Revelation, therefore, it is vital to determine the genre of a given passage before deciding how that passage should be interpreted. SDAs have tended to see historical sequences in nearly every part of Daniel and Revelation, even in the epistolary⁶⁴ and narrative⁶⁵

⁶⁰*Ministry* (1980): 28–29.

⁶¹Hasel, “Fulfillments of Prophecy,” 297.

⁶²Johnsson surveys the field on pages 278–282 of his DARCOM article on the subject. After considerable attention to the evidence of Daniel he concludes, “We search in vain for the element of conditionality” (278–279). Daniel is thoroughly apocalyptic and thoroughly unconditional. Zechariah, on the other hand, is apocalyptic in form but covenantal in approach. Its prophecies are, therefore, conditional on human response (280–281). Interestingly, while Matt 24 and its parallels are more general than apocalyptic in form, Johnsson argues (his brief comments of eight lines are more of an assertion) that they are thoroughly unconditional (282). The same is said for Revelation (282). Johnsson concludes that, “Except in those passages where the covenant with Israel is the leading concern, apocalyptic predictions, whether OT or NT, do not hinge on conditionality” (282). Conditional prophecies highlight the concept of human freedom. Unconditional prophecies emphasize divine sovereignty and foreknowledge (282–285).

⁶³*Ministry* (1980), 31.

⁶⁴SDAs commonly interpret the seven letters of Revelation 2–3 as a prophecy of seven eras of church history, an approach one would not naturally take to the letters of Paul, for example. In discussions regarding the letters to the churches, the Daniel and Revelation Committee failed to find convincing evidence for a historicist reading of the seven letters, but its work was closed before work on that topic could be published.

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portions at times. I believe that Adventist interpreters need to pay much closer attention to the genre of a given text before making judgments regarding how to interpret the passage. A historicist approach is appropriate wherever the genre of a passage is clearly historical apocalyptic. Other genres call for other approaches. When the genre has been determined, the appropriate approach can be taken.

While the distinction between general prophecy and apocalyptic is helpful, apocalyptic as a genre is not limited to the historical variety, as the Adventist discussion seems to assume.⁶⁶ It may be more helpful to think of a prophetic continuum⁶⁷ with general prophecy and historical apocalyptic at the two ends (characterized in the above box) and a variety of apocalyptic expressions in between, including mystical apocalyptic and types that focus on personal eschatology or include elements of both historical and mystical apocalyptic.⁶⁸

D. The Distinctiveness of Biblical Apocalyptic. While there is much common ground in the above developments, Adventists tend to differ from most scholarship on apocalyptic on account of their view of predictive prophecy. Biblical scholarship today generally approaches the books of Daniel and Revelation with the assumption that they are similar in character to the non-biblical apocalypses.⁶⁹ Adventists, on the other hand, see a distinction between canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic. For them, canonical apocalyptic (mainly Daniel and Revelation) is inspired; non-canonical apocalyptic is not. For Adventists, Daniel and Revelation offer windows into the mind of God and His ability to “know the end from the beginning” and announce ahead of time “what is yet to come” (Isa 46:10; John 16:13). While Adventists acknowledge the existence of

⁶⁵The Millerites saw the “seven times” of Daniel 4 as a year-for-day prophecy running from 677 BC to 1843 AD.

⁶⁶Collins actually identifies six different subcategories of apocalyptic, three of which are found in early Jewish apocalyptic. John J. Collins, “The Jewish Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 21–59.

⁶⁷Collins notes that a sharp distinction between apocalypses of the historical and mystical varieties is hard to maintain, particularly from the 1st Century AD on. Collins, “Morphology,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), 16.

⁶⁸Rather than historical reviews, some apocalypses “envisage cosmic and/or political eschatology,” which I find much like what Adventists have called “general prophecy” (cf. *ibid.*, 13).

⁶⁹John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, The Forms of Old Testament Literature, vol. 20, edited by Rolf Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 34. In his *Hermeneia* commentary on Daniel (*Daniel* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 25–26), Collins rejects the conservative notion that positions like his rest on a “dogmatic, rationalistic denial of the possibility of predictive prophecy” (26). He goes on, “For the critical scholar, however, the issue is one of probability.” Collins argues that since the prophecies of Daniel 11, in particular, were early recognized (by Josephus and Jerome, as well as Porphyry, to apply to Antiochus Epiphanes, the issue becomes: Why would a prophet of the 6th Century focus minute attention on the events of the 2nd Century? And why would the Hellenistic period be prophesied in greater detail than the Persian or Babylonian period? In his opinion, the burden of proof must fall on those who wish to argue that Daniel is different in character from other examples of the genre.

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pseudo-authorship and *ex eventu* prophecy in non-biblical apocalyptic,⁷⁰ Adventists have understood the inspired apocalyptic of the Bible to be substantively different.

In light of this, the date of Daniel becomes a crucial issue of interpretation for Adventists. The book of Daniel's stated setting is in the courts of Babylon and Persia in the 6th Century BC. During that period of history the gift of prophecy was exhibited in the work of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and perhaps others. Thus, Daniel would be counted among the inspired works of Scripture written around that time. On the other hand, few scholars of Daniel would question that chapter 11 includes a remarkably accurate portrayal of certain events in the fourth, third, and second centuries before Christ.⁷¹ Most scholars would argue that a 2nd Century BC date makes the most sense of that reality.

If one places Daniel in the 2nd Century BC, it would clearly speak to a time when people believed that the prophetic spirit had been silenced (Ps 74:9;

⁷⁰History is divided into twelve periods, for example, in 4 Ezra 14:11–12; 2 Apoc Bar 53–76; and the Apocalypse of Abraham 29. There is a ten-fold division of history in 1 Enoch 93:1–10 and 91:12–17, Sib Or 1:7–323, and Sib Or 4:47–192. History is divided into seven periods in 2 Enoch 33:1–2 and bSanhedrin 97. I know of no one who argues that any of these books were written by the original Enoch, Abraham, Ezra, or Baruch.

⁷¹According to John J. Collins (*Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 34), any discussion of apocalyptic must distinguish between the ostensible setting given in the text and the actual settings in which it was composed and used. The ostensible setting of Daniel is clearly the courts of Babylon and Persia in the 6th Century BC. Already in ancient times, however, Porphyry pointed out that the predictions in Daniel 11 are correct down to (but not including) the death of Antiochus Epiphanes (mid-second-century BC), but are thereafter incorrect or unfulfilled (*ibid.*, 36). This phenomenon of partial accuracy is common in all non-biblical apocalypses. So scholars like Collins suggest that the burden of proof must fall on those who wish to argue that Daniel is different from other examples of the genre (*ibid.*, 34). Collins, for one, is open to the possibility that the court narratives of Dan 1–6 are earlier than the 2nd Century. The crucial issue for him, as it is for SDAs, is the authenticity of the predictions in Dan 7–12.

Scholars who date Daniel in the 2nd Century before Christ do not always point out that Porphyry was a pagan opponent of Christianity who was seeking to demonstrate its inauthenticity. Since predictive prophecy is a powerful evidence for the validity of the Bible, Christianity's sacred text, Porphyry interpreted Daniel as a hostile witness, seeking to demonstrate that the crucial historical sequences of Daniel were all written after the fact. Before Porphyry's time (*circa* 230–300 AD), however, Christian readers of Daniel had no difficulty seeing the prophecies of Daniel being accurately fulfilled in Rome, two centuries after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. See the writings by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, 25.3–5; 26.1–2); A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 553–556), Hippolytus (*Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 28; A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, *Fathers of the Third Century* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 210), and possibly Barnabas (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 4.1–6); J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 278–281). See discussion in Froom, 1:210, 244–246, 273.

It should be noted that at least one major evangelical commentary (John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, 30 [Dallas: Word, 1988], xxxvi–xl) leans toward the 2nd Century position. While Lucas is sympathetic to the 2nd Century position, it is not clear which of the two positions he prefers. See Lucas, 306–312.

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1 Macc 4:44–46; 14:41, cf. *m. Aboth* 1:1).⁷² Without the gift of prophecy it would be impossible for anyone to write history in advance. Having said this, however, the historical time periods of *ex eventu* prophecy reflected the conviction that a true prophet such as Enoch, Moses, or Ezra would be capable of outlining history in advance.⁷³ So if Daniel was actually written in the 6th Century, it stands as a remarkable evidence of predictive prophecy.⁷⁴ Since evidence for a 6th Century date for Daniel has been given elsewhere, that issue will not be taken up here.⁷⁵

⁷²Russell, 73–103.

⁷³Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, trans. Neil Tomkinson, Coniectanea Biblica, NT series, no. 1 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1966), 25; Russell, 96.

⁷⁴While Adventist scholars have tended to see this as a “life and death” issue, Lucas, arguing from an evangelical perspective, disagrees (*Daniel*, 308–309). Those who support a 2nd Century date for Daniel do not necessarily deny that the visions are genuine, but argue that the significance of the prophecies of Daniel lies not in their *prediction* of history, but rather in their *interpretation* of it. Interpretation of past history is as much a part of the prophetic legacy as prediction is. Lucas argues that the use of pseudonymity, which is seen as problematic today, should not be judged by modern standards of literary appropriateness, but by ancient practices, in which pseudonymity was quite common.

I grant that Adventists may have been inclined to damn all who promote a 2nd Century date for Daniel as skeptics (which would be unfair), but they rightly take issue with these points on two grounds. 1) The issue of integrity in Scripture. Does divine revelation portray that which is clearly false, and intentionally so? 2) The fulfillment of divine prediction is a tremendous source of encouragement that unfulfilled predictions (such as the reality of the Jesus’ return, cf. 1 Cor 15:12–24) will take place and will do so in a way that substantially resembles that which was predicted. Rightly or wrongly, Adventists have not been comfortable with the fuzzy uncertainty regarding the future that eventuates from much preterist scholarship. On the other hand, Adventists have often been too confident that God’s plans for the future can be mastered in detail.

⁷⁵Gerhard F. Hasel, “Establishing a Date For the Book of Daniel,” in *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, DARCOM, vol. 2, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 84–164. See also Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale OT Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 35–46; Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (London: SPCK, 1923), 1–12 and *passim*; Arthur J. Ferch, “The Book of Daniel and the ‘Maccabean Thesis,’” *AUSS* 21 (1983): 129–141; Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale Press, 1965), 31–79; William H. Shea, *Daniel 1–7* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1996), 34–44; D. J. Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965), 9–18; Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 23–26.

Among the arguments for an early date for Daniel: 1) The way Daniel handles months and years is almost unknown in the writings of the 2nd Century, but quite common in the 6th. 2) The Aramaic of Daniel is much more like the Aramaic of the Persian period (Daniel’s time) than that of the Qumran scrolls (shortly after the time of Antiochus). 3) Some of the Daniel manuscripts at Qumran would probably be dated before the time of Antiochus were such a result considered possible. 4) Daniel’s awareness of Belshazzar’s existence and position, something unknown in the 2nd Century. 5) Recent evidence from the field of archaeology is much more supportive of a 6th Century date than a 2nd Century one.

III. A New Approach to Apocalyptic Genre

A. Revisiting the Genre of Daniel. While Daniel and Revelation are often thought of as quintessential apocalyptic books,⁷⁶ neither is a consistent example of the genre definition offered above. Daniel has a number of characteristics that do not fit the definition. With the exception of Nebuchadnezzar's dream/vision in 2:31–45, the first six chapters of Daniel are of a largely narrative character. While a “narrative framework” is a defining characteristic of apocalyptic, the stories of Daniel 1–6 have few of the other characteristics of apocalyptic. Within the larger genre of narrative, these stories instead fall into a category often called “court tales,” which is fairly rare in the extant literature of the ancient world.⁷⁷

Furthermore, at significant points in the book (Dan 2:20–23; 9:4–19), prayers occur. The first of these is in poetry, the second in prose! Other elements of Daniel are also written in verse; prominent among these is the heavenly judgment scene of Dan 7:9–10, 13–14.⁷⁸ There are aspects of the book that also fit very well into the Old Testament wisdom tradition.⁷⁹ Even the visions of Daniel don't always precisely fit the definition of apocalyptic. The closest fit is in chapters 11 and 12, which are clearly historical apocalyptic.⁸⁰ Questions have been raised, on the other hand, whether the visions of Daniel 7 and 8 truly fit the genre.⁸¹

While assessing the genre of whole apocalyptic books is a most interesting pursuit, therefore, it may not be as helpful to the interpretation of Daniel as a more nuanced approach. Daniel clearly exhibits a mixed genre, with elements of narrative, poetry, and prayers sprinkled among the apocalyptic visions. Whether one wishes to describe these elements as “genres,” “sub-genres” or “forms,” careful attention is needed on a text by text basis to determine that a given passage should or should not be interpreted as historical apocalyptic.⁸²

⁷⁶Collins is unequivocal with regard to Daniel, “Taken as a whole, Daniel is an APOCALYPSE, by the definition given in the discussion of that genre above. More specifically, it belongs to the subgenre known as “HISTORICAL APOCALYPSE, . . .” Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 33. In its title (Rev 1:1), the Book of Revelation supplies the word “apocalypse,” which has been used to cover the entire genre.

⁷⁷The book of Esther and the court stories of Joseph (Genesis 41–50) are the only true parallels in the Old Testament. From ancient Mesopotamia comes the story of Ahikar, along with several others from ancient Egypt, Sinuhe being the best known.

⁷⁸For a summary of the scholarly debate over the existence and extent of poetry in Daniel 7 see Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (Chico: Scholars, 1983), 190–191.

⁷⁹Gerhard von Rad was the first to see a strong wisdom background to apocalyptic in general (*Old Testament Theology*, 2: 301–308). He was supported by comparative work in mantic wisdom traditions (H. -P. Müller, “Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptic,” *Studia in Veteris Testamenti* 22 [1972]: 268–293, cited in Lucas, 311).

⁸⁰Lucas, 272–273, 310.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 311; Niditch, 177–233. Collins speaks of the visions of Daniel 7 and 8 as “Symbolic Dream Visions” in *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 78, 86.

⁸²John J. Collins is clearly moving in that direction with his interpretive distinction between the court tales of Daniel and the historical apocalyptic passages in *Daniel* (Hermeneia), 38–61.

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The importance of careful attention to genre is powerfully argued by Lucas in his recent commentary on Daniel.⁸³ Lucas points out that all readers have some sense of the different genres of literature that exist in their culture. Because of this, readers approach a given text with certain expectations based on the kind of literature they perceive it to be. If an author wishes to connect with an implied audience, that author needs to adopt a genre that will communicate to readers within that audience's culture. Not to do so would risk great misunderstanding.⁸⁴

Later readers who wish to understand a text, therefore, need to identify the place any given text has within the generic options available to the original audience. While the original audience will make such identifications unconsciously, the later interpreter will need to carefully observe the text under review, noting literary markers that indicate genre within the culture and worldview of the original audience. There is great potential for misunderstanding, of course, when later generations read a text. To treat a court tale or a classical prophecy as if it were historical apocalyptic would be to draw false conclusions. On the other hand, to treat historical apocalyptic as if it were something else would also lead to inappropriate and misleading acts of interpretation.

Seventh-day Adventist interpreters have had the tendency to treat most or all of Daniel and Revelation as historical apocalyptic, without specific attention to the textual markers that would indicate such interpretation. As a result, texts like the seven letters of Revelation 2 and 3 or the "seven times" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream were interpreted in a historicist fashion, even though there was no specific textual evidence for doing so.⁸⁵ This approach was plausible when Daniel and Revelation were thought of as completely apocalyptic, but the evidence now calls for a more nuanced approach.

When it comes to Daniel, the interpreter must decide whether the genre of a given passage is narrative (court tales), poetry, prayer, or apocalyptic. If the passage is apocalyptic, the interpreter must determine whether the evidence of the passage points to mystical or historical apocalyptic.⁸⁶ In a forthcoming article I will argue that the visions and explanations of Daniel 2 and 7 exhibit the marks of historical apocalyptic. I believe that most scholars would agree with me in that designation. As we have seen, the primary point of difference between the Adventist understanding of Daniel and the scholarly majority has to do with the

Collins discusses the genre of the court tales on pages 38–52, and the genre of the visions on pages 52–61. He anticipated this approach in his short commentary in the *Forms of the Old Testament Literature* series (Eerdmans, 1984).

⁸³Lucas, 22–24.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁵It might be appropriate at this point to note that Adventist "futurists" seem equally oblivious to genre when they treat most or all the passages of Revelation as End-time regardless of the kind of textual evidence that might or might not have led the original audience to draw such a conclusion.

⁸⁶As we have seen, the consensus of scholarship seems to be that the apocalyptic visions of Daniel are normally of the historical variety.

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date of the book, whether the visions are predictive or interpretations of history after the fact.

B. Revisiting the Genre of Revelation. A problem that previous Adventist discussions have not adequately addressed is the relationship of Revelation to the larger genre of apocalyptic prophecy. It has been largely assumed that Revelation is of the same character as Daniel (which Adventists generally treat as an apocalyptic prophecy).⁸⁷ Its visions, therefore, are usually interpreted as unconditional prophetic portrayals of the sequence of both Christian and general history from the time of Jesus to the end of the world.⁸⁸ This assumption, as we have seen, has not been found compelling by specialists in the field.

Rather than exhibiting a consistent use of historical apocalyptic, as many Adventists assume, Revelation seems to smoothly blend characteristics of general prophecy,⁸⁹ mystical apocalyptic,⁹⁰ and historical apocalyptic.⁹¹ One can also find the genres of epistle,⁹² and perhaps even narrative.⁹³ Like general

⁸⁷Christopher Rowland, on the other hand, shows that the two books are significantly different. See *The Open Heaven*, 12–14.

⁸⁸William Johnsson, in his article on the nature of prophecy (DARCOM, 3:282), provides only two paragraphs on Revelation. Kenneth Strand goes much further. He states without argument that Revelation, along with Daniel, is generally classified as apocalyptic prophecy, in contrast to “classical prophecy.” He then goes on to list the characteristics of apocalyptic prophecy (“Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 11–19). Strand does soften this assertion somewhat on page 22, however. He notes the epistolary nature of the seven letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3, giving Revelation “a certain flavor of exhortation,” an element of conditionality. He limits this exhortatory character of Revelation, however, to appeals and does not apply its conditionality to the prophetic forecasts of Revelation.

My own work in the same volume states that Revelation is both prophetic and apocalyptic, but I don’t address the implications of that distinction (“Interpreting Revelation’s Symbolism,” 78–79). One reason for this mild contradiction is that the Daniel and Revelation Committee was disbanded before finishing its work. Strand’s opening articles, a compendium of his earlier work, were added later but were never seriously discussed in the committee.

⁸⁹I find the prophetic genre exhibited in the seven seals of Rev 6:1–8:1.

⁹⁰I see the mystical apocalyptic genre of heavenly ascents exhibited in Rev 4–5, mingled perhaps with elements of the prophetic genre. See David Aune, *Revelation*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word, 1997), 276–279.

⁹¹In this sentence I go against the grain of some leading scholars’ opinions. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, for example, asserts that “strictly speaking,” Revelation does not belong to either the historical or the heavenly journey type of apocalypse (“The Phenomenon of Early Christian Apocalyptic,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, 298). She argues that the book contains no reviews of history, is not pseudonymous, and has no developed heavenly journey. The argument regarding pseudonymity does not seem to apply to the genre question (see page 42); the other two arguments are observational and intuitive. I question the former in this series of articles. A point in Fiorenza’s favor is that the systematic review of history so dominant in some of the Jewish apocalypses is entirely absent in Christian “apocalypses,” such as *The Apocalypse of Peter*, *Hermas*, the *Book of Elchasai*, and *5 Ezra* (ibid., 298–299, 310). The latter two are fragmentary, so the evidence is incomplete. She does, however, note the affinity between Revelation and the Synoptic Apocalypse in the prophetic-apocalyptic combination of eschatological events and *paraenesis* (exhortation). Ibid., 300. Cf. John J. Collins, “Introduction,” *Semeia* 14, 14–16.

⁹²Most scholars would agree that Rev 2–3 best fits the epistolary genre.

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prophecy, it is written to a specific time and place, and the audience is local and contemporary (Rev 1:1–4, 10–11, 2:1–3:22).⁹⁴ Its message was meant to be understood by the original audience (Rev 1:3).⁹⁵ It describes its author as a prophet and his work as a prophecy (1:3, 10–11; 10:8–11; 19:10; 22:6–10, 16, 18–19). It is not, therefore, simply a replay of the visions of Daniel.⁹⁶

At the same time, much of the language and style of Revelation is clearly apocalyptic. Unlike classical prophecy but like Second Temple apocalyptic, Revelation exhibits a radical and complete break between the old order and the new.⁹⁷ Like mystical apocalyptic, Revelation includes reports of the writer's forays into heavenly places (Rev 4–5; 7:9–17; 12:1–4; 14:1–5; 19:1–10). Like historical apocalyptic, there are clear traces of historical sequence in Revelation (Rev 12:1–17 and 17:10).⁹⁸ So the genre of Revelation as a whole seems mixed.

The early scholarly consensus was that the book of Revelation as a whole was primarily apocalyptic.⁹⁹ But that early consensus has needed qualification. The similarity between portions of Revelation and other apocalyptic writings does not negate the prophetic character of the book.¹⁰⁰ Not only so, but some scholars feel the difference between prophetic and apocalyptic genre is not always clear-cut.¹⁰¹ The apocalyptic War Scroll found at Qumran, for example, is

⁹³While Rev 1:9–20 has prophetic-apocalyptic features, one could argue that this represents narrative genre.

⁹⁴The prophetic portion of the book cannot be arbitrarily limited to the seven letters at the beginning, as Rev 22:16 clearly states that the entire book was intended as a message to the churches.

⁹⁵Rev 1:3 states, “Blessed is the one who reads and *those who hear the words of this prophecy* [οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας], and keep the things written in it, for the time is near.” The accusative form of *τοὺς λόγους* indicates that the author of Revelation intended his original readers not only to hear the book, but to understand and obey it (“keep the things written in it”).

⁹⁶In Daniel, by contrast, there are texts that seem to postpone understanding: Dan 8:27; 12:4, 13.

⁹⁷See Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time*, 55–71, concerning this shift from the historical and geographical continuity of Old Testament prophecy to the radical break between the ages of Jewish apocalyptic.

⁹⁸Strand, “Foundational Principles of Interpretation,” 17. In the article to follow, I examine these traces in some detail for chapter 12.

⁹⁹John J. Collins, “The Genre Apocalypse in Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, 531–548; idem, *Semeia* 14:1–20. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertation Series, no. 9 (Missoula: Scholars, 1976), 2; Jan Lambrecht, “The Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic in the New Testament: Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense XXX (August 28–30, 1979),” *Ephemerides théologique Lovaniensis* 55 (1979): 392.

¹⁰⁰Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Lion and the Lamb: The Gospel in Revelation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 88; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 135; Frederick David Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989).

¹⁰¹David Hill, “Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John,” *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971–1972): 401; Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 168; G. K. Beale, *Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 37; D. A. Carson, Douglas J.

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saturated with Old Testament prophetic language.¹⁰² On the other hand, the prophetic books of the Old Testament, even the “classical” ones, contain many features common to apocalyptic, such as the eschatological upheavals preceding the End (Joel 2:30–31; Isa 24:3)¹⁰³ and the inbreaking of the End-time itself (Amos 8:8–9; 9:5–6).¹⁰⁴ So to completely distinguish between prophetic and apocalyptic books is extremely difficult if not impossible.¹⁰⁵

It is perhaps safest to say that the Apocalypse is a unique literary work, one that utilizes the expressions of apocalyptic literature, but also reflects the conviction that the spirit of prophecy had been revived (Rev 19:10).¹⁰⁶ George Eldon Ladd, therefore, proposed a hybrid categorization.¹⁰⁷ In between prophetic literature and apocalyptic literature,¹⁰⁸ Ladd placed a new category that he called “prophetic-apocalyptic.” Here he would place literature such as Revelation.¹⁰⁹

Some would go a step further than Ladd. They would argue that while there are elements of Revelation that hark back to both OT prophecy and Jewish apocalyptic, the entire book is portrayed as a letter to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 22:16).¹¹⁰ Ulrich B. Müller points out that despite the tension in

Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 478–479.

¹⁰²Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 355–358.

¹⁰³John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 12.

¹⁰⁴George Eldon Ladd, “Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957): 197.

¹⁰⁵Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 168.

¹⁰⁶Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Apocalypse* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1976), 26; David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 75; idem, “Prophecy and Prophets,” 406; Donatien Mollat, *Une lecture pour aujourd’hui: L’Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), 30. Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang (“The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation,” [PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1985], 2), following Dieter Georgi, contends that Revelation is an “anti-apocalyptic book”: though written in the genre of an apocalypse, it offers a message contrary to that of contemporary apocalyptic literature. According to Vogelgesang, these differences were due to the Revelator’s belief in Jesus and his particular understanding of the implications of that belief.

¹⁰⁷Ladd, 192–200. Cf. the position of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Apokalypsis and Prophetia: The Book of Revelation in the Context of Early Christian Prophecy,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologarum Lovaniensium, vol. 53 (Gembloux: Leuven UP, 1980), 105–128.

¹⁰⁸Ladd calls this “non-canonical apocalyptic.”

¹⁰⁹Fiorenza (*The Book of Revelation*, 138, 168) agrees with Ladd that there is no either/or solution to the complexity of Revelation.

¹¹⁰Carson, Moo, and Morris, 479; David E. Aune, *Revelation*, 1:lxvii–lxxv; Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 51, 170. Fiorenza (4) would add that in addition to OT prophetic and Jewish apocalyptic traditions, Revelation also reflects the influence of Pauline, Johannine, and other NT-era prophetic traditions. I don’t doubt that this is the case, but as a practical matter, I take these backgrounds to be more speculative than helpful, since it is far from clear what NT books John would

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character between the seven letters and the apocalyptic portions of Revelation,¹¹¹ the fundamental prophetic content is the same.¹¹² The apocalyptic war is not only played out in heaven, but it is also played out in the everyday life of the churches. While the epistolary character of the seven letters is clear, categorizing the whole book of Revelation as an “epistle” does not seem to make sense.¹¹³ Ladd’s designation “Prophetic-Apocalyptic” and the Adventist phrase “Apocalyptic Prophecy” seem more appropriate designations for the genre of Revelation as a whole.

C. Adventists and the Genre Debate. What is clear from the scholarly debate is that the genre of Revelation as a whole is a mixed one whose character cannot be determined with exactness.¹¹⁴ The appropriateness of historicist method for Revelation, therefore, is much less obvious than is the case with the visions of Daniel. Most Seventh-day Adventists have not yet felt the force of this difficulty. Having inherited the historicist approach from Protestant forebears in the middle of the 19th Century,¹¹⁵ Adventist interpreters have assumed that approach to be the correct one for Revelation, but have never demonstrated it from the text.¹¹⁶

have been familiar with, if any. These difficulties are illustrated in the work of Louis Arthur Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965).

¹¹¹Ulrich B. Müller, “Literarische und formgeschichtliche Bestimmung der Apokalypse des Johannes als einem Zeugnis frühchristlicher Apokalyptik,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, 602.

¹¹²Müller, 606; Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 121.

¹¹³Adela Yarbro Collins, *Semeia* 14: 70–71. She notes that the epistolary parts of the book are in service of its revelatory character, not the other way around. Also the book begins not with the prescript of a letter, but with the apocalyptic introduction that characterizes the book not as letter, but as apocalypse and prophecy (Rev 1:1–3). John J. Collins (*The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 270) notes that even if it were determined that Revelation was primarily an epistle, that designation would not be helpful in understanding the content of the book.

¹¹⁴Typical of more recent discussion is the eclectic approach of G. K. Beale, *Revelation*, especially 37–43. He quotes Ramsey Michaels (from *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 31–32) with relish: “If a letter, it is like no other Christian letter we possess. If an apocalypse, it is like no other apocalypse. If a prophecy, it is unique among prophecies.”

¹¹⁵The works of E. B. Elliott and Alexander Keith seem to have been particularly influential.

¹¹⁶This came into focus in the context of recent Adventist conversations with representatives of the Lutheran World Federation. It was clear that the Lutherans had a hard time understanding the Adventist approach to Daniel and Revelation. When it came time to write the Adventist response, the Adventist representatives decided that exegetical justification for a historicist approach to Revelation was needed. But no one was able to suggest Adventist literature where such a justification could be found.

My own subsequent search turned up only one Adventist argument for a historicist approach to Revelation. It goes something like this (an example of this approach is Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb Among the Beasts* [Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1996], 44–48): The book of Daniel clearly exhibits a series of historical events running from the prophet’s time to the end. The Book of Revelation quotes Daniel and is similar in style to Daniel; therefore, the seven-fold series of Revelation are also to be understood as historical series running from the time of the prophet until the end. This argument by itself is not satisfactory.

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It should be evident for our purpose that there are significant differences in the conclusions of scholarly research with regard to Daniel and Revelation. While, for example, the visions and explanations of Daniel are generally understood to bear the marks of historical apocalyptic, as most Adventists have thought, there is disagreement regarding the time of the visions and the genuineness of the book's stated historical context.

Unlike Daniel, there is little dispute over the date of Revelation. Nearly all scholars would agree that the book was written somewhere within a 30-year span.¹¹⁷ But also in contrast with Daniel, it is far less obvious whether any given passage of Revelation should be interpreted as historical apocalyptic. But if a historicist approach to Revelation is to have any validity, it must be demonstrated from the text, not assumed from long tradition.

While the focus of scholarship until now has been on classifying Revelation as a whole, there is increasing interest in the genre of its parts.¹¹⁸ I sense that precision regarding the genre of Revelation as a whole has not made a huge difference in the interpretation of the book's parts.¹¹⁹ I therefore agree with J. Ramsey Michaels that for Revelation it will be more useful to pay attention to the genre of the parts than of the whole.¹²⁰ One could say that Michaels and I are

¹¹⁷A recent summary of the issues regarding the date of Revelation is found in G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 4–27. Two other summaries of research on the issue are found in John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 224–225, and J. Christian Wilson, “The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation,” *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 587–597. Aside from Robinson and Wilson, scholars who have held to an early date for at least part of Revelation (usually in the reign of Nero and in the mid to late 60s) include J. B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (London: MacMillan, 1893), 52; idem, *Essays on the Work Entitled Supernatural Religion* (London: MacMillan, 1889), 132; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible, 38 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 3–4; A. A. Bell, “The Date of John's Apocalypse: The Evidence of Some Roman Historians Reconsidered,” *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979): 93–102; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 403–413; and K. L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989). While the difference between a Neronian and a Domitianic date for Revelation obviously makes a big difference in interpretation for preterist scholars, the difference is not significant for our purpose in this article.

¹¹⁸Note the following two examples, which focus on the songs of Revelation: Robert Emerson Coleman, *Songs of Heaven* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1980); and Klaus-Peter Jörns, *Das Hymnische Evangelium*, Studien zum NT, vol. 5 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971).

Michael Stone early noted that large parts of “apocalyptic” books are not really apocalyptic in content, style, or ideology; therefore, genre studies of whole “apocalyptic” books would be doomed to a certain amount of frustration right from the start. See Michael Stone, “Revealed Things in Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, 439–444. John Collins acknowledges that it is more appropriate to speak of the “dominant genre” of works as a whole rather than insisting on an umbrella designation for works that are often composite anyway (*Mysteries and Revelations*, 14).

¹¹⁹Beale forcefully agrees in his commentary (24). He says that genre studies are yielding “diminishing returns.”

¹²⁰Ramsey Michaels, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, 32; cf. overall discussion in pages 29–33. Adela Yarbro Collins seems to hint at such an approach to Revelation in *Semeia* 14: 70. She

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thinking of “genre” more in the expanded German sense of *Gattung*, which can be used for smaller literary units within a work as well as for the work as a whole.¹²¹ One would call work in the smaller literary units an analysis of “forms,” but this might result in confusion with the methods of Form Criticism as applied to the gospels.¹²² So for now I will speak of the respective genres of the various parts of Daniel and Revelation.

If Adventists wish to revive the historicist approach to Revelation, therefore, they will need to pursue a thoroughgoing examination of the genre of Revelation’s visionary passages on a case-by-case basis.¹²³ One way to do this is to demonstrate that portions of Revelation fit the genre of historical apocalyptic better than other options. I will attempt such an evaluation of Revelation 12 in a future article. If there is historical apocalyptic in the Book of Revelation, it will be discerned in the genre of the particular text, as is the case with Daniel.

D. Historical Apocalyptic in Revelation. Unlike the case with Daniel, few scholars argue that the Book of Revelation is pseudonymous.¹²⁴ Most scholars understand that John is the name of the actual author and that his prophecies are

says, “To determine the literary form of the book of Revelation as a whole, one must ask what the dominant literary form is or how all these smaller forms are integrated into a coherent whole.”

¹²¹For a brief summary of how “genre,” “form,” and “*Gattung*” are used within biblical scholarship, see Lars Hartman, “Survey of the Problem of Apocalyptic Genre” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, 330; in the same book see also E. P. Sanders, “The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses,” 450–454. Sanders seems to have raised some of the same issues I am addressing here.

¹²²Cf. Sanders, 450, especially note 18.

¹²³In the Daniel and Revelation Committee session that was held at Newbold College in England in 1988, considerable discussion was given to this issue. A developing consensus seemed to be that the churches, seals, and trumpets of Rev 1–11 respectively exhibited the characteristics of the three main genre types found in the book of Revelation. It was felt that the seven letters portion of the book (Rev 2–3) reads most naturally along the lines of the New Testament epistles; the seven seals (Rev 6–7) bore the character of classical prophecy, along the lines of Matt 24; and the seven trumpets (Rev 8–11) were the most apocalyptic in nature. Upon further reflection in light of recent scholarship, I would today classify the letters as epistles, with some elements of classical prophecy, the seals as mystical apocalyptic with elements of classical prophecy, and the trumpets as essentially historical apocalyptic. Further refinement of these categories and further examination of the evidence is needed.

¹²⁴Major examples of the majority view are Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 27–28; idem, “The Early Christian Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 71; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 211; idem, “Pseudonymity,” 330–331; Horst R. Balz, “Anonymität und Pseudepigraphie im Urchristentum,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 66 (1969): 416–417, 427–428; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 61–70. For examples of the minority view that Revelation is pseudonymous, see P. Joachim Becker, “Erwägungen zu Fragen der neutestamentlichen Exegese: 3. Pseudonymität der Johannesapokalypse und Verfasserfrage,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 13/1 (1969): 101–102; Roderic Dunkerley, “The Five Johns,” *London Quarterly and Holburn Review* 30 (1961): 298; Georg Strecker, “Chiliasmus und Doketismus in der Johanneischen Schriften,” *Kerygma and Dogma* 38 (1992): 33, especially note 11; Ugo Vanni, “L’Apocalypse johannique: État de la question,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et L’Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, 33.

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genuine attempts to outline future events.¹²⁵ My question is, what is the nature of that outline? Is it the more general and immediate perspective of a classical prophet, or does it project a historical sequence like the apocalyptic visions of Daniel? While the time frame of John's understanding is certainly short (Rev 1:1, 3; 22:10), the latter option needs to be considered possible. Why?

The historical time periods of *ex eventu* prophecy (in Jewish apocalyptic) reflected the conviction that a genuine prophet such as Enoch, Moses, or Ezra would be capable of outlining history in advance.¹²⁶ In other words, the literary strategy of *ex eventu* prophecy would have no credibility with its audience unless that audience believed in the general concept of sequential predictive prophecy. Note the language of D. S. Russell:

The predictive element in prophecy had a fascination for the apocalyptists and it is to this aspect of the prophetic message that they devote so much of their interest and ingenuity. . . . The predictive element in prophecy is not simply accidental, as Charles would have us believe. It belongs to the very nature of prophecy itself.¹²⁷

Since John, the author of Revelation, believed that the prophetic spirit had returned (Rev 1:3; 19:9–10; 22:6–10),¹²⁸ he would have every reason to believe that the cosmic Christ could reveal to him the general outline of events between his day and the consummation. The return of genuine prophets would signal the return of predictive prophecy.¹²⁹ If the Book of Revelation is genuine prophecy, not *ex eventu*, it needs to be addressed differently than non-canonical apocalyptic.¹³⁰

The question to examine then becomes: In his outline of future events (Rev 1:1), did John the Revelator understand any of his visions to be in the genre of

¹²⁵Note the powerful affirmations of John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 212; *ibid.*, "Pseudonymity," 330–331, 339–340.

¹²⁶Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 25.

¹²⁷Russell, 96. The "Charles" mentioned in the quote is R. H. Charles, the influential commentator on Revelation, who wrote in 1920.

¹²⁸John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 212; *ibid.*, "Pseudonymity," 331.

¹²⁹Jon Paulien, "Eschatology and Adventist Self-understanding," in *Lutherans and Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented, 1994–1998*, edited by B. B. Beach and Sven G. Oppgaard (Silver Spring: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2000), 239–240.

¹³⁰To borrow a phrase from John J. Collins, the author of Revelation applied "the logic of periodization" to his genuine prophecy. See Collins' "Pseudonymity," 339–340, where he argues for genuine prophecy in Rev 17 as an example; see also page 330, where Collins is explicit on the absence of pseudonymity and *ex eventu* prophecy in Revelation.

For further study see Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7–12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 11 (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1988), 357–362.

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historical apocalyptic?¹³¹ Did he see himself in the heritage of Daniel and the apocalyptic writers as a portrayer of historical sequence? And if he did, what passages in Revelation need to be interpreted along the lines of historical apocalyptic?

IV. Conclusion

Since the concept of predictive prophecy is grounded in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, it should not surprise anyone that the vast majority of Biblical interpreters throughout Christian history believed in predictive prophecy and felt that Daniel and Revelation in some way offered an outline of Christian history leading to the end of the world.¹³² Most Adventists, like them, see no indication in the text of Daniel and Revelation that the events symbolized in the visions were to be confined to the distant past or the far future. They understand Daniel to address the entire course of history from his time until the end. They understand that the Book of Revelation speaks to the entire Christian era from the cross to the second coming of Christ.

If portions of Daniel and Revelation bear the character of historical apocalyptic, they were intended to portray the chain of events leading from the visionary's time to the end of all things. Whatever time frame Daniel had in mind for this chain of events (assuming a 6th Century perspective), it involved a sequence of kingdoms in control of God's people before the end. While Daniel's personal time frame was short at first, the visions suggest that Daniel experienced a stressful lengthening of that time perspective through the visions (7:28; 8:27; 9:24–27; 12:11–13).

In applying a historicist approach to Revelation, on the other hand, it is not necessary to claim that John himself, or any of the other writers of the New Testament, foresaw the enormous length of the Christian era, the time between the first and second advents of Jesus. If the Parousia had occurred in the 1st Century, no one would have been troubled on account of any statement in the New Testament. The finality of the Christ event is such that looking beyond the 1st Century was not conceivable, even for the apostles.

Regardless of John's own perception of time, the question here is whether or not John saw the future in terms of a sequence of events or purely in the immediate terms typical of the OT Day of the Lord prophecies. Time has continued far past John's expectation. If John's Apocalypse is a genuine revelation, the

¹³¹John J. Collins specifically denies (although without argument) that Revelation contains any example of historical apocalyptic (*Semeia* 14, page 16). He categorizes it among "Apocalypses with Cosmic and/or Political Eschatology," which for him have neither historical review nor otherworldly journeys. On the other hand, he later makes a puzzling off-hand comment including Revelation with Daniel in the category of "historical apocalyptic" (John J. Collins, "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism," 16). John M. Court agrees with the latter assessment in *Revelation* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 81.

¹³²See Fromm, *passim*.

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question becomes whether or not God used the immediate intention of a human writer, who thought he was close to the End, to say anything substantive about the events that lay beyond his time.

Given the immediate perspective of Revelation, historicism must draw meaning from an extended significance (*sensus plenior?*) that unfolds only with the passage of time. A valid historicism will build on the natural meaning of John's intention, but come to see a deeper divine purpose through the confirmation of history and/or later revelation.¹³³ There is an analogy for this in the NT itself. The NT writers viewed the OT with the wisdom of time passed and saw God's hand in those texts in ways the human authors of those texts did not fully perceive. Should we not be prepared for a similar expansion of meaning from our own perspective of time passed? The passage of more than 1900 years means that Revelation's attempts at periodization have been stretched far beyond John's recognition. I would argue that such a "divine reading" is valid if based on exegesis and proper attention to genre, but invalid if it loses touch with text and context.

As Paul has said, "We see through a glass darkly" and "we prophesy in part" (1 Cor 13:9, 12). Only from the perspective of the Parousia will history speak with perfect clarity. Any rebirth of historicist interpretation among scholars of faith, therefore, will need to avoid the minute details and "newspaper" exegesis of previous interpretation, while taking seriously the plain meaning of the symbols in their original context.¹³⁴

In a follow-up article I intend to examine two of Daniel's visions, in chapters 2 and 7, to lay out the kinds of markers in the text that indicate the presence of historical apocalyptic. I will then attempt to outline a strategy for detecting similar passages in the Book of Revelation, using chapter 12 as a test case. I believe the evidence will show that historicist interpretation should not be *a priori* excluded from the study of Revelation on account of the excesses of the past. As Arasola concluded in his seminal work, declarations of the "end of historicism" may prove to have been premature.¹³⁵

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¹³³For a clearer picture of my view on the interaction between the divine and the human in John's visionary experience, see Jon Paulien, "Interpreting Revelation's Symbolism," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, 77–78. I have used the expression "John's intention" in this article for the sake of convenience and ease of expression. I do not intend to imply that the book is merely a human product.

¹³⁴For examples of the above fallacy see the voluminous historicist interpretation of Edward B. Elliott and the material on the seven trumpets of Revelation by Uriah Smith, 596–636.

¹³⁵Arasola, 171–172.

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The Literary Structure of the Song of Songs *Redivivus*

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The literary structure of the Song of Songs has been the focus of a number of scholarly studies during the last several decades. Despite progress in unlocking the structural secrets of the Song's symmetrical beauty, no consensus has emerged, and there remain crucial enigmatic literary-structural features that need further attention. In this article I survey the major recent attempts to grapple with the literary structure of the Song and then set forth the (tentative) results of my own research, building upon the insights of, and suggesting refinements to, the work of those who have gone before.

Survey of Recent Scholarly Studies

Studies Supporting a Unified Song

I have been unconvinced by the popular suggestion that the book is simply an anthology or collection of various unrelated love songs.¹ If one takes seriously the statement of the superscription, the book constitutes “The Song [šîr, singular] of Songs” (1:1)—a unified song, not an anthology. Furthermore, a number of modern studies point to strong evidence within the contents of the

¹For example, in 1902 Paul Haupt wrote that the book was “simply a collection of popular love-ditties, and these erotic songs are not at all complete . . . neither are they given in their proper order” (Paul Haupt, “The Book of Canticles,” *AJSL* 18 [1902]: 205). The following more recent commentaries espouse this view: W. Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth: Das Hohe Lied: Die Klagelieder*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1962), 97–98; H. L. Ginsberg, “Introduction to the Song of Songs,” *The Five Megilloth and Jonah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 3; Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations: A Study, Modern Translation, and Commentary* (New York: Ktav, 1974), 17–18; Marvin Pope, *Song of Songs*, Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 40–54 (who also discusses earlier commentators with this view); Marcia Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible: A Translation and Literary Study of the Song of Songs* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982), 3, 69; Robert Davidson, *Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon*, Daily Bible Study Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 98; Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 17–18; and Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 54–56.

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Song itself of its integral unity, rather than its being a collection of unrelated love poems. For example, Roland Murphy points to recurring refrains, themes, words, phrases, and elements of dialogical structure;² J. Cheryl Exum analyzes numerous stylistic and structural indications of “a unity of authorship with an intentional design, and a sophistication of poetic style”;³ and Michael Fox elaborates on four factors that point to a literary unity: (1) a network of repetitions (repetitions), (2) associative sequences, (3) consistency of character portrayal, and (4) narrative framework.⁴

Finally, several recent literary-structural analyses point to an overarching literary structure for the entire Song. These literary macrostructural studies constitute our special focus in what follows.

Literary Macrostructural Studies

J. Cheryl Exum. Exum’s pioneering 1973 study, “A Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs,” posits a unified Song with six poems.⁵ Microstructurally, several of these poems are seen by her to contain chiasmic structures. Macrostructurally, Poems 1 and 6 are paired in an inclusio, poem 2 is paired with poem 4, and poem 3 is paired with poem 5, thus forming the overall broken chiasmic structure of ABCB’C’A’. This micro- and macro- structural analysis provides helpful, even foundational, insights, although Exum herself recognizes that “the artistry in the Song is even more intricate than we have been able to suggest here” and urges that “much more investigation of the poet’s style needs to be done.”⁶

William Shea. Shea’s 1980 study⁷ also finds six sections in the Song (although with slight adjustments to Exum’s division boundaries).⁸ Unlike Exum, Shea sees these six sections as forming a concentric chiasmic structure for the entire Song: ABCC’B’A’. Shea’s chiasmic analysis calls attention to crucial chiasmic parallels between paired units in the Song, and his overall structure has much to commend it. But there are some difficulties with his analysis: Shea’s

²Roland E. Murphy, “The Unity of the Song of Songs,” *VT* 29 (1979): 436–443; idem, *The Song of Songs: A Commentary on the Book of Canticles or the Song of Songs*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 64–67.

³J. Cheryl Exum, “A Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs,” *ZAW* 85 (1973): 47–79.

⁴Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: U of Wisconsin, 1985), 209–222. Note his conclusion (220): “there is no reason to posit an editor to explain the Song’s cohesiveness and stylistic homogeneity. The most likely explanation of these qualities is that the Song is a single poem composed, originally at least, by a single poet.”

⁵The six poems recognized by Exum are: (1) 1:2–2:6; (2) 2:7–3:5; (3) 3:6–5:1; (4) 5:2–6:3; (4) 6:4–8:3; and (6) 8:4–14.

⁶Exum, 79.

⁷William H. Shea, “The Chiasmic Structure of the Song of Songs,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 378–396.

⁸The six sections recognized by Shea are: (1) 1:2–2:2; (2) 2:3–17; (3) 3:1–4:16; (4) 5:1–7:10 [Eng. 9]; (5) 7:11 [Eng. 10]–8:5; and (6) 8:6–14.

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delimitations of the endings of at least three of the poems (2:2; 4:16; and 8:5) disregard now-generally-accepted literary boundaries marked by refrains; his detailed parallels occasionally seem forced (sparse evidence, or only thematic and not terminological parallels); his large sections C and C' appear in need of subdividing more explicitly into several sections of panel writing and not chiasmic arrangement; and the two central verses of the Song's macrostructure (4:16 and 5:1) astutely recognized by Shea seem to call for a separate paired section for these verses in the chiasmic outline.⁹

Edwin Webster. Webster's 1982 study of "Pattern in the Song of Songs,"¹⁰ in dialogue with Exum's study (but apparently unaware of Shea's work), finds in the Song a "five-section chiasmus with each section (except the central one) divided into two distinct units marked by ring constructions," yielding the following pattern:

- A 1. 1:2–2:6 Banter and praise
- 2. 2:7–3:5 The maiden
- B Interlude 3:6–11
- 1. 4:1–7 The youth
- 2. 4:8–15 The youth
- C 4:16–6:3 The maiden
- B' 1. 6:4–10 The youth
- 2. 6:11–7:10 The youth
- A' 1. 7:11–8:3 The maiden
- 2. 8:4–14 Praise and banter

While Webster offers some provocative analysis, his penchant for identifying "ring constructions" (complementary verses at the beginning and end of each unit) leads him to suggest a number of rather forced parallelisms (e.g., 1:2a and 7:11; 7:11 and 8:3; 8:4 and 8:14) with verses that are clearly not refrains (e.g., 4:8, 15; 6:4), to posit an interlude (3:6–11) with no parallel to any other part of the Song, and to omit some of the crucial refrains that serve as boundary-markers of the Song (e.g., 2:17; 5:8).

G. Lloyd Carr. Carr's 1984 commentary on the Song of Songs¹¹ refers explicitly to the work of Exum and Shea and rectifies some of the inadequacies of their analyses by recognizing and respecting the boundaries of macro-units

⁹In an unpublished class handout based upon Shea's analysis, literature professor Ed Christian of Kutztown University (and editor of *JATS*) spells out more clearly the block parallelism (or panel writing) of sections C and C', diagrams the central two verses of the Song as D and D', and tidies up Shea's outline in general.

¹⁰Edwin C. Webster, "Pattern in the Song of Songs," *JSOT* 22 (1982): 73–93.

¹¹G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984), 44–49; this structure is developed more fully in idem, "Song of Songs," *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 290–295.

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marked by refrains. Carr, like Webster (whom he does not cite), sees five, not six, main sections of the Song, forming a symmetrical chiasmic structure:

- A 1:2–2:7 Anticipation
- B 2:8–3:5 Found, and Lost—and Found
- C 3:6–5:1 Consummation
- B' 5:2–8:4 Lost—and Found
- A' 8:5–14 Affirmation

While Carr has identified four of the major refrains in the Song that demarcate macro-units, there are others that he has overlooked. He also considers that the presence of a chiasmic macrostructure of the Song is an explanation of why the Song does not have a sequential narrative plot, but rather “the individual units seem to fold back on each other rather than moving the story forward.”¹² This assumption that the chiasmic structure points away from the existence of a linear narrative-plot will be re-evaluated in a forthcoming study.

M. Timothea Elliott. Sister M. Timothea Elliott’s 1989 monograph explores the literary unity of the Canticle.¹³ In her detailed 383-page structural analysis of the Song, Elliott identifies a macrostructure of six units almost identical to that of Exum (with only slight modifications in establishing the exact place of transition between the units).¹⁴ Within these macro-units Elliott recognizes a number of subdivisions, also usually marked off by (sub)refrains, although it is unclear how she has determined which are the major refrains marking the main units and which are minor ones marking their subdivisions.¹⁵ Elliott systematically works her way through the Song’s six units, providing insightful microstructural analysis along the way. The most positive contribution of this monograph is that it provides an astonishing array of formal and stylistic evidence for the unity of the Canticle (her stated goal according to the title).

On the level of macrostructure, I am convinced by Elliott’s evidence that the Prologue (1:2–2:7) and Epilogue (8:5–14) form an inclusio to the entire Song, sharing many verbal and structural correspondences. However, her attempts to correlate Parts I and III (2:8–3:5 and 5:2–6:3) and Parts II and IV (3:6–5:1 and 6:4–8:4) are far less persuasive. She herself tacitly admits this, acknowledging the presence of “other elements, establishing a multiplicity of

¹²Carr, “Song of Songs,” 291.

¹³M. Timothea Elliott, *The Literary Unity of the Canticle*, European University Studies, Series 23, vol. 371 (Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York/Paris: Peter Lang, 1989). This study is a revision of Elliott’s doctoral dissertation in Biblical Science at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, defended in 1988.

¹⁴The six units are: (1) Prologue—1:2–2:7; (2) Part I—2:8–3:5; (3) Part II—3:6–5:1; (4) Part III—5:2–6:3; (5) Part IV—6:4–8:4; and (6) Epilogue—8:5–14.

¹⁵Most of these refrains and sub-refrains roughly coincide with the results of my independent analysis, but, as will become apparent below, I do not find any criteria within the Song to separate between major and minor refrains.

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correspondences among the various parts [of the Song].”¹⁶ By distinguishing arbitrarily between major and minor refrains (and thus major parts and their subdivisions in the Song), Elliot has (in my view) limited the number of major macro-units in the Song. This has kept her from comparing these smaller units (her subdivisions), and thus the overarching symmetrical macrostructure of the Song has not been allowed to fully emerge.

David Dorsey. Dorsey’s 1990 published study of “Literary Structuring in the Song of Songs”¹⁷ indicates a chiasmic structure in the Song similar to the analyses of Exum and Shea, but with seven sections, instead of six, in the overall macrostructure of ABCDC’B’A’.¹⁸ Dorsey rightly points out the failure of both Exum and Shea to recognize 3:1–5 as a discreet unit and points out several of their boundary markers as questionable (one of Exum’s and two of Shea’s). Dorsey finds chiasmic features in six of the seven poems, and five of these poems are seen to be septenary. Dorsey’s recent (1999) monograph, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*,¹⁹ reaffirms this basic structure of the Song. At the same time, by revealing Dorsey’s proclivity to find a septenary structure almost everywhere in the OT books, it causes one to reassess whether the seven-part structure is discovered inductively or artificially imposed upon the text.

Robert L. Alden. Duane A. Garret’s 1993 New American Commentary on Song of Songs reproduces the chiasmic structure of Robert Alden.²⁰ Alden points out some twenty-eight key words and motifs (many of the same terms and catch phrases as noted by Shea and Exum) that occur in a broad chiasmic parallelism (labeled by Alden from *A* through *L* and *L*’ back to *A*’) throughout the Song, and rightly finds the central verses to be 4:16 and 5:1 (his *L* and *L*’). In the inner parts of the Song (which he labels *Ja* [3:1–5], *Jb* [3:6–11], *Jc* [4:1–7], *Ja* [5:2–9], *Jb* [5:10–6:1], *Jc* [6:4–11]) he also correctly (in my view) points out the existence of block parallelism (panel writing) as well as chiasmic features. But the overall structure of Alden gives very little attention to the boundary markers (refrains) or chiasmic macro-units of the Song. Thus his proposal, while demonstrating the overall chiasmic “flow” of the Song of Songs, provides little assistance in grasping the literary macrostructure of the Song as it emerges from his analysis of the relationship between/among the Song’s macro-units.

¹⁶Elliott, 236.

¹⁷David Dorsey, “Literary Structuring in the Song of Songs,” *JSOT* 46 (1990): 81–96.

¹⁸The seven sections are: (1) 1:2–2:7; (2) 2:8–17; (3) 3:1–5; (4) 3:6–5:1; (5) 5:2–7:11[10]; (6) 7:12 [11]–8:4; and (7) 8:5–14.

¹⁹David Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 199–213.

²⁰Duane A. Garrett, “Song of Songs,” in *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 14:376. Robert Alden’s concentric chiasm is elaborated in his unpublished paper presented at the national ETS meeting, December 1985, entitled “The Chiasmic Structure of the Song of Songs.”

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Ernst Wendland. Wendland's 1995 structural analysis of the Song of Songs²¹ makes a significant contribution. Wendland points to literary criteria for determining the presence of poetic refrains in the Song, and his application of these well-defined criteria identifies seven major epiphoric junctures (or refrains) indicating boundaries of closure and dividing the Song of Songs into eight different poems or Songs.²² Wendland does not attempt, however, to interrelate these Songs in an overarching macrostructure. Wendland himself also points to the apparent imbalance in the length of some of his suggested cycles (he cites Song 3 and 4 as an example), and I find that according to his own criteria for determining boundaries of closure he has omitted several additional refrains that indicate macro-units of the Song.

D. Philip Roberts. The most recent (and most comprehensive) structural analysis of the Song that I have located is an unpublished 2001 doctoral dissertation by D. Philip Roberts.²³ Roberts' 810-page dissertation begins with detailed microstructural analysis of minimal structural units (i.e., poetic strophes) and then moves up the hierarchical structural ladder to the determination of twelve larger blocks of poetic material.²⁴ However, Roberts himself acknowledges that he "does not reach a final conclusion regarding the overall structure

²¹Ernst R. Wendland, "Seeking a Path Through a Forest of Symbols: A Figurative and Structural Survey of the Song of Songs," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 7/2 (1995): 13–59.

²²The eight sections (Songs) identified by Wendland are: (1) 1:2–2:7; (2) 2:8–17; (3) 3:1–5; (4) 3:6–5:1; (5) 5:2–6:3; (6) 6:4–7:10; (7) 7:11–8:4; (8) 8:5–14. The common recursive structuring devices (in Hebrew poetry in general) noted by Wendland involves repetition (the main structuring device) and the "convergence at key points" of other poetic features such as "metaphor/simile, metonymy, hyperbole, euphemism, exclamation/verbal intensification, dramatization (direct discourse), condensation, phrasal expansion, intertextual citation/allusion, colorful diction (including archaism and neologisms), syntactic perturbation (word order variation), grammatical shifting (*enallage*; e.g., tense, person), along with the usual alterations in cast (participants/characters), setting (time, place), perspective (speaker), or circumstance (emotive tone or psychological attitude)" (34–35). Wendland also notes the recursive structuring device of the *inclusio* (or sandwich construction), illustrated in the beginning and ending of the Song (1:4 and 8:14), there coupled with lexically equivalent references to King Solomon and images of sexual enjoyment (wine/scent/perfume, vineyard/fruit/spices). In the Song of Songs Wendland sees the compositional cue of epiphora (where the respective endings are parallel) as especially prominent, realized through the recurrence of various kinds of refrains. Specific aphoric abstract descriptions serving as diagnostic indicators or "motif-markers" for refrains of the Song include: left/right arm embrace, gazelle/doe/stag/ imagery, do [not] arouse/waken love; I am my lover's/my lover is mine; garden and related (fruit) motifs, movement imagery (coming/going), and daughters of Jerusalem.

²³D. Philip Roberts, "'Let Me See His Form': Seeking Poetic Structure in the Song of Songs," Ph.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2001.

²⁴The larger poetic blocks of which Roberts is reasonably certain include: 2:8–17; 3:1–5; 3:6–11; 4:1–7; 4:8–5:1; 5:2–6:3; and 6:4–10. Other possible poetic blocks are 6:11–7:11; 7:12–8:4; and 8:5–7. The segments of 1:2–2:7 and 8:8–14 Roberts identifies as composed of smaller units of two or three strophes each that do not evidence the same internal cohesion as the other blocks. Most (in fact, all but two) of the larger poetic blocks identified by Roberts coincide with my own analysis of the macro-units of the macrostructure of the Song.

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of the Song.”²⁵ His tentative assessment, following in the tradition of his major professor Tremper Longman III, is that the structure of the Song is “paratactic, i.e., as consisting of a series of related, but largely self-contained vignettes,” although he appears to go beyond his *Doktorvater* in arguing that “this paratactic structure consists of a much higher order of structured units than is typically recognized by anthologists.”²⁶

The Literary Macrostructure of Song of Songs: A Tentative Proposal

My own literary analysis builds upon what I consider the strengths of the aforementioned studies, but ultimately is based upon my own intensive inductive analysis of the literary macrostructure of the Song.

The Literary Macrostructure of the Song of Songs

A 1:2–2:7 Mutual Love

B 2:8–17 Coming and Going

C 3:1–5 Dream I: Lost and Found

D 3:6–11 Praise of Groom, I

E 4:1–7 Praise of Bride, I

F 4:8–15 Praise of Bride, II

G 4:16 Invitation by Bride

G' 5:1 Acceptance of Invitation by Groom and Divine
Approbation

C' 5:2–8 Dream II: Found and Lost

D' 5:9–6:3 Praise of Groom, II

E' 6:4–12 Praise of Bride, III

F' 7:1 [Eng. 6:13]–10 [Eng. 9] Praise of Bride, IV

B' 7:11 [Eng. 10]–8:2 Going and Coming

A' 8:3–14 Mutual Love

I identify here twelve macro-units of the Song of Songs, indicated by refrains (repetends) that denote the boundaries between these sections.²⁷ The

²⁵Roberts, 755.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 758.

²⁷Besides the seven macro-juncture markers identified by Wendland (2:6–7; 2:16–17; 3:5; 5:1; 6:3; 7:11 [Eng. 10]; 8:3–4), I accept three others supported by Roberts' meticulous structural analysis: 3:11; 4:7; and 6:10 (see Roberts, 298–304, 332–335, and 456–463, for substantiation of these boundary markers of macro-units). The one additional macro-juncture marker I recognize in the Song is 5:8. This, I believe, is clearly (by Wendland's own carefully articulated criteria) to be identified as a refrain with its adjuration of the daughters of Jerusalem (“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem. . .”), which parallels the same phraseology in the widely-recognized refrains of 2:7; 3:5; and 8:4.

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twelve sections of the Song form an artistic symmetrical macrostructure, comprised of reverse parallelism (i.e., chiasm) and block parallelism (i.e., panel writing) in a fourteen-member pattern (including the two-verse central climax): AB–CDEF–GG'–C'D'E'F'–B'A'.

These various sections of the literary macrostructure are paired in a parallelism of theme, terminology, and structural devices. Thematically, members A and A' describe various features of mutual love; B and B' highlight the coming and going of the lovers; C and C' are most probably dreams, with an overarching motif of presence-absence or lovers lost and found; D and D' record praise of the groom; E and E' presents praise of the bride; members F and F' record another round of praise for the bride; and G and G' form the climactic (and central, by word count) two verses of the Song, containing the invitation by the bride for the groom to consummate the marriage, the groom's acceptance, and the omniscient approbation of the marriage union.²⁸

After completing the basic research for this article, I was given what is to my knowledge a still unpublished paper by Gordon H. Johnston, "The Enigmatic Literary Structure of the Song of Songs," Dallas Theological Seminary (no date), which posits eleven poems in the Song, divided by ten major macro-juncture markers. Johnston, 2, nicely summarizes the different kinds of elements/motifs comprising the refrains/repetends and other macro-juncture markers of the Song: adjuration (2:7; 3:5; 8:4; cf. 5:8), mutual possession (2:16; 6:3; 7:11 [Eng. 10]); sexual embrace (2:6; 8:3); "Be like a gazelle!" (2:17; 8:14; cf. 4:6); Journey to a Garden (6:2, 11); and concluding exhortations in the imperative (3:11; 5:1; 7:1 [Eng. 6:13]). Johnston also points to a structural marker that appears at the *beginning* of two macro-units of the Song, namely, the question "Who . . .?" (3:6; 8:5). Johnston's analysis points to the same basic macro-junctures of Canticles as I do, with the exception of my inclusion of 4:6–7, which he apparently overlooks (4:6–7 repeats the same phraseology as in the undisputed refrain of 2:17: "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away . . ."; and with Roberts I accept 4:6–7 as a refrain of the Song and add this phraseology as one additional element/motif utilized for macro-structural boundary closure in the Song beyond Johnston's summary).

²⁸Johnston's overall literary macrostructure coincides very closely with the one that has emerged from my own research. A major macrostructural difference between Johnston's structural analysis and mine is that his section E (4:1–5:1) I divide into two sections, E (4:1–7) and F (4:8–15), in light of the refrain in 4:6–7 (unrecognized by Johnston), which repeats the same phraseology as in the undisputed refrain of 2:17: "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away . . ." This division in the first half of the chiasmic structure matches the similar division which Johnston recognizes in the two parallel members (6:4–13 and 7:1–11) which Johnston labels E and E', respectively, bringing a fully balanced symmetry to the two chiasmic halves of the Song (in contrast to Johnston's "hanging" member E', with no balancing section in the first half of the chiasm). Thus I posit twelve macro-units of the Song's macrostructure, instead of eleven—as Johnston does.

Furthermore, I separate the central two verses of the Song (4:16 and 5:1) as distinct sections G and G' of the chiasmic diagram (though recognizing them also as part of the macro-unit of 4:8–5:1, as does Johnston), making a total of fourteen members to the chiasmic structure, or seven paired members of the Song.

Johnston's careful study provides helpful terminological, thematic, and structural comparisons in the parallel members of his proposed macrostructure which also coincide in a number of instances with my own analysis.

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Let us look more closely at the individual paired members of this intricate symmetrical macrostructure of the Song, especially highlighting the terminological and structural parallelism.²⁹

Members A and A´. First we observe the parallelism between members A and A´. I am persuaded by the research of Shea, Dorsey, and others who show that the poetic lyrics in both of these sections alternate between the female and male lovers in overall chiasmic structures.³⁰ Thus member A may be outlined as follows:

- a female (1:2–7)
- b male (1:8–11)
- c female (1:12–14)
- d male (1:15)
- c´ female (1:16–17)
- b´ male (2:1–2)
- a´ female (2:3–7)

Member A´ has a similar alternation of male and female lyrics:

- a (introductory unnamed voice with rhetorical question about) the female (8:5a)
- b male (8:5b)
- c female (8:6–7)
- d male (the brothers) (8:8–9)
- c´ female (8:10–12)
- b´ male (8:13)
- a´ female (8:14)

The connectedness between members A and A´ is highlighted by this seven-fold matching alternation of male and female voices, since no other sections of the Song contain such a concentrated structural pattern of gender alternation.³¹

²⁹It should be kept in mind that in the parallelism of the Song, there is rarely an exact duplication of material; this would not make for good artistry in Hebrew poetry. Hebrew parallelism is just that—material that is parallel but not slavishly identical.

³⁰Shea, 381–385, points out the alternation of gender; Dorsey, *Literary Structure of the OT*, 200–202, 209–210, also shows a gender alternation (with minor differences from Shea), but further indicates the chiasmic connections between the two halves of each of these two sections. I have made minor corrections in the structures of Shea and Dorsey according to my understanding of these sections. Note especially that Shea has 8:12–14 spoken all by the woman (but 8:13 is clearly the man!), while 8:11 he arbitrarily assigns to an (unnamed) male voice. Dorsey assigns 8:8–10 to “the brothers and their sister” and (at least implicitly) counts this as the “male” section of the alternation of genders, whereas v. 10 clearly shifts to the voice of the female; he also labels 8:14 as “concluding refrain” without assigning it explicitly to the woman. I do not here include further discussion of the chiasmic microstructural analysis of these sections, since in this article I am not focusing upon microstructures except as these inform the macrostructure of the Song as a whole.

³¹Some further articulation of the dialogue through gender alternation does occur beyond members A and A´. In fact, my colleague at Andrews University, Jacques Doukhan, suggests (in

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We find also crucial thematic links: only these two sections of the Song contain a reference to the woman's brothers (1:6; 8:8, 9). Furthermore, only these two sections include the woman's statements of self-assurance regarding her beauty (1:5; 8:10; labeled "boast songs" in genre analysis).

The most significant linkages between these sections are the terminological repetitions revealing that members A and A' are also in generally chiasmic (reverse) parallelism with each other.³² The chiasmic relationship between these two sections of the Song is set forth in Table 1 below:

Table 1
A (1:2–2:7) and A' (8:3–14): Mutual Love (Chiasm)

A 1:2–2:7	Mutual Love	A' 8:3–14	Mutual Love
a 1:2–7	"Solomon" "my own vineyard"* "keeper/keep" (<i>ntr</i>)* "companions" (<i>hbrym</i>)* "let us haste" (<i>rwš</i>)	a' 8:12–14	"Solomon" "my own vineyard"* "keeper/keep" (<i>ntr</i>)* "companions" (<i>hbrym</i>)* "make haste" (<i>brh</i>)
b 1:8–11	"silver"	b' 8:11	"silver"
c 1:12–14	"my breasts"*	c' 8:10	"my breasts"*
d 1:15–17	building structure with "beams of cedar"*	d' 8:8–9	building structure with "planks of cedar"*
e 2:1–5	"love" (<i>hbh</i> ; 2:4–5) "house" (<i>byt</i> ; 2:4) "love" (<i>dôd</i> ; 2:3) under the "apple tree"* (2:3)	e' 8:5–7	"love" (3 times) (<i>hbh</i> ; 8:6–7) "house" (<i>byt</i> ; 8:7) "love" (<i>dôd</i> ; 3 times; 8:6–7) under the "apple tree"* (8:5a)
f 2:6–7	Refrain: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me"*; "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases"	f' 8:3–4	Refrain: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me"*; "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases"

Note from this table that members A and A' contain a number of terminological parallels; especially decisive are the rare terms and phrases that only appear in this pair of stanzas in the Song³³ and occur here generally in a reverse (chiasmic) order. These unique parallels include a paired cluster of phrases containing references to "my own vineyard," "keeper/keep," and "companions"; the woman's reference to "my breasts"; a building structure with "beams of cedar";

course lectures) that this gender alternation is actually the key to the entire Song: he finds three cycles of seven alternations between "he" and "she," with the regular occurrence—following the seventh gender shift in each cycle—of an emphasis upon the imminent coming of the Lover. The scholarly world must await Doukhan's publication of the specifics of his hypothesis before further discussion of its merits can ensue.

³²Most of these parallel expressions and themes are noted by Shea, 383–385.

³³Terms occurring only in the paired locations in the Song are marked by asterisks here and in later tables. I do not provide the Hebrew terms in this article unless the parallel is not already obvious from the English translation, or unless there are synonyms in the Hebrew that need to be distinguished.

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reference to love “under the apple tree”; and the refrain “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me.”³⁴ Noteworthy also are pairs of words repeated in the same verse only in these sections: “love” (*dôd*) and “apple” (2:3 and 8:5); and “love” (*hbbh*) and “house” (2:4 and 8:7). This sample of verbal parallels is by no means exhaustive: Elliott documents the “unusual concentration of shared vocabulary” by listing some twenty-six terms that are found in both of these two sections of the Song.³⁵

With regard to the refrains in these sections, not only do we encounter the uniquely occurring virtually identical paired refrain—“His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me”—but we find an additional virtually-identical paired refrain that immediately follows³⁶ (which occurs also in 3:5). Such a pair of double refrains, using virtually identical language throughout, occurs only here in members A and A' in the Song.

In this chiastic section of paired members, according to my analysis, the double refrain (8:3–4) must be seen primarily as an introduction to member A', rather than the conclusion of member B' (the macro-unit to be discussed below), contrary to how many others have analyzed the macrostructure at this point. Only thus can one account for the precise match of the double refrain in 8:3–4 with the double refrain that concludes member A in 2:6–7.³⁷ Such an arrangement, matching the conclusion of one member with the introduction of its paired member, is not surprising in the structure of a chiasm or reverse parallelism. This phenomenon of introductory (rather than concluding) refrain we will discover to be the case one other (not surprising) place in the Song: in the only other paired sections of the Song that are in chiastic relationship, i.e., members B and B', to which we now turn our attention.

Members B and B'. Members B and B' are also chiastic, building upon the motif of coming and going. In both members B and B' the man approaches the house where his lover stays; in both he invites the woman to go with him to the

³⁴Beyond the terminological parallels, see also the extensive discussion of motif parallels in the inclusio of the entire Song (1:2–4 with 8:13–14; and 1:5–6 with 8:11–12) in Stephen C. Horine, *Interpretive Images in the Song of Songs: From Wedding Chariots to Bridal Chambers* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 74–103, 157, summarized in the following diagram (157):

- a 1:2–4 Proleptic Summary to Appeal-Reaction Rhetoric (via positive imagery/motifs)
- b 1:5–6 Proleptic Summary to Tension Motifs (via impediments to rhetoric)
- b' 8:11–12 Resolution of Tension Motifs (via reversal of impediments)
- a' 8:13–14 Resolution of Appeal-Reaction Rhetoric (via reaffirmation of positive imagery)

³⁵Elliott, 216.

³⁶This refrain also appears in 3:5. In a forthcoming study, I will deal with the structural/theological significance of this three-fold repetition as I explore the possible linear (narrative-plot) development in the Song coinciding with the symmetrical macrostructure discussed in this article.

³⁷One could also argue that the double refrain in 8:3–4 does double duty, serving both as the conclusion of member B' and the introduction to A'. I am not opposed to such a suggestion, but have chosen to assign the refrain to the one macro-unit where it fits best structurally.

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country. The descriptions of their countryside adventure refer to several natural phenomena mentioned in both members B and B': vines, vineyards, and flowers. Two of the paired terms appear only in these two members of the Song: "blossoms" (*smdr*) and "give fragrance" (*ntn ryh*). A similar refrain (but reversed in sequence of referents!) concludes member B. This introduces the chiasmatically matching member B': "My beloved is mine and I am his"; "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me."³⁸

This chiasmatic parallelism is summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2
B (2:8–17) and B' (7:11 [Eng. 10]–8:2): Going and Coming (Chiasm)

B 2:8–17	Coming and Going	B' 7:11 [Eng.10]–8:2	Going and Coming
a 2:8–9	Coming: Approach of lover To her house <i>Inclusio with v. 17: "leaping on the mountains" "like a gazelle or young stag"</i>	a' 8:1–2	Coming: Approach of lover To the house of her mother
b 2:10–15	Going: Invitation to go to the country "Rise up, my beloved, and come away [<i>hlk</i>]" "appear [be seen]" (<i>nr 'w</i>) "flowers/blossoms" (<i>hnsnym</i>) "blossoms" (<i>smdr</i>)* "vine" (<i>gpn</i>) "give fragrance" (<i>ntn ryh</i>)* "vineyards" (<i>krmym</i>) "Let me see your form, let me hear your voice"	b' 7:12–14 [Eng. 11–13]	Going: Invitation to go to the country "Come [<i>hlk</i>] my beloved, let us go forth. . . . Let us get up early" "to see" (<i>nr 'h</i>) "to flower/blossom" (<i>hns</i>) "blossoms" (<i>smdr</i>)* "vines" (<i>gpnym</i>) "give fragrance" (<i>ntn ryh</i>)* "vineyards" (<i>krmym</i>) "I will give you my love"
c 2:16–17	Refrain: "My beloved is mine and I am his" <i>Inclusio with vv. 8–9: "like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bethel"</i>	c' 7:11 [Eng. 10]	Refrain: "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me"

Members C and C'. Members C and C' are structured in block parallelism (or panel writing), pairing two night dreams and highlighting the motif of presence/absence. Aside from the common nocturnal dream setting and overall theme of losing and finding, numerous identical (or virtually identical) parallel Hebrew clauses and phrases link these passages in the same sequence of the panel writing: "I sought him but I did not find him" (2x); "I will arise/arose"; "the watchmen who go about the city found me"; "I found the one I love"/ "If you find my beloved . . ." The closing refrain in each member features an oath addressed to the same group: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem."

³⁸This refrain, like 8:3–4, may serve double duty in the Song. I find it functioning primarily (in the macrostructural flow of the Song) as the introduction to member B', but it also could be regarded as a conclusion to member F'.

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This parallelism is summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3
C (3:1–5) and C' (5:2–8): Lost/Found and Found/Lost (Panel)

C 3:1–5	Dream I: Lost and Found	C' 5:2–8	Dream II: Found and Lost
a 3:1a	Night setting/sleep (dream)	a' 5:2	Sleep, but heart awake (dream)
3:1b	“I sought him but I did not find him”*	5:3–4	Beloved comes and leaves before she opens the door
b 3:2a	“I will arise”	b' 5:5	“I arose”
c 3:2b	“I sought him, but I did not find him”*	c' 5:6	“I sought him, but I did not find him”*
d 3:3	“the watchmen who go about the city found me”*	d' 5:7	“the watchmen who go about the city found me”*
e 3:4	“I found the one I love [<i>'hbh</i>]”	e' 5:8	“If you find my beloved, tell him I am faint with love [<i>'hbh</i>]”
f 3:5	Refrain: “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem . . .”	f' 5:8	Refrain: “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem . . .”

Members D and D'. Members D and D' are also structured in block parallelism (or panel writing), as indicated in Table 4 below:

Table 4
D (3:6–11) and D' (5:9–6:3): Praise of the Groom (Panel)

D 3:6–11	Praise of the Groom I	D' 5:9–6:3	Praise of the Groom II
a 3:6	Introductory question: “Who?” (<i>Inclusio</i> with “Solomon” in 3:11)	a' 5:9	Introductory question: “What?” (<i>Inclusio</i> with “where?” in 6:1)
b 3:6	Description of the groom’s procession “coming up” (<i>'lh</i>)	b' 5:10 ff.	Description of the groom himself from head to toe (down)
c 3:7–8	Numerals: Solomon’s couch with 60 valiant men	c' 5:10	Numerals: Solomon’s personage chief among 10,000 men
d 3:9–10	Solomon’s palanquin described (generally from bottom up): wood from Lebanon (= cedar) “pillars” (<i>'mwdym</i>)* supports of gold couch/bed (<i>mth</i>) or palanquin (<i>'prywn</i>) (“perfumed with myrrh”) interior of palanquin paved (<i>ršš</i>) with love	d' 5:11–16	Solomon’s body described (generally from top down): countenance like Lebanon, excellent as cedars “pillars” (<i>'mwdym</i>)* head like finest gold, hands rods of gold, bases of gold cheeks like bed (<i>'rwgh</i>) of spices; lips = lilies dripping myrrh body = ivory inlaid (<i>'lp</i>) with sapphires
e 3:10e	“by the daughters of Jerusalem”	e' 5:16e	“O daughters of Jerusalem”
f 3:11	Refrain: “Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart.”	f' 6:1	Refrain: Daughters of Jerusalem: “Where has your beloved gone . . . that we may seek him with you?”
		6:2	Journey to the Garden, to the bed of spices, to gather lilies
		6:3	“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”

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Both members D and D' concentrate on Praise of the Groom. Member D is in the setting of Solomon's wedding procession, and the focus of attention is not on the groom's personal features but upon his wedding palanquin. Member D', by contrast, describes the groom in detail. While member D emphasizes the "going up" of the wedding procession and describes the palanquin from bottom upward, member D' by contrast describes Solomon's personage downward from head to toe; thus there is also a chiasmic element in the overall block parallelism of these members. Some terminological parallels occur in the respective sequencing of the panel writing, such as the supports/bases of gold on both palanquin and Solomon's body, the cedar wood from Lebanon of which the palanquin is made and to which Solomon's countenance is compared; references in both members to a couch/bed of spices, including myrrh. Only in these two members is the term "pillars" (*mwdym*) found in the Song. Both members conclude with mention of the daughters of Jerusalem. The final refrain in member D is addressed to these daughters, while the final refrain in member D' is spoken by the daughters; both refer to the daughters going out to see Solomon.

Members E and E'. The intricate successive parallelism of key terms and motifs in these members is summarized in Table 5 below:

Table 5
E (4:1–6) and E' (6:3–6:12): Praise of the Bride I and III (Panel)

E 4:1–6 a 4:1a	Praise of the Bride I "Behold, you are beautiful [<i>yph</i>], my love. Behold, you are beautiful [<i>yph</i>]." (<i>inclusio</i> with 4:7)	E' 6:3–12 a' 6:4	Praise of the Bride III "O my love, you are beautiful [<i>yph</i>] as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem." "Awesome as an army with banners" (<i>inclusio</i> with 6:10)
b 4:b c 4:1c	Description of eyes Description of "hair like a flock of goats going down from Mount Gilead"*	b' 6:5a c' 6:5b	Description of eyes Description of "hair like a flock of goats going down from Gilead"*
d 4:2	"teeth like a flock of shorn sheep come up from the washing, every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them"*	d' 6:6	"teeth like a flock of shorn sheep come up from the washing, every one bears twins, and none is barren among them"*
e 4:3	Temples "behind your veil like a piece of pomegranate"*	e' 6:7	Temples "behind your veil like a piece of pomegranate"*
f 4:4	Graded numerical parallelism*: 1000 bucklers, all shields	f' 6:8–9	Graded numerical parallelism*: 60 queens, 80 concubines, maidens without number
g 4:6–7	Refrain: "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee" "mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense" (cf. 2:17) "You are all fair [<i>yph</i>], my love, and there is no flaw in you." (<i>inclusio</i> with v. 1)	g' 6:10–12	Refrain: "Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair [<i>yph</i>] as the moon and clear as the sun," "awesome as an army with banners?" (<i>inclusio</i> with v. 4) Journey to the garden (cf. 6:2)

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Members E and E' both contain a *wasf* (poetic description of the beauty of the spouse). The relationship between these two members is another panel writing or block parallelism. The *wasf* describing the woman's beauty in member E contains numerous clauses, phrases, and terms that are virtually identical to those found in member E', many of which occur only in these two sections of the Song. The following parallels occur in the successive order of panel writing: "Behold, you are beautiful, my love"/"O my love, you are beautiful"; "How fair is your love"/"How fair and how pleasant you are, O love"; description of eyes; hair "like a flock of goats going down from Mount Gilead"; teeth "like a flock of shorn sheep come up from the washing"; temples "behind your veil like a piece of pomegranate"; and the only usage in the Song of graded numerical parallelism.

The *wasfs* describing the beauty of the woman are continued in the next parallel sections of the Song, members F and F'. Although a case can be made for regarding these two sections as still part of members E and E', the presence of refrains demarcating boundaries at 4:6 and 6:10–12³⁹ has led me to the conclusion that four separate sections of Praise for the Bride are present in the Song of Songs: I, II, III, and IV. The paired panel matching the Praise of the Bride I and III constitute members E and E' of the Song's macrostructure, just discussed, and the paired panel matching of Praise of the Bride II and IV constitute members F and F', to which we now turn our attention.

Members F and F'. The panel structure of members F (7:8–15) and F' (7:1 [Eng. 6:13]–7:10 [Eng. 9]) is evident from the following successive parallel terms and motifs as set forth in Table 6 below:

³⁹For a time I hesitated to recognize these as full refrains (labeling them as "sub-refrains") and did not divide 4:1–15 and 6:4–7:11 [Eng. 10] into two paired sections. However, I have become convinced that the macro-junctures are distinct, and the separate macro-units are clearly defined, even though the verbal repetends are rather short ("until the day breaks and the shadows flee" [4:6, paralleling the refrain in 2:17] and "awesome as an army with banners" [6:10, paralleling the introductory refrain in 6:4]. In the case of chapter 4, not only does 4:6 contain a macro-junctural refrain, but this is underscored as 4:7 provides an additional refrain, and forms an inclusio with 4:1: "You are all fair, my love." Furthermore, only 4:8–15, and not 4:1–7, contains the special term of endearment for the woman, "bride" [*klh*]. In the case of Cant 6:4–7:11, the refrain of 6:10 ("awesome as an army with banners") forms an inclusio with the beginning of the section in 6:4, and a division at this point is also supported by a second refrain incorporating the "Journey to the Garden" motif (6:11–12, paralleling 6:2, which accompanies the refrain of 6:3). Further evidence for the separation of these matching praises for the woman into four separate parallel sections comes from the chiasmic matching of Praise of the Bride I with Praise of the Bride IV, and of the Praise of the Bride II with Praise of the Bride III, as described below.

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Table 6
F (4:8–15) and F' (7:1 [Eng. 6:13]–7:10 [Eng. 9]):
Praise of the Bride II and IV (Panel)

F 4:8–15	Praise of the Bride II	F' 7:1 [6:13]–7:10 [Eng. 9]	Praise of the Bride IV
a 4:8	“Come [<i>bo</i>] . . . , look [<i>šwr</i>]”	a' 7:1–4 [6:13–7:3]	“Return, return, [<i>šwb</i> , <i>šwb</i>] O Shulamite, . . . that we may look [<i>hzh</i>] upon you!”
b 4:8	Geography (mountains): Lebanon Amana, Senir, Hermon	b' 7:5–6 [Eng. 4–5]	Geography (mountains/cities): Lebanon Heshbon, Bath Rabbim, Carmel
c 4:9	The woman's mysterious power: his heart ravished (by a look of her eyes)	c' 7: 6b [Eng. 5b]	The woman's mysterious power: the king held captive (by the tresses of her hair)
d 4:10–11	“How fair [<i>yph</i>] is your love” Her love compared to various delica- cies: wine, spices, honeycomb, honey, milk, fragrance of Lebanon	d' 7:7 [Eng. 6]	“How fair [<i>yph</i>] and how pleas- ant [<i>n'm</i>]you are, O love, with your exquisite, luxurious delights [<i>t'ngwg</i>]!”
e 4:12–14	Comparison to a locked garden Metaphors from the products of a garden/orchard: pomegranates, various (eight differ- ent named) spices	e' 7:8–10a [Eng. 7–9a]	Comparison to a palm tree Metaphors from the products of the orchard/vineyard: date clusters, clusters of the vine, apples, best wine
f 4:15	Garden fountain, well of living (flowing) water, “flowing streams [<i>nzl</i>]”	f' 7:10b [Eng. 9b]	Wine “flows” (<i>hlk</i>), “moving gently, gliding over [<i>dbb</i>]” the lips
[4:16 and 5:1]	[Refrain = members G and G' be- low]	[7:11 (Eng. 10)]	[Refrain: “I am my beloved's And his desire is toward me” (<i>inclusio</i> with 6:3) = introduc- tion of member B']

Member F is set against the wedding procession and wedding day mentioned in 3:6–11 and probably constitutes part of the wedding ceremony proper. Here alone in all the stanzas of the Song (and I include members G and G' in this stanza, although we structurally place them at the climax of the macro-structure), the woman is mentioned as “sister” and “bride,” clearly placing this section in a wedding context. In this wedding *waysf*, the woman is likened to a “locked garden,” (4:12), most likely denoting her virginity.⁴⁰

⁴⁰There is a wide agreement among modern commentators that here the locked garden denotes virginity. For example, Carr, *Song of Solomon*, 123, recognizes that the garden here is a euphemism for the female sexual organs and concludes that “a fountain sealed and a garden locked speak of virginity.” C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*, rev. and exp. (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 230, writes: “That the wedding had not been consummated [before 4:16] and that the kind of love treated in the Song is not promiscuous are clear from the beloved's description of his betrothed as ‘a garden locked’ and ‘a spring sealed up’ (v.12).” Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 6 of *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, by C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, trans. M. G. Easton (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 84, comments: “To a locked garden and spring no one has access but the rightful owner, and

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In both members F and F' there is a call to "come/return" and "look." Both contain a unique concentration upon geographical place names, in particular, mountains: Lebanon, Amana, Senir, Hermon, Carmel (cf. the cities of Heshbon, Bath Rabbim). In both members F and F' the man is "ravished/captivated" by the woman's stunning beauty, and the beauty of her love is compared to luxurious, exquisite delights. Both F and F' compare the woman to a garden/orchard or its products: garden; orchard of pomegranates; various spices; date palm tree; apples; wine. There is also a play on word pictures between the "flowing" water in the woman's garden (member F) and the "flowing" of the wine in the woman's mouth (member F').

Finally, there seems to be an implied parallel between these two members in the respective functions of their refrains that actually serve as part of succeeding sections of the Song. The refrain of Cant 4:16 and 5:1 may be regarded as part of the macro-unit we have labeled member F, but because of its centrality in the Song and its own parallel structure, is better placed as a succeeding section of the Song's overarching macrostructure (which I label members G and G' below). Likewise, the refrain of 7:11 [Eng. 10] may be regarded as part of the macro-unit I have labeled member F' (and this is the view of a number of scholars), but because of its parallel with the matching element in member B (as discussed above), this refrain is better placed with the succeeding section of the Song's overarching macrostructure (which I have labeled member B' above).

The overall structure of members E and E' and F and F' is not only block parallelism, as demonstrated by the previous parallels, but also involves an interconnecting chiasmic arrangement in which member E (Praise of the Bride I) is in chiasmic parallelism with member F' (Praise of the Bride IV), especially apparent in 4:1-5 and 7:2-6 [Eng. 1-5]. In 4:1-5, the beauty of the woman is described from head *downward* to the breasts, including eight anatomical parts: eyes, hair, teeth, lips, mouth, temples (or cheeks), neck, and breasts. Cant 7:2-6 [Eng. 1-5], conversely, describes the woman's beauty from feet *upward* to the head, including eight anatomical parts: feet, thighs, navel/belly/genitals, waist, two breasts, neck, nose, and head/hair. There is also chiasmic interconnection between member E' (Praise of the Bride II) and member F (Praise of the Bride III), with both sections focusing upon the woman's head (lips/tongue in 4:11 and hair/teeth/temples in 6:5-7) and the mysterious and awesome power in her eyes: "You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes" (4:9); "Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me" (6:5). By the chiasmic interlinking of paired members E and E' with members F and F', as well as the overall panel

a sealed fountain is shut against all impurity." Joseph C. Dillow, *Solomon on Sex: The Biblical Guide to Married Love* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1977), 81, states explicitly: "The garden refers to her vagina. When Solomon says it is locked, he is saying it has never been entered; she is a virgin." S. Craig Glickman, *A Song for Lovers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976), 22, concurs: "the fountain is sealed and the garden is locked (4:12). This is a poetic way to praise her virginity and at the same time gently to request that she give herself to him."

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construction of these sections, the close literary coherence of the various *wāšfs* praising the bride of the Song is accentuated.

Members G and G'. Finally, members G and G', which actually belong to the sixth of the Song's twelve macro-units, form the apex to the entire Song. As intimated above, I separate these two verses into distinct structural members in the overall macrostructure because they are obviously parallel verses, and such symmetry would not be accounted for if they were left as the final verses of the panel writing in member F with no such matching symmetry at the end of member F'.⁴¹ Further, these two parallel verses, 4:16 and 5:1, appear in the exact middle of the Song (111 lines or 60 verses on either side). They were thus clearly designed by the Song's artistic composer to form the central, climactic verses of the entire symmetrical structure of the Song.⁴² These verses seem to be equivalent to our modern-day exchange of marriage vows, or alternatively, represent the consummation of the marriage in the marriage bed.⁴³ The groom has compared his bride to a garden (4:1 2, 15), and now the bride invites her groom to come and partake of the fruits of her (now his!) garden (4:16), and the groom accepts her invitation (5:1a-d). The marriage covenant solemnized, an Omniscient Voice, whom I take to be Yahweh Himself,⁴⁴ extends divine approbation,

⁴¹It also does not seem structurally sound to divide 4:16 and 5:1 between the two middle sections of the Song—as their respective introduction and conclusion—as Shea's analysis suggests (Shea, 396). To be fair to Shea, however, he compares these two verses to "two resplendent peaks that surmount twin mountains," and thus recognizes the distinctiveness of these two verses "at the very center of the Song and its chiasm" (394), even though he does not structurally label them as separate sections of the Song's literary macrostructure.

⁴²It is hardly accidental that these two verses are situated at the exact physical midpoint of the book. Numerous commentators recognize this as the highpoint of the Song. See, e.g. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 376 (citing R. L. Alden's chiasmic structure of the Song); Wendland, 42; Carr, "Song of Songs," 294; and Shea, 394.

⁴³Shea, 394, argues for linking 5:1 with what comes before, all as part of "the wedding service proper." On the other hand, Delitzsch, *Song of Songs*, 89, insists that "between iv. 16 and v. 1a the bridal night intervenes." Cf. also Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 407, who is convinced that "This [4:16; 5:1] is the consummation of the marriage." The Hebrew verbs in the perfect in 5:1 could be translated to support either view, as a present (or even future) or as a past tense. Perhaps the text is intentionally ambiguous, blending the public (legal) and sexual (physical) consummation of the marriage. Such ambiguity is present often elsewhere in the Song, especially when allusions are made to sexual intercourse. Glickman, 84-85, speaks of the "almost formal request and acceptance," the "delicate formality" of 4:16-5:1. While Glickman simply attributes it to a certain stiffness of mood in lovemaking on their wedding night, it could also allude to the formal covenant-making setting of the wedding "vows." The wedding couple is both *saying* "I do" and *acting* on it!

⁴⁴Commentators have puzzled over the identity of this voice at the center of the Song. Many suggest that it is the groom extending an invitation to the guests to join in the wedding banquet. But this is improbable since the two terms "friends" (*re'im*) and "lovers" (*dōdīm*) used in 5:1e, are the terms used elsewhere in the Song for the *couple* (5:16; 1:13-14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:10, 10, 16; 5:2, 4, 5, 6, 6, 8, 9 (4x), 10, 16; 6:1, 1, 2, 3; 7:10 [Eng. 9], 11 [Eng. 10], 12 [Eng. 11], 13 [Eng. 12], 14 [Eng. 13]; 8:5, 14), not for the companions/guests. If the terms in 5:1e refer to the couple, they could not be spoken by either bride or groom. The "omniscient" narrator/poet at this high point in the Song seems to have a ring of divine authority and power—to be able to bestow a blessing and

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summoning the bride and groom to “drink deeply” in the consummate experience of sexual union (5:1e–f).

These two verses at the climax of the Song each contain six cola (or poetic lines), which may be set forth and labeled as follows:

4:16:
a Awake, O north wind,
b And come, O south!
c Blow upon my garden,
d That its spices flow out.
e Let my beloved enter his garden
f And eat its pleasant fruits.

5:1:
a I entered my garden, my sister, bride;
b I plucked my myrrh with my spice;
c I ate my honeycomb with my honey;
d I have drunk my wine with my milk.
e Eat, O friends!
f Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!”

Shea suggests that the arrangement of these twin peaks may be a microcosm of the entire Song’s structure.⁴⁵ I find this proposal plausible and intriguing. But whereas Shea takes the six cola in each verse at the center of the Song as corresponding to the six macro-units into which he divides the entire Song, I suggest rather that it is more appropriate to view the twelve (six matching) cola here at the center of the Song as corresponding to the twelve (six matching) macro-units of the Song that have emerged from our macrostructural analysis.

Regarding the microstructure of these central verses, scholars generally agree that 5:1a–f should be analyzed as a triplet of bicola. Most commentaries and translations have likewise scanned the lines of 4:16a–f as a triplet of bicola, and this arrangement is supported by the careful microstructural analysis of

approbation upon the consummation of the marriage of the bride and groom. In parallel with the reference to Yahweh that climaxes the other highpoint of the Song (8:6–7), as discussed in my forthcoming monograph, *Flame of Yahweh: A Theology of Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Hendrickson), I find it most likely that the Voice of Cant 5:1e is that of Yahweh Himself, adding His divine blessing to the marriage, as He did at the first Garden wedding in Eden. In the wedding service, only He has the ultimate authority to pronounce them husband and wife. On the wedding night, only He is the unseen Guest able to express approbation of their uniting into one flesh and summons them to enjoy their love to the full. Here I concur with Dillow, 86: “The poet seems to say this is the voice of God Himself. Only the Lord could pronounce such an affirmation. He, of course, was the most intimate observer of all. Their love came from Him (Song 8:7). Thus, the Lord pronounces His full approval on everything that has taken place. He encourages them to drink deeply of the gift of sexual love.” So also Glickman, 25: “In the final analysis this must be the voice of the Creator, the greatest Poet, the most intimate wedding guest of all, the one, indeed, who prepared this lovely couple for the night of his design.”

⁴⁵Shea, 394–395.

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Roberts.⁴⁶ Based upon this poetic line division, the thematic and verbal parallels between members G (4:16) and G' (5:1) give evidence of chiasmic arrangement as follows:⁴⁷

Table 7
G (4:16) and G' (5:1): Consummation of Wedding/Marriage
 (Exact center of Song: 111 lines [60 verses] on either side)

<p>G 4:16 Bride's Invitation</p> <p>a She summons the winds: (cola a-b) "Awake, O north wind, And come, O south!"</p> <p>b She calls on the winds to blow her (cola garden fragrances to her groom and c-f) invites him to enter her garden and eat its fruit: "Blow upon my garden, That its spices flow out. Let my beloved enter his garden And eat its pleasant fruits."</p>	<p>G' 5:1 Groom's acceptance</p> <p>a' [Refrain] The Omniscient Voice sum- (cola mons the lovers to enjoy their love: e-f) "Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O lovers!"</p> <p>b' He accepts her invitation to come to her (cola (=his) garden, to gather the spices and a-d) eat the delicacies: "I entered my garden, my sister, bride; I plucked my myrrh with my spice; I ate my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk."</p>
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Note that in this chiasmic (abb'a') arrangement the outer members comprise an inclusio of opening and closing bicola (members a and a') that represent a call to/by an outside entity (call to the winds by the woman, call by the Omniscient Voice to the couple). The inner members (b and b') are linked by four crucial verbal parallels (garden, spice/s, entering, and eating) and by clear thematic echoes of the bride inviting the groom—and the groom accepting her invitation—to enter her (now his) garden and partake of its delicacies.

While the majority of commentators/translators analyze 4:16 as a triplet of bicola, Shea, following the translation of Marvin Pope, views the six cola in this verse as a couplet of tricola.⁴⁸ Roberts' meticulous microstructural analysis yields further evidence that 4:16 "exhibits the structure of two tricola."⁴⁹ In fact,

⁴⁶This is the commonly-accepted poetic analysis of 4:16. See, e.g., Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 154, and the major modern translations (NRSV, NASB, NKJV, NIV, etc). Roberts, 363-364, shows how thematically the verse most naturally divides into three bicola (16a-b has the woman summoning the winds to arise; 16c-d has her calling on the winds to blow her garden fragrances to her groom, and in 16e-f she invites the man to come to her garden). Structural clues also point toward three bicola in this verse (16b starting with a *waw* [and] indicates that 16a-b belong together as a bicolon; the third masculine singular ending of *bšmyw* of 16d is anaphoric to *gny* in 16c, thus binding 16c and d together as a bicolon; and 16e-f belong together as a bicolon with both having the same subject).

⁴⁷I am indebted to Ed Christian, who, after reading an earlier draft of this study, pointed out these chiasmic relationships between members G and G'.

⁴⁸Shea, 395.

⁴⁹Roberts, 363-366 (quotation 364). Roberts points out that the first three cola in this verse all begin with imperatives and the last three cola all commence with "jussive-like imperfects." Further, the last three cola all end with the third-person singular suffix.

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Roberts concludes that *both* of these structural analyses are probably correct for 4:16: “we have two poetic patterns with one superimposed on the other. We actually have two tricola and three bicola.”⁵⁰

Shea’s proposal of 4:16 as a couplet of tricola and 5:1 as a triplet of bicola is diagrammed by him as 3 x 2::2 x 3 (a tricolon times two and a bicolon times three), and he suggests that this 3:2::2:3 poetic pattern constitutes a structural chiasm at the center of the Song corresponding to the chiasmic nature of the Song as a whole. If Roberts is correct that 4:16 is also a triplet of bicola (as the majority of commentaries/translations likewise indicate), we can then further diagram the poetic pattern of these two verses as 2 x 3::2 x 3 (a bicolon times three and another bicolon times three), which constitutes by form a panel structure (block parallelism).⁵¹ I suggest that these two superimposed poetic patterns at the twin-peak apex of the Song—chiasmic and panel—epitomize the overall macrostructure of the Song with its combination of matching chiasmic members (ABB’A’) and panel members (CDEFC’D’E’F’) and its superimposing of chiasm and panel writing (in members EF and E’F’).

Summary and Conclusion

A literary-structural examination of the Song of Songs reveals twelve macro-units, the boundaries of which are indicated by specific refrains. The twelve sections of the Song form an artistic symmetrical macrostructure, comprised of chiasmic and block parallelism (or panel writing) in a fourteen-member pattern (including the two verse central climax): AB–CDEF–GG’–C’D’E’F’–B’A’. The first two outer-paired members of the Song are designed in a chiasmic arrangement (ABB’A’). Next come four paired panel (block parallelism) structures (CDEFC’D’E’F’). Member pairs E/E’ and F/F’ contain not only panel but also chiasmic features (E–F’ and F–E’). The Song’s symmetrical macrostructure climaxes in a final chiasmic and panel pairing of the two central verses of the whole Song (GG’).

The astoundingly intricate symmetry between each of the matching pairs in the literary-structural outline seems to rule out the possibility of a redactor imposing an artificial structure upon a miscellaneous collection of love poems. No doubt further study will uncover even more literary-structural artistry than surveyed and preliminarily set forth here. Such detailed and multidimensional macrostructure surely displays the overarching unity and stunning literary beauty of Scripture’s Most Sublime Song.

⁵⁰Roberts, 365.

⁵¹I say that “by form” it represents a block parallelism because, as we noted above in Table 7, by theme and by verbal parallels these paired tricola also give evidence of chiasmic arrangement.

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Grace in the Synoptic Teachings of Jesus

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Grace is generally defined as “God’s unmerited favor toward humanity and especially his people, realized through the covenant and fulfilled through Jesus Christ.”¹ The idea of “unmerited favor” is generally highlighted in the definitions because it is perceived as the “essence of grace in biblical terms.”² For example, Charles C. Ryrie says it is “the unmerited favor of God giving His Son and all the benefits that result from receiving Him.”³ It is “favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth of the one who receives it and in spite of what that person deserves.”⁴ The Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez calls this “gratuitousness.”⁵

The vocabulary denoting grace is quite extensive in the Bible. The primary Hebrew root (*hnn*) and its derivatives appear about 160 times and generally point to finding favor from God or from a person.⁶ In concrete pictures, typical of the OT, it means “to bend down to,” and is suggestive of “a loving parent

¹*Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, (1987), s.v., “Grace.”

²Horace O. Duke, *Where is God When Bad Things Happen?* (Mumbai: St. Paul’s, 1999), 104.

³Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989), 156.

⁴Ronald F. Youngblood, gen. ed., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. (Nashville: Nelson, 1986), 522.

⁵Gustavo Gutierrez, *Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987), xi.

⁶Willem A. Van Gemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:203.

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bending over a suffering child.”⁷ It is not an abstract idea since it “denotes the kind turning of one person to another as expressed in an act of assistance.”⁸

In the NT the Greek word *charis* appears 155 times, mostly in the Pauline literature (110 times),⁹ where it “is a central concept that most clearly expresses his understanding of the salvation event.”¹⁰ However, the vocabulary for grace is amazingly sparse in the Synoptic Gospels. The word does not occur in Matthew and Mark. In Luke it is found eight times: in 1:30 it points to Mary finding “favor” with God; in 2:40, 52, it denotes the acceptability of the child Jesus with God and people; in 4:22 it underscores the charming words Jesus spoke; while in 6:32, 33, 34 and 17:9 it means “thanks.”

Since grace is “the purest expression of God’s redemptive love”¹¹ and the biblical record underscores it “from creation to redemption,”¹² it is surprising that the word is not dripping from the lips of Jesus, the Savior of the world, who is described as being “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). However, although the “Gospels rarely use the word ‘grace,’ . . . its substance permeates them in the life and teaching of Jesus.”¹³ Indeed, “the idea of grace is prominent. Jesus says that he came to seek and save the lost. Many of his parables teach the doctrine of grace.”¹⁴

This paper explores the concept of grace in two of Jesus’ parables that place the emphasis on unmerited favor, not in the typical God-to-Person context, but in the Person-to-Person context. Indeed, the teaching is decidedly pastoral. These two are the parables concerning the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:21-35). They share the following similarities:

1. Both are introduced with an interrogative. They are Jesus’ responses to questions posed by His listeners. In the first, the query of the expert in the law

⁷Wayne E. Ward, “Grace,” *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Macon: Mercer UP, 1990), 347. Ward stresses the “divine initiative and human helplessness” and indicates the centrality of grace to the Exodus and the Cross. It is dynamically related to other theological concepts such as covenant, forgiveness, love, and salvation.

⁸Walther Zimmerli, “*Charis*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), Gerhard Friedrich, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 9:377.

⁹It is especially prevalent in Romans (twenty-four times), 1 and 2 Corinthians (ten and eighteen times, respectively), and Ephesians (twelve times). Outside of Paul’s epistles it is found primarily in Acts (seventeen times), 1 Peter (ten times), and Hebrews (eight times). Related words such as *charisma* and *charizesthai* are also chiefly Pauline. See H. -H. Esser, “Grace, Spiritual Gifts,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 2:118.

¹⁰“*Charis*,” TDNT (1974), 9:393.

¹¹Ward, 347.

¹²*Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Grace.”

¹³*Ibid.*, 437.

¹⁴J. H. Stringer, “Grace, Favour,” *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d. edition, ed. I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 433.

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is, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”¹⁵ (v. 25) and more specifically, “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29). In the second, Peter inquires, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” (v. 21).

2. Both deal with how a person treats another. Hence, they are in the concrete context of human behavior.

3. Both are triadic. In the first, the thieves, by having the same intent, are lumped together as one character; the priest and Levite, since they are both religious persons, form the second; while the Samaritan is the third.¹⁶ In the second parable, the king is the first character; the unjust servant is the second, while his colleague is the third.

4. Both deal with characters operating according to similar principles. In other words, the parables demonstrate similar philosophies of life as illustrated in the characters. These indicate how people live their lives.

5. Both deal with the idea of mercy. This forms the concluding issue for both parables.

The Good Samaritan: Grace in the Context of the Enemy

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.

¹⁵All scripture quotations are from the NIV.

¹⁶While the story is told from the perspective of the injured man, and he is the only person who appears in all scenes of the parable, he is also the only one who is passive. All other characters are active. Hence, we do not include the victim as one of the main characters.

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“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”
The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”
Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” Luke 10:25-37

The discussion here starts because a lawyer wants to test Jesus. He asks, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). It appears that his motive is negative because the word *ekpeirazein* (“test”) usually has such a connotation in the NT.¹⁷ Further, the aorist participle *ti poiesas* (“what must I do?”) “implies that by the performance of one thing eternal life can be secured. What heroic act must be performed, or what great sacrifice made?”¹⁸ This emphasis on doing something to gain eternal life points in the direction of merit by human action and achievement. Jesus directs the lawyer’s attention, most appropriately, to what the Law teaches. The man responds by quoting portions of the Law (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, respectively) to show that total love for God and one’s neighbor insures eternal life. Jesus answers with an imperative, “*Touto poiei*,” “Keep on doing so and you will live” (v. 28). The implication is that eternal life cannot be accomplished by merit, that is, from following a set of rules as the lawyer suggests.

Not grasping the implications of his own words, the lawyer seeks self-justification by posing another question: “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29). The Jews believed that the neighbor could only be one who belonged to the covenant community, not an outsider.¹⁹ Already there is a hint that this definition is too limited, because the word for neighbor (*ho plesion*) quoted in Lev 19:18 means more than one who lives nearby or next door, for which *ho perioikos* would have been used.²⁰

Interestingly, Jesus does not directly answer the lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” Instead, he turns it around and, by telling the parable,²¹ answers a different question: “Whose neighbor am I?” In other words, He teaches *how* one ought to behave neighborly. The story may have been “an account of an actual occurrence”²² and “is told from the perspective of the needs of the wounded man.”²³ This man, whose ethnicity is not mentioned²⁴ but is generally

¹⁷Cf. Matt 4:7, Luke 4:12, and 1 Cor 10:9.

¹⁸Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 313.

¹⁹The narrow scope of the definition of neighbor may already be noted in Sirach 12:1-4: “If you do good, know to whom you do it . . . and do not help the sinner.”

²⁰Cf. Luke 1:58.

²¹For a discussion concerning the classification or categorization of this parable, see John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35B (Dallas: Word, 1993), 590-91.

²²Glendenhuys, 311. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1940), 485, who writes, “This was no imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented.”

²³Nolland, 591. This is obvious since the wounded man is the only person who remains on the scene of action throughout the account.

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understood to be Jewish, was attacked by robbers who terrorized travelers on the notoriously dangerous road going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.²⁵ His desperate plight is captured in v. 30b: “They (the thieves) stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.” This verse also introduces us to the first character in the triad. Since the thieves all had the same intention they are grouped together. From their violent and vicious actions against this unsuspecting man they manifest a certain philosophy of life that says, “*I will take what you have.*” It is their actions, based on such a philosophy of life, which place the unfortunate victim in a state of emergency—indeed, in a life-and-death situation. His desperate need results directly from their atrocious and barbarous behavior.

Verses 31 and 32 describe the second character in the triad. Since both priest and Levite are religious persons, they are grouped together. To Jesus’ listeners, the arrival of the priest would have signaled good fortune for the wounded man.²⁶ If anyone is expected to help a mortally wounded person, surely it would be one who works on behalf of “injured” people (at least, the spiritually injured). However, “this prime representative of the religion that, in the person of the lawyer, has just agreed upon the fundamental place of love hardens his heart and passes by on the other side.”²⁷

Then along comes a Levite.²⁸ As a religious person he would be expected to help, though that expectation would be lesser than that of the priest. But he too chooses not to get involved and passes by on the other side. The similar action of both religious figures demonstrates the same philosophy of life: “*I will keep what I have.*”

There is much discussion about the reason(s) why these two avoided the wounded man. It has been suggested that they were concerned for their own safety since the brigands sometimes had one of their own feign misfortune, and when some unsuspecting person stopped to help, then they would attack him.

²⁴He is described simply as *anthropos tis*, “a certain person.” Nolland, 592, says that even though the expression appears in the NT only in Luke’s writings (cf. 12:16; 14:2,16; 15:11; 16:1,19; Acts 9:33), it may not be distinctively Lukan.

²⁵The distance between both cities was about eighteen miles with a drop in elevation of approximately 3,300 feet or about 1100 meters. Jericho itself is roughly 800 feet (244 meters) below sea level. Because the focus of the story is on human need, details of geography and so forth are merely extraneous and therefore distracting.

²⁶At that time Jericho was a city of priests, and so it was not uncommon for priests (and Levites) to be moving between the temple in Jerusalem and their homes in the “city of palms” (Judg 3:13).

²⁷Nolland, 593.

²⁸Of the tribe of Levi, only direct descendants of Aaron could function as priests, charged with cultic responsibilities such as offering burnt offerings and supervising the people in worship. The other Levites served as priestly assistants, caring for the tabernacle and temple and performing other non-priestly duties.

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The main reason posited, however, is a cultic one. In describing the priest's action (and the Levite by extension), Leon Morris says,

Since the man was 'half dead' the priest would probably not have been able to be certain whether he was dead or not without touching him. But if he touched him and the man was in fact dead, then he would have incurred the ceremonial defilement that the Law forbade (Lv. 21:1ff.). He could be sure of retaining his ceremonial purity only by leaving the man alone . . . He deliberately avoided any possibility of contact.²⁹

Regardless of the reason, we must realize that the focus here is not why the religious leaders refused to help, but on the fact that they did not help. By telling the narrative in this way, Jesus masterfully plots the story so as to have a heightened effect on the hearers. The role of these two religious personages is to create hope and then quickly dash it to the ground. To be sure, if these two do not help, who will? "The needy man's situation has now measurably worsened. Nobody else might come on the scene soon enough."³⁰ Further, by bringing together the priest and Levite, Jesus makes the drama even more intriguing. Certainly the priest is expected to help; but since he does not, it is not expected that the Levite will help, as Levites were subordinate to priests. After all, they were relegated to menial and secondary tasks in the temple. They were of lower rank than priests. So who then will help the fallen comrade? Will there be some miracle of divine intervention? Nolland puts it this way:

At this point the story is open to a number of possible developments. (Is it after all an anti-clerical story, and now an ordinary Israelite will come along and save the day? Will God intervene with angelic help and shame the religious figures? Is the story to be a tragedy in which the injured man's demise brings shame upon the covenant community?)³¹

Instead, Jesus now introduces the Samaritan. The listeners would have expected this Samaritan to do nothing for the sufferer. The historic enmity between Jews and Samaritans was well known. To be called a Samaritan was a deep insult,³² and both groups avoided contact with each other as much as possible.³³ There was much bad blood between them. Tractate *m. Seb* 8:10 captures the

²⁹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 189. Touching a corpse defiled a person (cf. Lev 21:1-3; Num 5:2; 19:2-3; Ezek 44:25-27).

³⁰Nolland, 594.

³¹Ibid.

³²When Jesus accused the Jews of refusing to believe in Him and therefore in God, they retorted with derision, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" John 8:48.

³³Cf. Luke 9:51-56 and John 4:7-9.

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inherent abhorrence, “He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like one that eats the flesh of swine.” Furthermore, Samaritans were placed at “the lowest degree of the scale [i.e., of racial purity].”³⁴ And along with other groups, Samaritans “shared . . . a hostile attitude toward Jerusalem.”³⁵

The impact is heightened by Jesus’ use of the contrastive conjunction: “*But* a Samaritan . . . came where the man was; and when he saw him he took pity on him” (v. 33). M. J. J. Menken has shown how Jesus deliberately positions the expression “he took pity” (*esplagchnisthe*) in a strategic way so that it explodes the impact of what He is teaching.³⁶ Whereas those who are expected to act with compassion toward the helpless victim deliberately refuse to do so, the one who is hated and despised deliberately stoops to help. Furthermore, he risks himself in doing so. This action defines compassion, “that which causes us to identify with another’s situation such that we are prepared to *act* for his or her benefit.”³⁷

The demonstration of such compassion is illustrated in what the Samaritan does for the injured man. He administers first aid,³⁸ provides transportation to a safe place, pays for the man’s immediate basic needs, and makes arrangements for any future attentions he may need. In so doing, the Samaritan demonstrates his philosophy of life: *I will share what I have*. It is in this sharing that love is exemplified. Therefore, the Samaritan’s philosophy and action in life indicate that he is fulfilling the ethical demands of the Law, that is, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev19:18). As such, he, an outcast, is closer to eternal life than those who count themselves as privileged members of the elect community. By their refusal to act on “the ethical demands of their own law,”³⁹ the priest and Levite have made themselves the (new?) outcasts. They are far from eternal life.

While the word “grace” is not used in the story, the idea of it is quite evident. From the perspective of the victim, grace is experienced. The sufferer does not merit favor, especially since Jewish fanaticism would prefer death rather than receive help from a Samaritan.⁴⁰ But by his very actions this Samaritan

³⁴Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 352.

³⁵R. J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered*, Growing Points in Theology (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 142.

³⁶M. J. J. Menken, “The Position of *splagchnizestai* and *splgachna* in the Gospel of Luke,” *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988), 111.

³⁷Nolland, 594 (emphasis mine).

³⁸Oil and wine were used for medicinal purposes in the first century. R. K. Harrison, “Oil,” *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d edition, ed. D. R. W. Wood (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 844, says that oil was a “popular unguent application for bruises and wounds.” See too A. C. Shultz, “Wine and Strong Drink,” *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 5:938, who refers to a popular rabbinic saying, “Wine is the greatest of all medicines; where wine is lacking, there drugs are necessary.”

³⁹Nolland, 595.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

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exemplifies graciousness, even in the OT sense of the word. Esser puts it eloquently,

The use of the word hen clarifies the meaning of “grace” in history and actions. *It denotes the stronger coming to the help of the weaker who stands in need of help by reason of his circumstances or natural weakness. He acts by a voluntary decision, though he is moved by the dependence or request of the weaker party.*⁴¹

In his conclusion to the parable, Jesus then asks the lawyer, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (v. 36).⁴² The answer is obvious. Indeed, “The *one* who had mercy on him” (v. 37a). Yet, the lawyer’s answer shows his deep-seated racism. By using a periphrasis he avoids putting the scornful word “Samaritan” on his lips and mutters a non-specific designation, “The *one* who showed mercy.” He denies ‘identity’ to the Samaritan. In this way the Samaritan, though a hero in the story, remains a non-person, still the object of scorn. But it is precisely the merciful acts of the Samaritan that give him identity. On Jesus’ lips, he is the real person, the one who is not hemmed in by narrow boundaries.

According to Jesus, the neighbor is anyone who addresses the needs of the other. Jesus emphasizes the concrete actions of sympathy, empathy, and compassion. This is the essence of grace. It is being neighborly to those in need. From the perspective of the desperate and disenfranchised, neighborliness is the choice to share what one has. When one loves God and people, such a choice, as exemplified in the Samaritan’s actions, demonstrates graciousness. In short, there “is no limit . . . to Love’s field of action.”⁴³ And when Jesus told the lawyer, “Go and do⁴⁴ likewise” (v. 37b), He also addresses the modern reader. We must be like the Samaritan who “shows us a compassion unrestricted by national, racial, or religious barriers.”⁴⁵

Philip Yancey records an incident that illustrates the attitude and philosophy of life of the Samaritan in contemporary society. He wonders aloud, “What would a Good Samaritan look like today in urban America?”⁴⁶ He answers by reporting his interview with Louise Adamson, who has dedicated her life to working with the poor and disenfranchised in Atlanta, Georgia. Her ministry is

⁴¹Esser, 116 (emphasis mine).

⁴²Jesus’ skill in communicating is magnificently demonstrated here. The lawyer is met on his own grounds. As an expert he must consider if the priest and Levite, though scrupulously adherent to the Law, really keep the Law. Is their ceremonial and puritanical idealism justified in the situation? And if so, how could their abject refusal to help a victimized person qualify them as being law-abiding, since the Law required them to love their neighbor like themselves?

⁴³Glendenhuys, 314.

⁴⁴Jesus uses the present tense *poiei*, “keep on doing” or “do constantly” with the idea of life-long commitment.

⁴⁵Nolland, 597.

⁴⁶Philip Yancey, *Finding God in Unexpected Places* (Nashville: Moorings, 1995), 67.

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called the “Jericho Road Ministry.” She says, “How would anyone go about scheduling a Jericho Road ministry? You just walk down the road and look for victims.”⁴⁷

The Unmerciful Servant: Grace in the Context of Forgiveness

This parable illustrates grace in the context of forgiveness. It is introduced by two questions posed by Peter: “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” (v. 21). Peter’s question is appropriate because Jesus had just been talking about forgiveness (vv. 15-20). In that discourse, He said nothing about the number of times you should forgive someone who wrongs you. Hence, Peter’s queries. It would seem that since seven represents the perfect number, then seven instances of forgiveness would be superlative. Jesus answers that one should be willing to forgive seventy-seven times.⁴⁸ This wide contrast clearly dwarfs Peter’s assumption and puts the matter in bold relief. Forgiving someone a mere seven times is not even the minimum. Certainly, what Jesus is teaching is that forgiveness should be limitless, even infinite. To illustrate this He tells the parable.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

“The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’

“But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

⁴⁷Ibid., 72.

⁴⁸The LXX uses the same expression (*hebdomekontakis hepta*) in Gen 4:24: “If Cain avenged seven times then Lamech seventy-seven.” See too Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 39, who believes that the expression “actually means ‘70 times (and) 7,’ and not ‘70 times 7. . . .’” The NIV says it may also be interpreted as “seventy times seven.” This really puts the idea of limitlessness in perspective.

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“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he should pay back all he owed.

“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.” Matt 18:21-35

This is one of the Kingdom parables, since Jesus likens the kingdom to “a king who wanted to settle accounts⁴⁹ with his servants” (v. 24). It is closely connected to the same genre of parables in Matt 13 that deal with the Kingdom of heaven (13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47). Kingdom parables often deal with the actions and behavior of the residents of the Kingdom. This parable is no different. This is underlined in that the king is about to settle accounts with some of his subjects.⁵⁰ The parable is clearly triadic, with the main characters or actors being the king, the first subject, and the second subject. The first subject appears in all scenes of the story, which is told from his perspective. The “story is concise and artistic,”⁵¹ as seen in its structure depicting a series of encounters or scenes between the main characters:⁵²

- Introduction: The king decides to settle accounts with his subjects (v. 23)
- I. The king and the first servant (vv. 24-27)
 - A. The servant’s huge debt (v. 24)
 - B. The decision to force payment (v. 25)
 - C. Plea for mercy (v. 26)
 - D. The king cancels the debt (v. 27)
- II. The first and second servants (vv. 28-30)
 - A. The servant’s small debt (v. 28b)
 - B. Decision to force payment (v. 28c)
 - C. Plea for mercy (v. 29)
 - D. Refusal to cancel the debt (v. 30)
- III. The king and the first subject (vv. 31-34)
 - A. The servants’ report to the king regarding his first subject’s behavior (v. 31)
 - B. The king’s rebuke (vv.32-33)
 - C. Reversal of the canceled debt (v. 34)
- Conclusion: Jesus’ application of the parable (v. 35).

⁴⁹“Settling accounts” has undertones of judgment. Cf. Luke 16:1-8 and 19:12-27.

⁵⁰Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 270-71, finds several hints that this parable deals with Gentile characters. However (to get ahead of ourselves), we must note that the punishment exacted by the first servant for non-payment by the second follows an OT—and, hence, Jewish—background.

⁵¹Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 468.

⁵²For a similar outline see Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), 536-37.

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In the first encounter, the servant has an astronomically high debt. The use of the word *daneion* (“loan,” a *hapax legomenon*), together with the extraordinarily excessive debt, suggests that the relationship between the king and subject is that of a royal contract with a tax collector. Hence, these servants should not be seen as slaves but as officials who managed the administrative affairs of the state.⁵³ The debt is described as *murioi* (“myriad”) which “is a deliberate hyperbole pointing to a debt that was so high that it was practically incalculable.”⁵⁴ It meant that the servant was absolutely incapable of repaying such a large sum.⁵⁵ Owing to this the king ordered that the servant and his family, together with all their possessions, be sold as repayment (v. 25). In so doing the sovereign is following a well-established tradition.⁵⁶ It is obvious that even this is meager and insufficient. The point here is that the servant is not in a position to repay the debt. Although he has power and influence,⁵⁷ he is in an impossible situation. To avoid the shame and loss of freedom from being sold into slavery he throws himself on the mercy of the king. “Be patient with me,” he begs, “and I will pay back *everything*” (v. 26). Again, even this is insufficient. Further, the plea approaches even a comical dimension with the promise to repay everything. The sum is so gargantuan that even if the servant were to repay for several lifetimes it would be impossible to satisfy the loan. Despite these factors, the king accepts the plea for mercy. In fact, he goes beyond the man’s request. Instead of allowing him the opportunity to repay as requested, the king “took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go” (v. 27).⁵⁸ In short, the record is completely expunged. The servant has nothing to commend him to the monarch, and despite his best promise it is impossible for him to erase his indebtedness. It is only the compassion and leniency of the potentate that saves the servant. In short, the king expresses grace. His philosophy in life is: “*I will share what I have.*” And this motivates the act of grace: unmerited favor to the undeserving. Donald A. Hagner describes it as such:

⁵³Archibald M. Hunter, *The Parables Then and Now* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 67.

⁵⁴Hagner, 538. Luz, 471, says, “In Greek *murioi* is the highest possible number”

⁵⁵Josephus reports that in 4 B.C.E., Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, did not collect that much money in taxes for all of his territory combined. “The money that came to Archelaus as yearly tribute from the territory given him to rule amounted to six hundred talents.” See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities 17.11.4* (trans. Ralph Marcus, LCL, 8:521). In other words, this servant owed far more than the GNP of that vast area.

⁵⁶See 2 Kgs 4:1; Neh 5:3-5; Isa 50:1; and Amos 2:6; 8:6.

⁵⁷Robert F. Capon, *The Parables of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 46.

⁵⁸The expression *to daneion apheiken auto* has the idea of total absolution. Luz, 472-73, highlights the effect of such forgiveness, “The slave himself would never have dared to ask for so much. The amount of the gift is fantastic for both the readers of the gospel and for Jesus’ hearers. Today we would express it only in the millions, or even billions.”

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In response to the plea of the servant for clemency in the form of time to repay the enormous debt, the sovereign responds with nearly unimaginable *grace* in the full dismissal of all indebtedness. It is not difficult to hear the echo of the gospel of the forgiveness of sins in this verse.⁵⁹

In the second encounter, the forgiven servant meets a colleague who owes him a mere one hundred denarii. This is minuscule in comparison to the debt he himself has owed and from which he has been so recently released. Suddenly he is enraged and treats his associate with violent hostility,⁶⁰ demanding, “Pay back what you owe me!” (v. 28). The man offers a plea that is almost identical to the one made earlier by his assailant, “Be patient with me, and I will pay you back” (v. 29). The only difference between both pleas is that the latter omits the word *everything*. In short, his debt is so small that it is ridiculous to even suggest that he needs time to repay everything. That is assumed. This makes the first servant appear in an even worse light. He promises to repay everything but he is really unable to do so. And now he refuses to give the same leniency to one who, given time, can repay more than the everything (100 denarii) that is owed.⁶¹ He who has just experienced grace now acts in un-grace. He lives by the philosophy, “*I will keep what I have.*” He has just received forgiveness, but now selfishly keeps that same gift to himself.

Jesus deliberately contrasts these first two scenes to put the action of grace into bold relief. This also heightens the impact of the story on the listeners. Let us note the following contrasts:

Scene 1 (vv. 24-27)	Scene 2 (vv. 28-30)
Large debt	Small debt
Unpayable debt	Payable debt
Promise to repay but really cannot	Promise to repay and can
Response of the king	Response of the first servant
Philosophy of the king	Philosophy of the first servant
Undeserving of forgiveness	Deserving of forgiveness
Mercy	No mercy
Grace	Un-grace

The impact on the listener is clear: treating another person without grace, especially when one has just received grace, indicates hard-heartedness and cold evil. It betrays an inner inhumanity. Even the “minimum” of forgiveness is not

⁵⁹Hagner, 539; cf. Luz, 472-73.

⁶⁰According to Hanna, 39, “The imperfect tense is descriptive in *epnigen*, describing the debtor as ‘choking him in his rage.’”

⁶¹Hagner, 539, indicates that a denarius was about one day’s wages. There were about 6000 denarii to one talent, and the first servant owes about 10,000 talents. In other words, the first servant is forgiven a debt that is about 600,000 times greater than what he is demanding of his associate.

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attained. Little wonder that in the third encounter (vv. 32-34), the other servants report this incident to the king, who immediately summons the unjust servant. The king reminds the unmerciful servant that he has received grace (v. 32) but has not shown grace, so he deserves to be characterized as “wicked” (v. 32a). This leads to his rhetorical question, “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” (v. 33). This interrogative places the emphasis squarely on treating others as one would like to be treated.⁶² In short, just as the king willingly gives to the undeserving servant, because of his grace, so too the unmerciful servant should have been willing to share what he had just received. Instead, he has refused. In treating his colleague in this way he is destroying the kingdom. To be sure, “failure to forgive excludes one from the kingdom, whose pattern is to forgive.”⁶³ Such cannot be tolerated. Hence, no one is saddened when the king rescinds the earlier pardon (v. 34).⁶⁴

In the final verse Jesus points out that the measure by which we forgive others is the same one the heavenly Father uses when we ask for forgiveness. The application is poignant. So back to Peter’s original query concerning the number of times we should forgive a person who wrongs us. The answer is found in our reflection on this question: “How many times do we want God to forgive us?” Unlimited. Though undeserving of forgiveness, we would like grace extended to us time and time again (even seventy times seven). The point of the parable is “that the spirit of genuine forgiveness recognizes no boundaries. It is a state of heart, not a matter of calculation.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

Although these two parables do not mention the word grace, they certainly illustrate the premium placed on grace in the teachings of Jesus. Indeed, true religion is seen in how we treat each other. Grace enables us to be a neighbor and help even those who treat us like the enemy. This is what the first parable teaches. The second teaches us that grace enables us to forgive others even as we would like to be forgiven by God. In both, it is our concrete actions toward other human beings that are important. To neglect the fallen and disenfranchised is to be like the priest and Levite whose religious formalism kept them cold and detached from serving humanity. To be unforgiving is to be as wicked as the first servant whose selfishness made him heartless. But to serve humanity and be

⁶²Cf. “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31). The same is true of forgiveness. Cf. Matt 6:12, 14-15; Luke 6:37.

⁶³Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:406.

⁶⁴This verse is identical in content to v. 30. It signals retributive justice in that exactly the same punishment that the wicked servant meted out is now measured on him. Since it is impossible for him to repay the debt, it means that his imprisonment will be permanent.

⁶⁵William Hendrickson, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 704.

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forgiving are the best illustrations of what it means to have grace. The word does not need to be on our lips, but its essence must be the guiding principle in our hearts and must be reflected in our treatment of people.

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The Trinity in Scripture

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The word Trinity (Lat. *Trinitas*, “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness”) is not found in the Bible (neither is the word “incarnation”), but the teaching it describes is clearly contained in Scripture. Briefly defined, the doctrine of the Trinity stands for the concept that “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”¹

God himself is a mystery—how much more the incarnation or the Trinity! Nevertheless, even though we may not be able to comprehend logically the various aspects of the Trinity, we need to try to understand as best we can the scriptural teaching regarding it. All attempts to explain the Trinity will fall short, “especially when we reflect on the relation of the three persons to the divine essence . . . all analogies fail us and we become deeply conscious of the fact that the Trinity is a mystery far beyond our comprehension. It is the incomprehensible glory of the Godhead.”² Therefore, we do well to admit that “man cannot comprehend it and make it intelligible. It is intelligible in some of its relations and modes of manifestations, but unintelligible in its essential nature.”³

We need to be aware that we can only ever achieve a partial understanding of what the Trinity is. As we listen to God’s Word, certain elements of the Trinity will become clear, but others will remain a mystery. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29).

¹ W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 226.

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 1941), 88.

³ *Ibid.*, 89.

PFANDL: THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE

The Trinity in the Old Testament

Several passages in the Old Testament suggest or even imply that God exists in more than one person, not necessarily in a Trinity, but at least in a binary relationship.

1. Genesis 1

Throughout the creation story in Genesis 1 the word for God is *‘Elohim*, the plural form of *‘Eloha*. Generally, this plural has been interpreted as a plural of majesty rather than of plurality. However, G. A. F. Knight has correctly argued that to make this a plural of majesty is to read into the ancient Hebrew text a modern concept, since the kings of Israel and Judah are all addressed in the singular in the biblical record.⁴ Furthermore, Knight points out that the Hebrew words for water and heaven are both plural. Grammarians have termed this phenomenon the quantitative plural. Water can appear in the form of small drops or large oceans. This quantitative diversity in unity, says Knight, is a fitting way of understanding the plural *‘Elohim*. This also explains why the singular noun *‘Adonai* is written as a plural.⁵

In Genesis 1:26, we read “Then God said [singular], ‘Let Us make [plural] man in Our [plural] image, according to Our [plural] likeness.’” What is significant is the shift from singular to plural. Moses is not using a plural verb with *‘Elohim*, but God is using a plural verb and plural pronouns in reference to himself. Some interpreters believe that God is here speaking to the angels. But according to Scripture, angels did not participate in creation. The best explanation is that already in the first chapter of Genesis there is an indication of a plurality of persons in the Godhead itself.

2. Genesis 2:24

According to Genesis 2:24, man and woman are to “become one (*‘echad*) flesh,” a union of two separate persons. In Deuteronomy 6:4 the same word is used of God, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one (*‘echad*).” Millard J. Erickson says, “It seems that something is being affirmed here about the nature of God—he is an organism, that is, a unity of distinct parts.”⁶ Moses could have used the word *yachid* (only one, unique) in Deuteronomy 6:4, but the Holy Spirit chose not to do so.

3. Other Old Testament Texts Expressing a Plurality

After the fall of man God said, “Behold, man has become like one of Us” (Gen 3:22). And some time later, when men began to build the tower of Babel,

⁴ G. A. F. Knight, *A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Edinburgh, 1953), 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker, 1983), 1:329.

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the LORD said, “Come let Us go down and there confuse their language” (Gen 11:7). Each time the plurality of the Godhead is emphasized.

In his famous throne vision Isaiah hears the LORD asking, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” (Isa 6:8). Here we have God using the singular and plural in the same sentence. Many modern scholars take it as a reference to the heavenly council. But did God ever call on his creatures for advice? In Isaiah 40:13,14 he seems to refute this very notion. He has no need of counseling with his creatures, not even with heavenly beings. The plural, therefore, while not proving the Trinity, suggests that there is a plurality of beings in the speaker.

4. The Angel of the Lord

The phrase “angel of the LORD” appears fifty-eight times in the Old Testament, “the angel of God” eleven times. The Hebrew word *mal’ak* (“angel”) means simply “messenger.” Therefore, if the “Angel of the LORD” is a messenger of the LORD, he must be distinct from the LORD himself. Yet, in a number of texts the “Angel of the LORD” is also called “God” or “LORD” (Gen 16:7-13; Num 22:31-38; Judg 2:1-4; 6:22). The Church Fathers identified him with the pre-incarnate Logos. Modern scholars have seen him as a being who represents God, as God himself, or as some external power of God. Conservative scholars generally agree that “this ‘messenger’ must be seen as a special manifestation of the being of God himself.”⁷ If this is correct, we have here another indicator of the plurality of persons in the Godhead.

The Trinity in the New Testament

Truth in Scripture is progressive; therefore, when we come to the New Testament we find a more explicit picture of the Trinitarian nature of God. The very fact that God is said to be love (1 John 4:8) implies that there must be a plurality within the Godhead, since love can only exist in a relationship between different beings.

1. In the Gospel of Matthew

(a) At the baptism of Jesus, we encounter the three members of the Godhead in action at the same time:

When he had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ (Matt 3:16-17)

The account of Jesus baptism is a striking manifestation of the doctrine of the Trinity—there stood Christ in human form, visible to all; the Holy Spirit

⁷G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis* (Zondervan, 1981), 300.

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descended upon Christ in bodily form as a dove; and the voice of the Father spoke from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” In John 10:30 Christ claims equality with the Father, and in Acts 5:3, 4 the Holy Spirit is identified as God. It is difficult if not impossible, therefore, to explain the scene at Christ’s baptism in any other way than by assuming that there are three persons in the divine nature or essence.

At the baptism of Jesus the Father called him “my beloved Son.” The sonship of Jesus, however, is not ontological but functional. In the plan of salvation each member of the Trinity has accepted a particular role. It is a role for the purpose of accomplishing a particular goal, not a change in essence or status. Millard J. Erickson explains it this way:

The Son did not become less than the Father during his earthly incarnation, but he did subordinate himself functionally to the Father’s will. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son (see John 14-16) as well as to the will of the Father, but this does not imply that he is less than they are.⁸

The terms of “Father” and “Son” in Western thinking carry with them the ideas of origin, dependence, and subordination. In the Semitic or Oriental mind, however, they emphasize sameness of nature. Thus when the Scriptures speak of the “Son” of God they assert his divinity.

(b) At the end of his ministry, Jesus tells his disciples that they should go “and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). In this, the initiatory rite of each believer into the Christian religion, the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught. First, we note that “in the name” (*εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* / *eis to onoma*) is singular, not plural (“in the names”). To be baptized in the name of the three persons of the Trinity means to identify oneself with everything the Trinity stands for; to commit oneself to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁹ Second, the union of these three names indicates that the Son and the Holy Spirit are equal with the Father. It would be rather strange, not to say blasphemous, to unite the name of the eternal God with a created being (whether eternally created or at some point of time), and a force or power in this baptismal formula. “When the Holy Spirit is put in the same expression and on the same level as the two other persons, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is also viewed as a person and of equal standing with the Father and the Son.”¹⁰

⁸ Erickson, 1:338.

⁹ Some commentators believe that behind the formula lies the language of money transfers from the Hellenistic era, so that the formula figuratively expresses that the one baptized is “transferred” to the Lord’s account and so becomes his possession. Others interpret “name” as “authority.” Thus, one is baptized by the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰ Grudem, 230.

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2. In the Writings of Paul

Paul and the New Testament writers generally use the word “God” to refer to the Father, “Lord” to refer to the Son, and “Spirit” to refer to the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul refers to all three in the same text:

There are diversities of gifts, but the same *Spirit*.
There are differences of ministries, but the same *Lord*.
There are diversities of activities, but the same *God* who works all in all.

Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 13:14 he lists the three persons of the Trinity:

The grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*.
The love of *God*.
The communion of the *Holy Spirit*.

While we cannot say that these texts are a formal enunciation of the Trinity, these passages and others like it (e. g., Ephesians 4:4-6) are distinctly Trinitarian in character. It was the church in later times that hammered out the details of the Trinity, but they built on the foundations of the biblical writers.

The Divinity of Christ

A crucial element in the doctrine of the Trinity is the divinity of Christ. Since the Trinity doctrine teaches that there is one God in three persons, and that each person is fully God, it is important to ascertain what Scripture teaches about the divinity of Christ.

The Divinity of Christ in the New Testament

There are a number of passages in the New Testament which clearly affirm the full deity of Christ:

1. John 1:1-3,14.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The introductory phrase “in [the] beginning” (without the article) refers us back to the beginning of time. If the Word was “in the beginning,” then he himself was without beginning, which is another way of saying he was eternal.

“The Word was with God” tells us that the Word is a separate person or personality. The Word was not “in” (*εν / en*) God, but “with” (*πρὸς / pros*) God.

“And the Word was God,” or, more literally “and God was the Word.” The Word was not an emanation of God but God himself. While verse 1 does not tell us who the Word is, verse 14 clearly identifies it as Christ. “A more emphatic

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and unequivocal affirmation of the absolute Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ it is impossible to conceive.”¹¹

2. John 20:28

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God.’” This is the only time in the Gospels that anyone said to Christ “my God” (*ὁ θεός μου / ho Theos mou*). When Thomas saw the resurrected Christ, the doubter was transformed into a worshiper. It is significant that neither Christ at the time it happened nor John when he wrote the Gospel disapproved of what Thomas said. On the contrary, as far as John was concerned, this episode constituted a high point in his narration, for he immediately tells the reader,

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (20:30, 31)

This Gospel, says John, is written to persuade people to imitate Thomas who called Jesus “My Lord and my God.”

3. Philippians 2:5-7

Although this passage was written to illustrate humility, it is one of the key NT texts to support Christ’s divinity. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form [*μορφῆ / morphe*] of God, did not consider it robbery [*ἄρπαγμός / harpagmos*] to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form (*morphe*) of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men.”

Morphe (“form,” or, “visible appearance”) describes the genuine nature of a thing, its essence. It “refers not to any changeable form but to the specific form on which identity and status depend.”¹² *Morphe* contrasts with *schema* (*σχῆμα*, 2:7), which also means “form,” but in the sense of superficial appearance rather than essence. The noun *harpagmos* appears only in this text in the NT; the corresponding verb means “steal, take away forcefully.” In secular Greek the noun means “robbery.” However, the context makes it clear that Jesus did not covet, or try to steal “equality with God.” On the contrary, he did not attempt to hold on to the equality with God that he possessed intrinsically. In other words, he did not attempt to retain his equality with God by force, but “treated it as an occasion for renouncing every advantage or privilege that might have accrued to him thereby, as an opportunity for self-impoverishment and unreserved self-sacrifice.”¹³ This is the meaning of “but made Himself of no reputation.” His

¹¹ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Zondervan, 1945), 22.

¹² W. Poehlmann, “*μορφῆ*,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols., eds. H. Balz and G. Schneider (Eerdmans, 1981), 2:443.

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, NIBC (Hendrickson, 1989), 69.

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equality with God was something he possessed intrinsically; and one who is equal with God must be God. Hence, Philippians 2:5-7 “is a passage which demands for its understanding that Jesus was divine in the fullest sense.”¹⁴

4. Colossians 2:9

“For in Him dwells all the fullness (*πλήρωμα* / *pleroma*) of the Godhead bodily (*σωματικῶς* / *somatikos*).” The word *pleroma* has the basic meaning of “fullness, fulfillment.” In the Old Testament it refers repeatedly to the earth/sea and “all its fullness” (Ps 24:1; cf. 50:12; 89:11; 96:11; 98:7), which is quoted in 1 Corinthians 1:26,28. In secular Greek *pleroma* referred to the full complement of a ship’s crew or to the amount necessary to complete a financial transaction. In Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 Paul uses the word to describe the sum total of every function of divinity.¹⁵ This fullness dwelt in Christ “bodily”; i.e., even during his incarnation Christ retained all the essential attributes of divinity, though he did not use them for his own advantage. The fullness of the Godhead “made its abode in his humanity without consuming it or deifying it, or changing any of its essential properties. . . . It was easily seen that Godhead dwelt in that humanity, for glimpses of its glory flashed again and again through its earthly covering.”¹⁶

5. Titus 2:13

Paul describes the saints as “looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (NKJV). The KJV translates this passage as “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” which has the saints waiting for the Father and the Son. While this translation is possible, the NKJV rendering is to be preferred for the following reasons: (1) The two nouns “God” and “Savior” are connected by one article, indicating that, as a rule, the two nouns are two designations for one object. (2) The entire New Testament looks forward to the second coming of Christ. (3) The context in verse 14 speaks of Christ alone. (4) This interpretation is in harmony with other passages such as John 20:28; Rom 9:5; Heb 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1. This text, therefore, is an explicit assertion of the deity of Christ.

¹⁴ Leon Morris, *The Lord from Heaven: A Study of the New Testament Teaching in the Deity and Humanity of Jesus* (Eerdmans, 1958), 74.

¹⁵ Some commentators define *pleroma* in terms of Gnostic thought, whereby *pleroma* signifies the new aeon (or gnostic emanation) that has become incarnate in the Redeemer (Kaeseman, *Essays on New Testament Themes* [London, 1964], 158). C. F. D. Moule, however, has pointed out that *pleroma* was such a common word in the LXX that one would need strong evidence to drive one to look to an external source for its primary meaning in a writer so steeped in the OT as Paul (*The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary [Cambridge, 1957], 166).

¹⁶ John Eadie, *Colossians*, Classic Commentary Library (Zondervan, 1957), 145.

The Witness to Christ's Divinity in the Old Testament

Not only is Jesus called God in the New Testament, but he is also called Lord and God in quotations from the Old Testament where the Hebrew has Yahweh or Elohim.

1. Matthew 3:3

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord." According to verse 1, this text from Isaiah refers to John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Jesus. In Isaiah 40:3 the word for Lord is Yahweh. Thus "the Lord" whose way John was to prepare was none other than Yahweh himself.

2. Romans 10:13

"For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." The context (vss. 6-12) makes it clear that Paul is thinking of Christ when he refers to "the name of the LORD." The text is a quote from Joel 2:32 where the word for LORD in the Hebrew is again Yahweh.

3. Romans 14:10

In this text Paul reminds his readers that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." He then adds a quote from Isaiah 45:23 which says "As I live says the LORD, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God." In Isaiah the speaker is Yahweh; in the book of Romans the text is applied to Christ.

4. Hebrews 1:8

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever . . . God, your God has anointed you." In this chapter, seven Old Testament texts are used to support the argument that Christ is superior to the angels. The fifth text, quoted in verses 8 and 9, comes from Psalm 45:6, 7, where a king of the house of David is addressed as "God." Is this poetic hyperbole, as is sometimes found in oriental courts, or is this text pointing to another person beyond the Old Testament prince from the house of David?

To Hebrew poets and prophets a prince of the house of David was the vice-regent of Israel's God; he belonged to a dynasty to which God had made special promises bound up with the accomplishment of His purpose in the world. Besides, what was only partially true of any of the historic ruler's of David's line, or even of David himself, would be realized in its fullness when the son of David appeared in whom all the promises and ideals associated with the dynasty would be embodied. And now at last the Messiah had appeared. In a fuller sense than was possible for David or any of his successors in ancient days, this Messiah can be addressed not merely as God's Son (verse 5) but actually as God, for

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He is both the Messiah of David's line and also the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance.¹⁷

All these passages indicate that Christ and God and Yahweh are one.

Jesus' Self-Consciousness

Jesus never directly asserted his divinity; nevertheless his teaching was permeated with Trinitarian concepts. In accordance with the Hebrew idea of son-ship (i.e., whatever the father is, that is the son also), Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (Matt 9:27; 24:36; Luke 10:22; John 9:35-37; 11:4). The Jews understood that by claiming to be the Son of God he was claiming equality with God, "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18, cf. 10:33).

Jesus repeatedly claimed to possess what properly only belongs to God. "He spoke of the angels of God (Luke 12:8-9; 15:10) as his angels (Matt 13:41). He regarded the kingdom of God (Matt 12:28; 19:14, 24; 21:31, 34) and the elect of God (Mark 13:20) as his own."¹⁸ In Luke 5:20 Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic, and the Jews on the basis of Isaiah 43:25 correctly argued "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Thus implicit in Jesus' action of forgiveness was the claim to be God.

Christ's divinity is also indicated by his use of the present tense in his reply to the Jews, "Before Abraham was [born] (*γενέσθαι* / *genesthai*) I am (*ἐγὼ εἰμί* / *ego eimi*)" (John 8:58). By using the terms *genesthai* (was born or became) and *ego eimi* (I am) Jesus contrasts his eternal existence with the historical beginning of the existence of Abraham. It is eternity of being and not simply pre-existence before Abraham which is expressed here. The Jews at least understood it this way; they realized that Jesus claimed to be Yahweh, the I AM from the burning bush (Exod 3:14), and they took up stones to kill him (8:59).

Finally, the fact that Jesus accepted the worship of others is evidence that he himself recognized his divinity. After Jesus came to the disciples walking on water, "they worshiped him" (Matt 14:33). The blind man whose sight was restored after he washed in the pool of Siloam "worshiped Him" (John 9:38). After the resurrection the disciples went to Galilee, where Jesus appeared to them, and "they worshiped Him" (Matt 28:17).

Time and again Jesus accepted worship as perfectly proper. He thereby laid direct claim to divinity.

¹⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, NICNT (Eerdmans, 1964), 19, 20.

¹⁸ Erickson, 326.

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Difficult Texts¹⁹

Anti-Trinitarians use a number of Bible texts to support their contention that Jesus at some time in eternity was “begotten” (i.e., he had a beginning and is therefore not absolutely equal to God).

1. Revelation 3:14

“Jesus, the beginning of God’s creation.” It is claimed that Jesus was created at some point in the past, that he was God’s first work.

Response:

(a) The Greek word ἀρχῆ (arche) can be translated “beginning,” “point of origin,” “first cause,” or “ruler.” The Father himself is called “beginning” in Rev 21:6.

(b) The same title is used for Jesus in Rev 22:13. While the word “arche” can have a passive sense, which would make Jesus the first created being, the active sense of the word makes him the first cause, the prime mover, or the creator. That Jesus is not the first created being but the creator himself is the testimony of other New Testament texts (see John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2).

2. Proverbs 8:22-31

“I was brought forth.” It is argued that this passage refers to Jesus and teaches that Jesus was either born or created.

Response:

The context speaks about wisdom, not Jesus. The personification of wisdom is a literary device that occurs also in other parts of Scripture. In Psalm 85:10-13 we have “mercy and truth” meeting together, “righteousness and peace” kiss each other, and “truth shall spring out of the earth.” In Psalm 96:12 “the field” is joyful, and “all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord.” (See also 1 Chron 16:33; Isa 52:9; Rev 20:13-14). This kind of language should not be interpreted literally. “Personification is a literary and poetic device which serves to create atmosphere, and to enliven abstract ideas and inanimate objects by representing them as if they were human beings.”²⁰

The personification of the divine attribute of wisdom as a woman begins in chapter one: “Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares” (1:20). In chapter three we are told, “She is more precious than rubies” and “all her paths are peace” (3:15, 17). In chapter seven she is called a “sister” (7:4), and in chapter eight wisdom lives together with prudence, another personification (8:12). Personified wisdom is also the topic in Prov 9:1-5. To apply these passages to Jesus requires an allegorical method of biblical interpretation that leads to positions incompatible with other passages. It was this kind of hermeneutic that led to the rejection of the allegorical method of interpretation by

¹⁹ I am indebted to my colleague Ekkehardt Mueller for material in this section.

²⁰ Kenneth T. Aitken, *Proverbs* (Westminster Press, 1986), 85.

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the Reformers. It should also be noted that no verse of this passage is ever quoted in the NT.

(c) Proverbs 8:22-31 contains poetic imagery which needs to be carefully interpreted. The first phrase in verse 22 can be translated, “The Lord possessed me” (KJV, NIV); “The Lord created me” (RSV, NEB); or “the Lord begot me” (NAB). The basic meaning of the verb *qanah* is “to purchase, to acquire,” and hence “to possess,” but the other two translations are possible. Apart from *qanah*, two other words refer to wisdom’s origin: *nasak* (“to establish”; 8:23), and *chil* (“be born”; 8:24, 25). The basic thought in this passage is always the same: wisdom was with God before creation began. Whether God created her or whether she was begotten or simply possessed is not the focus. What is central is not the manner of her origin but rather her antiquity and precedence within God’s creation. Since the language is poetical and metaphorical, it should not be used to establish anything concerning Christ’s supposed origin.

Ellen White at times applied Proverbs 8 homiletically to Christ, but she used the text to support his eternal pre-existence. Before quoting Proverbs 8 she says, “Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.”²¹

3. Colossians 1:15

“Jesus, the firstborn.” Since Jesus is called the “firstborn” (*πρωτότοκος* / *prototokos*), it is argued that he must have had a beginning.

Response:

(a) The expression *prototokos* (“firstborn”) in this text is a title, not a definition of his biological status. According to 1:16, everything is created by Jesus. Therefore, he cannot be created himself.

(b) The term “firstborn” had a special meaning for the Hebrews. In general, the firstborn was the leader of a group of people or a tribe, the priest in the family, and the one who received twice as much of the inheritance as his brothers. He had certain privileges as well as responsibilities. Sometimes, however, the fact that one was the firstborn did not matter in God’s eyes. For example, although David was the youngest child, God called him “My firstborn” (Ps 89:20, 27). The second line of the parallelism in verse 27 tells us that this meant that he was to become the most exalted king. See also the experience of Jacob (Gen 25:25-26 and Exod 4:22) and Ephraim (Gen 41:50-52 and Jer 31:9). In these cases the time element “first” was deleted. Important was only the special rank and dignity of the person called the “firstborn.” In the case of Jesus, this term also refers to his exalted position and not to a point of time at which he was born.

²¹ *Selected Messages*, 1:247.

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In Colossians 1:18 Christ is called the “firstborn from the dead.” Though he is not chronologically the first (Moses and others had preceded him), he is the pre-eminent one.

4. John 1:1-3.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” It is claimed that there is a distinction in equality between God the Father, who is *the* God, and Jesus, who is only *a* god. The Greek term for God (*θεός* / *theos*) is found with the article *ὁ* (*ho*), “the God,” or without the article, “a god” or “God.” In John 1:1-3 the Father is named *ho theos*, whereas the son is called *theos*. Does this justify the claim that the Father is God Almighty whereas the Son is only a god?

Response:

The term *theos* without the article is frequently also used for the Father, even in the very same chapter (see John 1:6, 13, 18; Luke 2:14; Acts 5:39; 1 Thess 2:5; 1 John 4:12; and 2 John 9).

Jesus is also *the* God (Heb 1:8-9; John 20:28). In other words, the use of the term God—with or without the article—cannot be used to make a distinction between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father is *theos* and *ho theos*, and so is the Son.

Oftentimes, the absence of the article in Greek denotes special quality and should not be translated with the indefinite article “a.”

If John had used the definite article each time *theos* occurs, he would be claiming that there is only one divine person. The Father would be the Son. John 1:1 reads, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with *ho theos*, and the Word was *theos*.” If John had used only *ho theos*, we would read: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with *ho theos*, and the Word was *ho theos*.” According to John 1:14 the Word is Jesus. Therefore, replacing “Word” by “Jesus” we get the sentence, “In the beginning was Jesus and Jesus was with *ho theos*, and Jesus was *ho theos*.” *Ho theos* clearly refers to the Father. The modified text would read: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with the Father, and the Word was the Father.” This is theologically wrong. In talking about two persons of the Godhead, John had no other choice than to use once *ho theos* and the next time *theos*. Therefore, the absence of the article in the second case cannot be used for arguing against equality between Father and Son.

5. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9

“The only begotten [*μονογενής* / *monogenes*] Son.” It is suggested that the word *monogenes* points to a literal begetting of Jesus.

Response:

The word *monogenes* means “only, one of a kind, unique.” It occurs nine times in the NT. It is found three times in Luke (7:12; 8:42; 9:38), where it al-

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ways refers to an only child. It is found five times in John's writings (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) as a designation of Jesus' relationship to God. It occurs once in Hebrews 11:17, where Isaac is called Abraham's *monogenes* son. Isaac was not Abraham's only son, but he was the unique son, the only son of promise. The emphasis is not on the birth, but on the uniqueness of the son. Therefore, the translation "only" or "unique" is to be preferred. The translation "only begotten" may have originated with the early church Fathers and is found in the Vulgate. The latter in turn influenced later translations.

The normal term for begotten is *gennao* (*γέννω*) which is found in Heb 1:5 and may point to Christ's resurrection or incarnation.

In the LXX the term *monogenes* is the translation of the Hebrew *yachid*, which means "only one, unique" or "beloved" (cf, Mark 1:11 in connection with Christ's baptism).

It is not clear whether *monogenes* refers only to the historical and risen Lord or also to the pre-existing Lord. It is of interest to note, however, that neither in John 1:1-14, nor in 8:58, nor in chapter 17 does John use the term "Son" for the pre-existent Lord.

6. Matthew 14:33

"You are the Son of God." Can the title "Son of God" be understood literally?

Response:

(a) This title is a messianic title (see Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5). It stresses Jesus' deity. Jesus used the title very rarely for himself (only in John, e.g., John 11:4). It is one of many titles that Jesus had. In trying to understand who Jesus is, all of them need to be investigated in order to get a coherent picture. That the title "Son of God" stresses Christ's deity is evident from John 10:29-36. This is further supported by the fact that the Son is the precise image of God, being equal with God (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; Phil 2:6).

(b) The word "son" has a broad range of meanings in the original language. Therefore, it is not possible to reduce it to the narrow limits of the English language and define it in a purely literal way. The sonship of Jesus is attested in connection with Christ's birth (Luke 1:35), baptism (Luke 3:22), transfiguration (Luke 9:35), and resurrection (Acts 13:32-33). The Bible is silent on the question on whether this title describes the eternal relationship between Father and Son. In any case, Scripture attributes timeless existence to Jesus (Isa 6:6; Rev 1:17, 18).

During his incarnation Jesus voluntarily subordinated himself to the Father, being the Son of God. This included surrendering the prerogatives, but not the nature of the deity. The risen Lord, being enthroned as king and priest, also voluntarily accepts the priority of the Father, but he and the Father are—according to Scripture—both God, co-eternal and co-equal personalities of one Godhead.

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The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity

That the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal in substance, power, and glory with the Father and the Son, is manifested throughout Scripture.

1. The Holy Spirit is a Personal Being

(a) Some have questioned whether the Holy Spirit is a distinct person or only the “power” or “force” of God. There are a number of verses where the Holy Spirit is mentioned together with the Father and the Son (Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14). This indicates that the Father and the Son are persons. The Holy Spirit, therefore, should also be a person.

Frequently, the masculine pronoun “he” is used in reference to the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13, 14), in spite of the fact that the word for Spirit in Greek [*πνεῦμα* / *pneuma*] is neuter and not masculine).

The word “counselor” or “comforter” (*parakletos*) uniformly refers to a person, not a force.

The Holy Spirit is said to speak (Acts 8:29), teach (John 14:26), bear witness (John 15:26), intercede on behalf of others (Rom 8:26-27), distribute gifts to others (1 Cor 12:11), and to forbid or allows certain things (Acts 16:6-7). According to Ephesians 4:30, the Holy Spirit can also be grieved by people. All these activities are characteristic of a person, not a force.

2. The Holy Spirit is God

A number of texts in Scripture describe the Holy Spirit as God:

Matthew 28:19 “. . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This text places the Holy Spirit on an equal level with the Father and the Son.

(b) Peter told Ananias that, in lying to the Holy Spirit, he had lied not “to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4).

(c) “The Holy Spirit is omnipotent. He distributes spiritual gifts ‘to each one individually as He wills’ (1 Cor. 12:11). He is omnipresent. He will ‘abide’ with his people ‘forever’ (John 14:6). None can escape His influence (Ps. 139:7-10). He also is omniscient, because ‘the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God’ and ‘no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God’ (1 Cor. 2:10,11).”²²

(d) Ellen White firmly believed in the personality of the Holy Spirit. “We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds.”²³

²² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, (Hagerstown, 1988), 60.

²³ *Evangelism*, 616.

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Summary

While there are certainly textual and conceptual difficulties with the doctrine of the Trinity, our study of the Old and New Testament has produced some possible answers. We have seen that the Godhead exists in a plurality, that Jesus is God, co-existent from eternity with the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead.

Difficult Bible texts are best understood in harmony with the rest of Scripture. It is of little value to the church to cause division because of different understandings of some aspects of the Godhead. While the mystery of the Trinity can never be fully understood by finite man, it is a biblical doctrine that is part of the Christian Faith.

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Zechariah's Flying Scroll and Revelation's Unsealed Scroll

William H. Shea

One of the larger puzzles in the Book of Revelation has to do with the contents of the seven-sealed scroll in chapter 5 that is opened in 8:1. The contents of the seals with which this scroll is sealed become evident in the course of chapter 6, but no comment is made about the inner contents of the scroll itself when it is finally opened in 8:1, after the seventh seal is opened. The only statement made there is that there was silence in heaven for about half an hour when it was opened. To determine the nature of the inner contents of the scroll, we are reduced to examining potential relations in three different directions: with the rest of the book of Revelation, elsewhere in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, or extrabiblical sources such as the papyri. This problem arises because, as David E. Aune remarks in his massive reference commentary on Revelation, the text “contains no explicit indication as to the contents of the scroll.”¹

The parallels Aune dismisses most readily are the extra-biblical parallels. These come from Greco-Roman papyri, especially from Egypt. The fact that this scroll in Revelation was written on both sides calls to mind the doubly written legal documents. These came in two varieties, either as military papers (1:342) or as testaments or wills (1:342).

Biblical parallels are taken more seriously, and Aune stresses the parallels with the scroll of Ezek 2:9–10 that was also written on both sides like this scroll in Revelation. That scroll of Ezekiel contained “the message of divine judgment that the prophet will announce” (1:343). In one way or another this is identified with the some of rest of the contents of Revelation. It could represent the rest of the book of Revelation (1:344, see also 2:507). It could represent the “book of destiny,” the foreordained eschatological plan of God that cannot be known until

¹ D. E. Aune. *Revelation*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52A (Dallas: Word, 1997), 343. The additional volumes in this series are vol. 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) and vol. 52C (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998). The references in the body of this study are cited from this work by volume and page.

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the period of fulfillment (1:345). It could also contain the record of the sins of mankind for which the Lamb has made atonement (1:345). Or it could contain the rest of the Old Testament, especially the Torah (1:345). A variant here is drawn from a book of the covenant that was used in the enthronement of kings. It could also represent a bill of divorce for the Old Testament Jerusalem when the Lord marries the New Testament Jerusalem (1:346). Finally, it could represent the Lamb's Book of Life mentioned later in Revelation (13:8, 17:8, 21:27).

From this welter of possibilities I have previously favored the idea that this scroll represents the Book of Life of the Lamb. Here in Rev 5 we have the book and we have the Lamb, and thus the further references in Revelation simply put these two elements together. The equation is a simple one: the scroll represents the roll or roster of all the saints of all the ages who will go into the kingdom with the Lamb when he comes the second time. Since the Second Coming is in view at the end of the sixth seal, such a connection with the seventh seal is a logical one.

In giving some attention to the first six chapters of the book of Zechariah in both writing and teaching, another possibility has come into view, but before that possibility is examined, some of the more general connections between Zechariah and Revelation's seals should be reviewed. One of the more prominent features of the book of Revelation is its four horsemen, found in its first four seals. These are obviously modeled upon the four horsemen of Zechariah's first vision (1:7–11). They reappear in Zechariah's eighth vision (6:1–8). The different colored horses serve different purposes in these two visions of Zechariah. In the first vision they are messenger horses that have come into Jerusalem to proclaim that there is a time of peace in which to build the temple. In the eighth vision they are connected with chariots, war weapons that are going out to the points of the compass to establish that peace. The use of this symbol in Revelation is more directly connected with the first vision, where the horses and their riders serve the purpose of relaying messages, in Revelation's case the prophetic messages of what is to come.

A connection with the second vision of Zechariah can be made to the fifth seal of Revelation, although the connection is slightly more indirect. Both involve the image of the altar in the courtyard. In Zech 1:18–21 the four horns of an undescribed altar are said to represent the powers that have broken down and scattered the Lord's people from Judah. Then the workmen come to break those horns and give release and return to the people of God so they can come back to their land and reestablish themselves and their temple. In Revelation's fifth seal we also see an altar, and in this case that altar also represents the oppression of the people of God, the church in this case. The blood of martyrs is poured out at the base of that altar just as the blood of sacrifices was poured out at the base of the altar, in the courtyard in Old Testament times.

At the heart of the eight visions of Zechariah, in chapters 3 and 4, are two prophecies given about two persons: Joshua the high priest in the first case and

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Zerubbabel the governor in the second case. It is interesting to note in this connection that the introductory sanctuary scene of Rev 4–5 also deals with two main persons, God the Father in Rev 4 and Christ the Lamb in Rev 5. Even the name is parallel in the second case in Revelation with the first case in Zechariah, for the name of Joshua is ultimately the name of Jesus, who is represented as the Lamb in Rev 5. The message in Zechariah is about Zerubbabel building the temple so that Joshua could serve in it, and this refers to the earthly temple in Jerusalem. The great throne scene in Rev 4–5 deals with the temple that God built and not man. In it God presides, but Jesus the Lamb ministers by opening up the seals.

The holy spirit is present in both Rev 4 and 5 as the seven lamps or torches blazing before the throne in Rev 4:5 and as the seven horns and seven eyes that are sent out into all the world from the Lamb in Rev 5:6. This language is paralleled by the description of the four horses in Zech 6:5 as “the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world” (NIV). The same theme recurs in Zech 3:9 with the seven eyes engraved on the stone before Joshua the high priest. Even more specific is the connection with the two witnesses of Rev 11:4, identified as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. The connection with the two olive trees that pour the oil of the holy spirit down through the two golden pipes into the great golden bowl and the seven lamps with seven lips in the prophecy to Zerubbabel is clear.

There are other more general connections between Revelation's seals and the visions of Zech 1–6. The young man in the third vision goes to measure Jerusalem with a measuring line in his hand (Zech 2:1), while the rider of the black horse in the third seal measures with the balance scales (Rev 6:5). In the same seal there is a measurement of the wheat and barley. In Old Testament times these were measured out by the ephah that is seen in the seventh of Zechariah's eight visions (5:5–11).

In summary, there are both general and specific connections between the symbols used in Zechariah's eight visions in chapters 1–6 and the book of Revelation, and more specifically with the seven seals of chapter 6. That calls attention to the connection between the flying scroll of Zech 5:1–4 and the scroll that is unsealed in Rev 8:1. Aune has called attention to the parallels between this scroll in Revelation and the scroll in Ezek 2:9–10, but the parallels of that scroll, which was then eaten by the prophet in Ezek 3:1–3, is much more similar to the little scroll the prophet eats in Rev 10:8–11, where the scroll that the prophet eats is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly. The language connecting those symbols is also different. The scroll or book in Rev 5 is called a *biblion* eight times, whereas the little scroll or book in Rev 10 is called a *biblaridion*, with a diminutive ending, four times.

Since the connection of Ezekiel's scroll that was written on both sides lies elsewhere in Revelation we should look for another parallel to the scroll that is

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sealed in Rev 5 and unsealed in 8:1. The flying scroll in Zechariah is unsealed, like the scroll in Rev 8:1. It too has been written on both sides, like the scroll as it is described in Rev 5:1–2. Perhaps the reason this scroll did not come to Aune's attention was that Zechariah's scroll was open and flying, while the scroll in Rev 5 was still rolled up. When the seventh seal is opened in 8:1, however, that scroll is also opened up to view, just as was the case with the flying scroll in Zech 5.

The text of Zech 5:1–4 is very specific about what is written on its two sides. The two-sided text contains the Ten Commandments. The text of the commandment prohibiting stealing is read by the prophet on one side and the text of the commandment that prohibits bearing false witness is seen on the other side of the flying scroll. The flying scroll has a direct connection with the earthly sanctuary, just as the scroll in the hand of the Father is located in the heavenly sanctuary. Zechariah's flying scroll measures ten by twenty cubits—the size of the Holy Place of the tabernacle in the wilderness. As the flying commandments came out of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place they passed through the Holy Place on their way to bring their “curse” to the homes of those who broke those commandments. Thus the Ten Commandments were not dead letters left behind in the Ark of the Covenant when it was hidden at the time of the exile. Even in the second temple that was built by Haggai, Zechariah, Joshua, and Zerubbabel, these commandments were still in effect, still active principles meant to govern the life of the people who lived in post-exilic Judah.

If the ten commandments were written on the two sides of the flying scroll in Zechariah, then one can think of them as being written on the two sides of the scroll that is unsealed in Rev 8:1, for by context and content this provides the best parallel in the Old Testament to explain the symbol for the content of the scroll in Revelation. In Zechariah the flying scroll was to fly into the house of the violators of those commandments. In Revelation one can think of the unsealed and now unfettered scroll of those same commandments flying to earth to convict the violators of those commandments of their guilt. That is precisely the response we see among the wicked at the end of the sixth seal, where they call for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. All of this occurs at the time of the Second Coming of Christ. One may think, therefore, of a manifestation of the Ten Commandments at the time of that Second Coming. The flying scroll of the Old Testament flew only to the homes of the violators of those commandments in Judah. At the Second Coming the flying scroll will be manifested to a whole world of violators of those commandments.

The best parallel for the scroll in Rev 5 within the book of Revelation is the Lamb's Book of Life. Outside of Revelation, the most direct symbolic parallel of that scroll is the flying scroll of the commandments in Zechariah. Can these two features be harmonized? One may think of the commandments as the heart

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of the scroll and the names of those who have lived according to those commandments surrounding that central feature. Of course no human being has ever been able to keep this law perfectly, so all of the persons listed in the Lamb's Book of Life have been redeemed from the curse of the law by the blood of the Lamb. Thus, there is a correlation between the scroll as containing both the names of the redeemed and the commandments they have broken but from whose penalty they have been redeemed. The wicked here on earth are not so fortunate, for they have willfully violated those commandments and refused to turn to God, from whom they could find forgiveness for the violations of those commandments through the blood of Jesus. They rejected both a life lived by those commandment and a life lived for the Savior who could have redeemed them from the curse of the law.

That leaves the final question: what is the meaning of the silence in heaven that occurs when the scroll is unsealed and unloosed to do its work. Aune cites three possible significances of this silence. First, this silence allows the prayers of the saints to be heard (2:507). Second, it may represent an eschatological return to primordial silence (*ibid.*). Third, it could be seen as a prelude to a divine manifestation (*ibid.*). If this silence is connected with the Second Coming of Christ that becomes evident at the end of the sixth seal, then the last two features bear upon this concluding event. With Christ and the angels absent from heaven, it is natural that there is silence there during their absence. All of the noise and commotion at this time takes place on earth. There the great earthquake at the end of the sixth seal occurs, when all the islands and mountains are moved out of their places. There the wicked call for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them. There Christ blows the trump of the archangel and his angels go out to the four winds, the corners of the earth, to gather the saints, both living and resurrected, together to be with Christ. Then they ascend to the sea of glass that is before the throne (Rev 7:9–17, Rev 14:1–5, Rev 14:14–16, Rev 15:1–4, 19:11–16, 20:4–6, 21:2–3, 21:10). Then the brief silence in heaven is broken as the saints of the Most High come home to celebrate with joy the deliverance that has been worked for them. The songs of the redeemed will echo through the courts of heaven as they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:3–4) as they celebrate on the sea of glass before the throne. After this brief interlude of silence they come to celebrate what the plan of redemption has accomplished in their own persons.

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Toward a Theology of Religion in an Asian Adventist Perspective

Nestor C. Rilloma

Adventists in Asia live in a vast region where all the major world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.—had their beginnings, where religion is a way of life, and where Christianity is generally considered a western religion. As Adventist Christians, we cannot avoid the problem of religious diversity and pluralism. We are faced with the question: What attitude should Adventist Christians take toward other religions? This article aims to answer the query by: 1) briefly describing the phenomenon of religion; 2) examining several Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians' views of religion; and 3) proposing a biblical theology of religion in an Asian Adventists perspective. In this article, the Adventist Christian perspective is emphasized in three important elements: our distinctive theological insights, unique lifestyle, and distinctive worldview.

What Is Religion?

It has been said that humans are *homo religiosus*, inherently religious.¹ But what is religion? When one examines the literature, one soon discovers that scholars have difficulty formulating a generally acceptable definition. The difficulty lies in the fact that defining something involves specifying its limits, and it is hard to limit such a wide range of religious phenomena.² For this article we take as our own a definition proposed by Roger Schmidt: religion is “a set of beliefs, practices, and social structures, grounded in a people’s experience of the

¹Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion*, 2nd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1988), 7. See also Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Williard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), 15.

²Disparate categorizations of various scholars’ definitions are offered in Terry C. Muck, *The Mysterious Beyond: A Basic Guide to Studying Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 19–30; Eric J. Sharpe, *Understanding Religion* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 33–48; and John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), 1–3.

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holy, that accommodates their emotional, social, intellectual, and meaning-giving needs.”³ We choose this definition for its broad scope, encompassing practically everything that has been said on the subject.

Let us unpack this loaded definition. Firstly, all religions share common forms of expression. According to Schmidt, all religions are: 1) “conceptual,” that is, they have a set of beliefs constituting a worldview which is seen in the symbols and language they use; 2) “performative,” that is, they involve practices which are enacted in the rituals that members perform; and 3) “social,” that is, their members are organized into communities with distinctive patterns of relationships.⁴

Secondly, all religions share common functions. Schmidt claims that all religions meet the intellectual, social, and emotional needs of human beings. Religions respond to the human desire to know the how and why of things. They are powerful forces for social stability, role clarification, and individual and group identity. And they provide resources for the creative expression and mediation of human emotions.⁵

Thirdly, all religions “have an essential nature in spite of real differences in the content of religious belief system.”⁶ According to Schmidt, this shared essential nature has two fundamental features: 1) “the conviction that there is something holy”; and 2) “the belief that human existence, if it is to be fulfilled, must be harmonized with or subordinated to what humans experience as holy.”⁷ As Adventist theologians, we recognize that religion is simply people’s attempt to identify a divine Creator and His unique relation to and active interaction with His creation, as exemplified in human beings’ experiences and emotion.

Christian Views of Religion

How do we come to terms with the challenge of religious pluralism? How should other religions be viewed? Should all of them apart from Christianity be seen as the creation of humanity under demonic influence, their work thus needing only to be disavowed, rejected, and replaced? Or should they be seen as possessing “Christian” values that need to be discovered, appreciated, and nurtured? Theologians are divided over how to answer these questions. Many of them advocate a “Christ-against-religions” theology, while a few argue a “Christ-of-religions” theology, to borrow the terminology of Sri Lankan Jesuit Aloysius Pieris.⁸

³Schmidt, 17.

⁴Schmidt, 16.

⁵Schmidt, 12–14.

⁶Schmidt, 14–16.

⁷Schmidt, 14–16.

⁸Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1988), 88.

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The Christ-against-religions theologians—those advocating “discontinuity between the gospel and religions,” in the words of J. Robert Nelson⁹—include such preeminent twentieth century Reformed theologians as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Hendrik Kraemer. For Barth, “Religion is unbelief. It is a concern, indeed, we must say that it is the one great concern, of godless man.”¹⁰ According to Pieris, Barth “reduced the notion of religion to a blasphemous manipulation of God, or at least an attempt of it.”¹¹ His negative assessment of religion arose from his Neo-Orthodox view of general revelation. For him there was no such thing; he refused to acknowledge any revelation outside the Word of God.¹² Brunner clashed with Barth on this point, asserting that the knowledge of God derived from nature is a “point of contact” for hearing the gospel, against Barth’s idea that the gospel creates its own point of contact.¹³ Nevertheless, Brunner echoed Barth’s criticism of the basic concept of religion, insisting that “no ‘other religion’ knows the God who is Himself the Revealer.”¹⁴ Kraemer, the eminent Dutch missiologist, took a similar position, arguing that “all religions . . . are the various efforts of man to apprehend the totality of existence, often stirring in their sublimity and as often pathetic or revolting in their ineffectiveness.”¹⁵ In Kraemer’s view, because men and women are sinful, these efforts are necessarily corrupted, representing their attempt to be like God.¹⁶ The answer to the human quest is to be found not in religion but only in the Christian revelation, “giving the divine answer to this demonic and guilty disharmony of man and the world.”¹⁷

A few theologians have questioned this idea of absolute discontinuity between the gospel and religions. For example, Walter Freytag asks,

Is everything in the religions really only Godforsakenness and rebellion? Has God really forgotten the works of His hands? Is there no humanity in the religions, in the rectitude and truthfulness we can encounter, in the tenderness of conscience, the genuine coming together in human community, the heartfelt sympathy for the suffering, in the

⁹J. Robert Nelson, “Christian Theology and the Living Faiths of Men,” in *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 109–124 (121).

¹⁰Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, I/2*, trans. G. T. Thompson and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 299–300; quoted in Nelson, “Christian Theology and the Living Faiths of Men,” 120.

¹¹Pieris, 91.

¹²B. A. Demarest, “Revelation, General,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 944–45.

¹³See Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 84; and John Jefferson Davis, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 91.

¹⁴Nelson, 120.

¹⁵Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 111.

¹⁶Kraemer, 113.

¹⁷Kraemer, 113–14.

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honest quest for God, in the resolute obedience to that which a man has perceived as being right, in genuine modesty, in humble self-moderation?¹⁸

Asian Evangelical theologian Ken Gnanakan offers a similar objection: “But is it biblical (or are we being Barthian) in saying that there is nothing good in religions? Is there nothing in religion that will cause the adherent to draw a bit closer to experiencing salvation in Jesus Christ?”¹⁹ According to C. S. Song, an Asian Reformed theologian, if we claim that Christianity is the only valid religion, then we have to assume that “God left Asia in the hands of pagan powers and did not come to it until missionaries from the West reached it. That would have left Asia without the God of Jesus for millions of years.” To him, nothing is farther from the truth. “God could not have been such an irresponsible God.”²⁰ To reject the validity of other religions is plain “dogmatism,” a “product of western religious absolutism.”²¹ He firmly believes that (here he is quoting Tillich) “[t]here are revealing and saving powers in all religions. God has not left himself unwitnessed.”²² Indeed, God reveals himself equally through all religions. Some Asian theologians, like Raymond Pannikar of India, go so far as to say that Christ is already present in non-Christian religions, albeit “hidden” and unacknowledged.²³

“Inclusivism” is a middle position between contemporary pluralism and traditional exclusivism that attempts to resolve the perceived problems of both. Clark H. Pinnock, an articulate proponent of this perspective, contends, “There is no salvation except through Christ, but it is not necessary for everybody to possess a conscious knowledge of Christ in order to benefit from redemption through him.”²⁴ According to him, “Responding to premessianic revelation can make [non-Christians] right with God.”²⁵ For biblical support, he cites Heb 11:6 in defense of the thesis that “people are saved by faith, not primarily by knowledge [of Christ].” Taking Abel, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Cornelius, and others who had heard little or nothing of Christ as examples of those saved by faith without such explicit knowledge, he argues that those who have yet to hear of Christ today can be saved in the same way.²⁶

¹⁸Walter Freytag, *The Gospel and the Religions* (London: SCM, 1957), 29, quoted in Nelson, 122.

¹⁹Ken Gnanakan, *The Pluralistic Predicament* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992), 32.

²⁰C. S. Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 167.

²¹Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1977), 180.

²²Song, 190.

²³C. V. Mathew, “Indian Theology,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 557–58.

²⁴Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 75. Although Pinnock cannot be considered Reformed, we include him here because of his stature as an Evangelical theologian.

²⁵Pinnock, 105.

²⁶Pinnock, 22, 111, 158–68.

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Exclusivists are uncomfortable with Pinnock's idea, insisting that it smacks of pluralism or even universalism. To Gnanakan, "an inclusivism without some clear parameters constantly faces the danger of straying into pluralism. Some inclusivists, we have noted, are really "anonymous' pluralists."²⁷

Ramesh Richard comments,

Pinnock's theology of religions portrays salvific revelation in the realm of history, outside special, normative revelation. God salvifically reveals Himself, at least indirectly, in ordinary *and* special events of universal history. This salvific revelation is uncovered by the "faith principle." A question . . . may be asked. If salvation is possible outside the Bible, why is the Bible treated as *if* it were special at all?²⁸

Conservative Evangelicals take issue with Pinnock's use of isolated examples, such as that of Melchizedek, to support the assertion that people can be saved by "responding to premessianic revelation." Richard argues,

In Scripture, more people are saved in relation to the main stream of salvation from Abraham rather than outside it. These occasional instances definitely point to extraordinary, "divine revelatory initiatives." . . . [O]thers mentioned as standing under the Melchizedek umbrella were all divinely nudged into contact with Israel, the news-bearers of salvation, as she fulfilled her elective missionary role.²⁹

Asian Evangelical thinker Ajith Fernando observes that those described by the Scripture as having been saved without explicit faith in Christ actually received a special revelation of God, a revelation which "presents a covenant relationship between God and his people, which is mercifully initiated by God and received by man through faith."³⁰

Roman Catholics have debated the question of pluralism longer than Protestants. According to Catholic scholar Richard McBrien, over the centuries there have been three basic Catholic positions: 1) "exclusivism," the view that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation apart from the church); 2) "religious indifferentism" or pluralism, the view that all religions are equally valid; and 3) "inclusivism," the view of theologians who reject both exclusivism and

²⁷Gnanakan, 222. He describes himself as an "exclusivist-inclusivist."

²⁸Ramesh Richard, *The Population of Heaven: A Biblical Response to the Inclusivist Position on Who Will Be Saved* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 142 n. 32; emphasis his.

²⁹Richard, 39–40; the quoted phrase is taken from Bruce Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 260.

³⁰Ajith Fernando, *The Christian's Attitude toward World Religions* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1987), 136, quoted in Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 267.

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pluralism as they try to deal with religions in a positive and constructive fashion.³¹

McBrien describes three contrasting approaches taken by Catholic inclusivists: “Each of these three . . . respects the uniqueness and truth of Christianity, and, in varying degrees, the intrinsic religious and salvific value of non-Christian religions.”³² The first is identified with Karl Rahner. This view holds that,

. . . there is but one true religion and that insofar as other “religions” embody authentic values and even saving grace, they do so as “anonymously Christian” communities. All grace is grace in Christ, who is the one Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). Therefore, all recipients of grace are at least in principle new creatures in Christ, people whose lives are governed implicitly or virtually by the new life in Christ that is at work within them.³³

The second approach has no “marquee name” identified with it. According to McBrien, this,

. . . acknowledges the salvific value in each of the non-Christian religions and underscores, as the preceding view does, the universality of revelation and of grace. It does not speak of the other religions as “anonymously Christian,” but instead implicitly regards them as lesser, relative, and extraordinary means of salvation.³⁴

The third approach is identified with Hans Küng and others. Again according to McBrien, this

. . . affirms [without prejudice to the uniqueness and truth of Christian faith] the intrinsic religious value of the other great religions of the world and, going beyond the second view, insists on the necessity and worthwhileness of *dialogue* with them. These other religions are not only to be tolerated or even respected; they are to be perceived as having something to teach us, not only about themselves and their own “doctrines,” but also about God, about human life, about Christ, that is, about *our own* doctrines.³⁵

The inclusivist perspective is apparently presumed by the 1965 Second Vatican Council “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”:

³¹Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1966), 380–82.

³²McBrien, 383.

³³Demarest, “Revelation, General,” 945.

³⁴McBrien, 382–83.

³⁵McBrien, 383; emphasis his.

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The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. It looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what it holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people. Indeed, it proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), in whom everyone finds the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18–19), men find the fullness of their religious life.³⁶

As the preceding discussion has demonstrated, there is no agreement even among these theologians of a single tradition—we have examined the positions of several Protestants and Roman Catholic theologians—on how Christians should view other religions. Some say religions other than Christianity are not valid and need to be disavowed, rejected, and replaced. Others say they have redeeming values that need to be discovered, appreciated, and nurtured. Our Adventist worldview permits the contention that God’s truths drawn from natural revelation and found in non-Christian religions are strictly limited and not salvific in any way. They are even damnific. Such truths may inspire their adherents to live virtuous lives, but they cannot save people from the presence, power, and penalty of sin. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can justify and reconcile people to God (2 Cor 5:17–21). Christ explicitly declares: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, NIV; see also 1 Tim 2:5; Acts 4:12). God has revealed Himself to all peoples, but salvation is found in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. In short, revelation is universal, but salvation is particular. General revelation allows us to understand and experience the reality of God’s Being as a supreme Creator, but not as a Redeemer.

Toward a Biblical Theology of Religion

Where does this discussion lead us? The most logical thing to do is to turn to the Scriptures and see how they treat the topic of religion. This is no easy task because the Bible does not say much about the subject. In fact, there is no Hebrew word for “religion” in the Old Testament. In the New Testament three Greek words are commonly translated as “religion” or “religious” by the New International Version (NIV). The first of these is *thrēskeia* (Acts 26:5; Col 2:18; James 1:26, 27). Literally, this means “worship of God, religion.”³⁷ The second is *deisidaimonia* (Acts 17:22; 25:19). This has three possible meanings, namely “fear of or reverence for the divinity,” “superstition” or “religion.”³⁸ The third is

³⁶Austin Flannery, gen. ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Northport: Costello, 1975), 739.

³⁷Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979), 363.

³⁸Bauer et al., 173.

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eusebeia (1 Tim 5:4), which literally means “piety, godliness, religion.”³⁹ The adjectival form of this word, *eusebēs* (translated “devout” in the NIV), is used to describe Cornelius and one of his aides (Acts 10:2, 7). A related word is *thēosebeia* (“reverence for God, piety, religion”⁴⁰), but the NIV does not translate this as “religion” where it appears (e.g., 1 Tim 2:10; 2 Tim 3:5; John 9:31).

Eric Sharpe observes that where the word “religion” occurs in the English Bible, it always renders words meaning “not a systematic collection of statements *about* God, but a living relationship *to* God within the terms of a ‘covenant’ or ‘testament’.”⁴¹ Pieris concludes that the conspicuous infrequency of such words in the New Testament is due to the fact that the whole concept of “religion” as understood in the West is alien to the Bible.⁴² From this we see that a study of such words is not very helpful in formulating a theology of religion. Where do we start then? It is probably best to begin with the question: Why is a human being religious?

It is implicit in the Bible that human nature has something to do with one’s religiosity. What is a human? What does it mean to be a human being? We read in the Book of Genesis that *ha’ādām* (“the man,” both male and female), unlike other creatures, was created by God “in his own image” (1:27). What does it mean to be created “in the image of God”? Among other things, this means that humanity was created to have an intimate relationship with God. To be a human being, according to Millard Erickson, is to be “consciously related to God.”⁴³ To be a human is to be a follower of God.⁴⁴ This is the main reason why humans are incurably religious: God created them that way. The pagan Roman statesman, orator, and writer Cicero (106–43 BCE) said something similar: “Nature herself has imprinted on the minds of all the idea of God.”⁴⁵ Therefore, a man or woman without religion is not really a human being,⁴⁶ but a beast or a machine.

Secondly, humans are religious because, being rational creatures, they possess a rudimentary “knowledge of God” (Rom 1:28). Humans know something about God because they were created with the mental capacity to recognize the effects of God’s actions in the world. They have the innate ability to understand God’s thoughts (Amos 3:7; 4:13) and mysteries (Job 12:22; Dan 2:22, 47). Paul made this point explicit when he wrote, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made” (Rom 1:20, NIV). The

³⁹Bauer et al., 326.

⁴⁰Bauer et al., 358.

⁴¹Sharpe, 41–42; emphasis his.

⁴²Pieris, 91.

⁴³Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 510.

⁴⁴Johannes Blauw, “The Biblical View of Man in His Religion,” in *Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961), 31–41 (32).

⁴⁵Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*.

⁴⁶Blauw, 32.

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Greek word translated as “being understood” is *nooumena*, from the verb *noew*, which literally means “to perceive with the mind.”⁴⁷ In the same vein, the psalmist proclaimed: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. . . . Their voice goes out into all the earth” (Ps 19:1, 4, NIV).

Thirdly, humans are religious because God has indelibly written His moral law on their hearts. Again, Paul made this point explicit when he wrote that “the requirements of the law are written on [human] hearts” (Rom 2:15). John called this “the light of humans” which, when the time had fully come, appeared in the person of Jesus, the “true light that gives light to everyone” (John 1:4–6).

So it appears that being religious is not wrong in itself. To be religious is to be true to our human nature. To be a human being is to have religion.

Since religion is the human response to God’s self-disclosure mediated through the created order, the most appropriate way of continuing this discussion is by considering the contents and consequences of that disclosure. To reiterate, Paul taught that God had revealed Himself through nature (Rom 1:20) and the moral law (Rom 2:15), and through creation and the human conscience. But did Paul consider this general revelation to be salvific? According to the Book of Romans, can one genuinely know God through general revelation alone and thus be saved? This is difficult to answer. But judging from Paul’s high regard for general or natural revelation, he probably believed that it was at least “theoretically possible.”⁴⁸ There was one condition, though. If a person who had access only to such knowledge of God were to experience salvation, he or she must respond to that knowledge in faith and obedience. After all, Paul taught that only those who are justified by faith will live (i.e., be saved) (Rom 1:17). For him, this was what made the possibility of salvation via general revelation purely theoretical. He saw the problem as lying not with God’s revelation but with humans whose minds had been corrupted and led astray by their own folly (Rom 1:18–3:20).

Human history has shown that instead of responding to God’s revelation in faith by glorifying and thanking him, humans, in Paul’s words, “suppress[ed] the truth” about God and “did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God” (Rom 1:20, 28). Because of their godlessness and wickedness, God had allowed them to seek their own happiness independent of Himself. Paul described the “way of life” they had created as basically blasphemous (Rom 1:23, 25). In his mind, therefore, all other religions were idolatrous and demonic in nature. He warned the Corinthians, “The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Cor 10:20, NIV). Demarest concludes,

⁴⁷Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (n.p.: AMG, n.d.), 1958.

⁴⁸Erickson, 173.

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... the consistent response of the sinner when confronted with the truth-content of general revelation is to dismiss it from his consciousness (Rom 1:21–32). Thus instead of worshiping and obeying God, the unregenerate person asserts his own autonomy and fashions lifeless idols which he proceeds to venerate. Whereupon God deliberately gives man over to the sordid impulses of his sinful nature (Rom 1:24, 26, 28). Instead of proving salvific, general revelation serves only to condemn the sinner and to establish his guilt-worthiness before God (Rom 1:20).⁴⁹

Asian Adventist theologians agree and subscribe to this perspective. This is the prevailing perspective among conservative Evangelicals. Fernando says, “[the scripture] shows that no one lives according to the light he receives.”⁵⁰ Reacting to Pinnock’s “manyness” doctrine of salvation, Richard says, “Unfortunately, Scripture does not portray [the] masses of humans coming into salvation during that time [i.e., before Judaism and Christianity existed] which would justify the inclusivist’s wider-hope conclusion.”⁵¹ Commenting on Rom. 1:19–20, Stott states, “For what Paul says here is that through general revelation people can know God’s power, deity and glory (not his saving grace through Christ), and that this knowledge is enough not to save them but rather to condemn them, because they do not live up to it.”⁵² But to Pinnock, Demarest’s idea—that nobody responds positively to general revelation, so that general revelation only serves to condemn the sinner—makes no sense. He asks, “Why would God . . . do such a thing? Is there not one author of both general and special revelation? Is the God of creation not also the God of redemption?”⁵³ Again he points to Job, Enoch, Noah, and others as biblical examples of those who responded favorably to general revelation.⁵⁴

This point is far from settled. Nevertheless, it is clear to us as Adventists that although other religions are idolatrous in nature, they express some elements of truth as well. Without diminishing the evil of the former, Pinnock is right to insist on the validity of the latter.⁵⁵ Paul himself accepted this point. In his sermon to the crowd at Lystra, he declared, “In the past, [God] let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony” (Acts 14:16–17). Signs of God’s grace are evidently found in the religious expressions of all peoples. This is why Paul had no qualms about quoting pagan sources in his dialogue with the Athenians. Obviously their revered poets spoke God’s truth when they said, “We are his [God’s] offspring” (Acts 17:20). Paul believed

⁴⁹Demarest, “Revelation, General,” 945.

⁵⁰Fernando, 120.

⁵¹Richard, 40.

⁵²John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994), 74.

⁵³Pinnock, 104.

⁵⁴Pinnock, 105.

⁵⁵Pinnock, 81–113.

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that God's revelation was not limited to just one religion, for "the truth, wherever it is to be found, is God's truth."⁵⁶ From Paul's example, we may conclude that to reject another religion outright on the basis of distortions we find in it is not wise.⁵⁷ As with Paul, our attitude toward other religions ought to be both humble and intrepid. According to Kraemer, "radical humility" comes from the recognition of revelation's divine origin. "Downright intrepidity" is needed because the Christian worker nevertheless bears a message from God.⁵⁸

One way of expressing this attitude is to engage in meaningful inter-religious dialogue with the intention of "straightening up" our myopic view of God and His ways. Enhancing our understanding of other traditions will certainly help us to proclaim the gospel message in terms that people raised in those traditions can more readily grasp. Indeed, to conservative Evangelicals this is the primary goal of such dialogue.⁵⁹ For example, Filipino Evangelical theologian Rodrigo D. Tano warns, "Evangelical Christians must not merely engage in dialogue with adherents of other religions with no intention to persuade them to own Christ as Lord."⁶⁰ To Roman Catholics, on the other hand, especially Asian Catholics leaning toward pluralism, the primary goal of inter-religious dialogue is "shared religious experience, that constantly reaches out, in a deeper way, to the ultimate [i.e., God]."⁶¹ This disparity of objectives reflects the fact that the Bible itself exhibits a certain tension in its attitude toward religions. Dean Flemming, a missionary working in Asia, observes, "Man's [*sic!*] religions and cultures can be the arena of both sinful opposition to God and his gracious activity that prepares people for the final and saving revelation in the Christ event."⁶² As one ethnologist expresses it, "God employs culture [which encompasses religion] as a teacher to prepare" people for Christ.⁶³ This is the starting point of our dialogue with non-Christian religions.

Contrary to Barth's contention, there is indeed a common ground for dialogue with those of other religions. Muck suggests three complementary concepts that provide a basis for this interchange. First is the idea of the *logos spermatikos* ("seed of reason") developed by Justin Martyr in defense of early

⁵⁶Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Living God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987; New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 7.

⁵⁷Song, 191.

⁵⁸Kraemer, 128.

⁵⁹See Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 79–80.

⁶⁰Rodrigo D. Tano, "Toward an Evangelical Asian Theology," in *Biblical Theology in Asia*, ed. Ken Gnanakan (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1995), 46–76 (60).

⁶¹John Gnanapiragasam and Felix Wilfred, ed., *Being Church in Asia*, vol. 1, *Theological Advisory Commission, 1986–92* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1994), 17.

⁶²Dean Flemming, "Biblical Theological Foundations for a Response to Religious Pluralism," *ATA Journal* 4:2 (July 1996), 3–29 (17).

⁶³Morris A. Inch, *Doing Theology across Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 20–22, 29.

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Christians and Greek philosophers who were both experiencing persecution. According to Muck, Justin argued,

All human beings have a seed of rationality planted within, but the devils work to discourage its cultivation. Good humans who have only a part of the seed are persecuted some, but those who have much more of the seed (those who know the whole seed, the *Logos* himself, Jesus Christ) are persecuted unrelentingly.⁶⁴

As a contemporary example of Justin's *logos spermatikos*, Muck cites the familiar story of Don Richardson's experiences in Irian Jaya, pointing to the practice of exchanging infants to stop violence between warring tribes, what Richardson calls a "redemptive analogy,"⁶⁵ "[There is] the seed of wisdom planted in all cultures waiting to be discovered, watered and grown."⁶⁶

The second theological basis for inter-religious dialogue Muck suggests is the *sensus divinitatis* ("awareness of God"),⁶⁷ a term used by the great Reformer John Calvin. According to Calvin, "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity."⁶⁸ Also according to Calvin, "[There is] no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep seated conviction that there is a God."⁶⁹ The proof of this is that all human cultures have had a religion; even idolatry only underscores the point. The world's religions are not the evil invention of the devil but the natural result of the *sensus divinitatis*.⁷⁰ Calvin stressed that all human beings everywhere intuitively know God, although he denied that this awareness would lead to salvation. Sin prevents us from taking full advantage of our knowledge.⁷¹

The third basis for dialogue Muck suggests is the *imago Dei*. He says,

If Justin's *logos spermatikos* emphasizes the objective nature of a common ground for all religions and Calvin's *sensus divinitatis* emphasizes the subjective intuition of a common ability to know God, then one way of understanding the *imago Dei*, the biblical teaching that human beings "by creation uniquely bear the image of God," is to see it as somewhere between the two poles. That is, one way to understand it is to see it as an inherent drive we all have to be in relationship to God.⁷²

⁶⁴Terry C. Muck, "Is There a Common Ground among Religions?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/1 (March 1997), 99–112 (105).

⁶⁵See Don Richardson, *Peace Child*, 3rd ed. (Ventura: Regal, 1974), 193–206, 288.

⁶⁶Muck, 106.

⁶⁷Muck, 107.

⁶⁸John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I, 43.

⁶⁹Calvin, I, 44.

⁷⁰Calvin, I, 45.

⁷¹Calvin, I, 47.

⁷²Muck, 109.

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He summarizes,

The *logos spermatikos* affirms that Truth exists. . . . The *sensus divinitatis* affirms that we can know the Truth. . . . The *imago Dei* reminds us . . . that all God's children are similarly engaged and that the proper response to any human being, Christian or non-Christian, is to consider how God is working in their life and aid them in growing in relationship to the one true God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷³

Conclusion

We began this exercise with the question: How should Adventist Christians view other religions? Let us summarize our findings:

1. Religion is difficult to define. In fact, we saw that there is no single definition accepted by all scholars. We defined it as "a set of beliefs, practices, and social structures, grounded in a people's experience of the holy that accommodates their emotional, social, intellectual, and meaning-giving needs."

2. Christian theologians have been divided over the issue of how to view other religions. Even within the two traditions we examined, Protestant and Roman Catholic, we saw that there is no agreement. Some say that religions other than Christianity are not valid; others say they are to be valued.

3. We saw a tension in the Bible's attitude toward religions. On one hand, these are described as expressing the rebellion and idolatry of fallen humanity; on the other hand, they are viewed positively as sources of godly insight and preparation for faith in the true God. This is the reason some theologians are exclusivists while others are inclusivists. The former emphasizes religions' negative side; the latter highlights their positive side.

4. In light of the above, the attitude of Asian Adventist Christians toward adherents of other religions ought to be one of respect and openness, paving the way for meaningful dialogue. We engage in this:

4.1 To correct our own distorted understanding of God. We all have theological blind spots due to "our culture, our religious traditions, our personal history and so on."⁷⁴

4.2 To enrich our own Christian spirituality. Even exclusivist Harold Netland acknowledges that we can learn a lesson or two from other religions. He writes,

We can admire the tenacity with which Muhammad, in a highly polytheistic environment, condemned idolatry and called for worship of the one God. And surely we must be impressed with the great compassion and sensitivity to human suffering evident in the Gautama Buddha. One cannot help but be struck by the keen insight

⁷³Muck, 111–12.

⁷⁴Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 61.

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into human nature and interpersonal relationships found in the teachings of Confucius.⁷⁵

John R. Davis, a missionary who served in Thailand for thirty years, has written about effective models for communicating the gospel in the context of Thai Buddhism. He observes,

The oriental mind places great value on the mystical, subjective experience of the worshiper. The eastern mind places emphasis on “spirituality,” a quality of life which stresses meditation, contemplation and asceticism rather than the cerebral and logical approach of the West. This is why many Buddhists discount Christianity as a “shallow” religion which is incapable of answering the deep philosophical questions of life.⁷⁶

Davis characterizes true biblical spirituality as: 1) action-oriented (cf. the Pentecost Christians of Acts 2);⁷⁷ 2) christocentric and theocentric;⁷⁸ and 3) “affective” (i.e., characterized by love; cf. John 13:35).⁷⁹

4.3 To “contextualize” the Christian message. By “contextualization” we mean “the articulation of the biblical message in terms of the language and thought forms of a particular culture or ethnic group.”⁸⁰ We need to make the gospel understandable to men and women of different worldviews because it is the only message that possesses the power of God both to save them (Rom 1:16) and to “transform” their cultures and social orders into the likeness of the kingdom of God.⁸¹

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⁷⁵Netland, 261.

⁷⁶John R. Davis, *Poles Apart: Contextualizing the Gospel* (Bangkok: OMF Literature; Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1993), 122.

⁷⁷Davis, 123.

⁷⁸Davis, 123.

⁷⁹Davis, 125–26.

⁸⁰Davis, 60–61.

⁸¹For a classic discussion of Augustine’s (and Calvin’s) view of Christ as the transformer of cultures, see H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), ch. 6.

World Religions and the Vegetarian Diet¹

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The relationship between the physical and the spiritual nature of a human being has been widely discussed within many faith traditions. This paper seeks to deal with one of the physical aspects of human existence: diet. It will be limited to the religions most familiar to Westerners: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. We will find curious similarities and striking differences in the various links between diet and religion.

Historical Survey

1. Hinduism. The complex system of Hinduism has proven to be very resilient. It has absorbed elements of various other religions over thousands of years and yet maintained its distinctive character. Hindus believe in many gods, reincarnation, and *karma* (understood as how one's actions in previous lives morally affect the current cycle of existence).

Regarding diet, Hinduism today differs from what we know of its oldest forms. During the Vedic period in India (after about 2000 BC), Hindus ate meat and sacrificed animals extensively. Conception of an afterlife included a "heaven" where those who had acquired enough merit through the bestowal of adequate sacrificial gifts were likely to go.²

Vegetarianism emerged gradually in Hinduism. Around the 7th century BC, some Hindu sages began to advocate a meatless diet, though they were probably a minority.³ A major upheaval around the 6th century BC in India deeply affected Hinduism. This led to the formation of the Buddhist and the Jain religions—both of which put increased emphasis on the sanctity of all life, including

¹ Paper presented at the 54th annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, November, 2002, the theme of which was "World Religions."

² M. M. J. Marasinghe, *Gods in Early Buddhism*, Vidyalankara Campus, University of Sri Lanka (Ceylon, 1974).

³ M. Lal, "Cow Cult in India," in *Cow-Slaughter: Horns of a Dilemma*, ed. A. B. Shah (Bombay: Lalvani, 1967).

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animal life. In the third century BC the great Indian King Asoka converted to Buddhism, and Buddhism became the official religion. Asoka himself gave up most, if not all, meat consumption. Eating flesh meat was almost entirely done away with at the royal court, and the killing of some kinds of animals was prohibited entirely. It is said that Asoka was converted to Buddhism after viewing the carnage that resulted from one of the great battles of the day.⁴

Economic factors were also affecting meat consumption. It was becoming more and more expensive to produce meat because of the pressure overgrazing and deforestation were placing on the land.⁵ Some of Asoka's decrees, such as restrictions on forest-cutting, demonstrate an early sensitivity to the relationship between ecology and human life only now slowly emerging in modern Western thinking.⁶ After about 1000 BC, meat-eating apparently was widely restricted. The Upanishads of this period are the first Hindu scriptures to mention doctrines suggestive of reincarnation. The sutras of this period (other collections of writings) also stated that one could eat meat only when the animal was sacrificed ritually.⁷

Hindu vegetarianism received its strongest impress from the Krishna cult, from whom the revering of the sacred cow in Hinduism originated. This perspective persists to this day. The followers of Krishna, who began propagating their view in the first few centuries AD, were strict vegetarians, and Hinduism came more and more under their influence.

From the 3rd century AD onward, the use of beef was increasingly restricted. In the 4th century the Law of Manu again restricted meat-eating to sacrificial occasions. The life of Krishna was written down in the *Bhagwat Purana* during the 5th century. Upper castes in India resisted the trend toward vegetarianism, and it seems that they continued to eat beef as late as the 9th or 10th centuries. After the translation of the *Bhagwat Purana* into Hindi (15th century AD), no orthodox Hindu would kill a cow or eat beef.⁸ Not all Hindus became vegetarian, however—though the orthodox followers of Krishna's teaching undoubtedly were.

While many Hindus today and in the past have eaten meat, there is nevertheless a strong vegetarian tradition within Hinduism. Today it is generally motivated from issues connected with reincarnation.

2. Buddhism. Buddhism and Hinduism have many similarities. Both originated in India and both believe in karma and reincarnation. Buddhists reject the idea of the self or soul, however, believing it to be an illusion brought about by one's attachment to worldly things. The Buddha taught that life is a stream of

⁴ R. Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (New York: Oxford UP, 1961).

⁵ B. G. Gokhale, *Asoka Maurya* (New York: Twayne, 1966).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ R. C. Dutt, *A History of Civilization in Ancient India*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1889), 104-105.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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becoming in which no permanent self endures. Individuals are composites of perception, feeling, volition, intelligence, and form, all subject to the law of karma. Life is essentially suffering, desire is the cause of suffering, and the path to Nirvana (or salvation) involves the cessation of all desire. Non-attachment to food was generally practiced as one way of withdrawing from desire. Compassion for animals was also urged in recognition of the shared life of all creatures.

Of the two chief branches of Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana, the Theravada tradition is the older. Today it is found in Burma, Ceylon, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Tibet, and Malaya. The Mahayana tradition is found in China. Both traditions are found in Vietnam, while Japan has yet another tangent originally brought from China.

Attitudes toward meat consumption are noticeably different within the two main traditions. In Theravada Buddhism, meat-eating has come to be largely condoned, while in Mahayana Buddhism, meat consumption is frowned upon. These differences are very apparent in some of their rituals.

Theravada Buddhist monks beg for food and are to accept what they are given. To receive some foods but to reject others signifies an attachment to the world, a trait which monks are supposed to suppress. Certain principles regarding flesh foods are also operant. For example, no monk can kill an animal. Nor can a monk accept meat that has been specially slaughtered for him.⁹ Moreover, certain kinds of meat cannot be eaten under any circumstance. The Buddha forbade eating the meat of elephants, horses, dogs, serpents, lions, tigers, bears, hyenas, and panthers, even if they had died natural deaths.¹⁰ The Buddha also clearly enjoined monks to abstain from killing animals, so that all creatures of whatever kind could live.¹¹ In most Theravada countries today, though, lay Buddhists regularly eat meat.

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, the monks do not beg for food at all. They prepare their own food, which they buy, grow, or collect as rent. The Mahayana monks in China were strict vegetarians in ancient times and remain so today.¹² In China, all animal foods, onions, and alcohol were either forbidden or customarily avoided. This included the use of animal products in dress with a prohibition on the use of silk or leather (not observed in Theravada Buddhism). However, dietary abstinence from meat was an ancient Chinese tradition that apparently antedated the arrival of Buddhism.¹³

Not only are Mahayana Buddhist monks vegetarian, but so are many Buddhist lay believers in China. People other than monks take a lay Buddhist ordination of from one to five vows. Almost everyone takes the first vow, which

⁹ Mahavagga VI, 31.14, in *Vinaya Texts*, pt. II, trans. T. W. R. Davids and H. Oldenberg, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XVII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910).

¹⁰ Mahavagga VI, 23, in *Vinaya Texts*, pt. II.

¹¹ H. C. Warren, trans., *Buddhism in Translation* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 303.

¹² Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967), 112.

¹³ *Ibid.*

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prohibits killing any sentient creature. This is usually interpreted to mean or imply vegetarianism. However, there is disagreement on this point. Some argue that the injunction against taking the life of sentient creatures means only that one should not personally slaughter animals or eat an animal expressly killed for personal benefit.¹⁴

In reincarnation, an animal may have to go through eons of existences before finally accumulating enough good karma to be reborn as a human. However, animals can eventually achieve salvation. In fact, there are many stories of the prior existences of the Buddha, and he is often an animal.

Even though it is meritorious to abstain from meat, not all Buddhists refrain. Yet there is a very strong tradition of vegetarianism in Buddhism, since the Buddha commanded his followers not to kill animals. The violence of slaughtering animals for food and the restless craving for flesh meats reveal modes in which humans enslave themselves to suffering. The ethical doctrine of *ahimsa*, or non-injury to living beings, shared by both Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions, derives from the conviction that violence to creatures, whose forms and identities through reincarnation are fluid, has consequences for karma. Motivation for the meatless diet does not seem to emerge from ecological issues or concern for the physical health of the Buddhist. Mahayana affirmation of spiritual potential in all sentient life, coupled with the Theravadin emphasis on compassion and karma, gave rise to the centrality of the meatless diet in Buddhist thinking.

3. Jainism. The Jain religion came into existence around the 6th century BC, about the same time as Buddhism. Jainism shares several beliefs with Hinduism and Buddhism, including reincarnation, karma, and nonviolence.

According to the Jains, the entire universe is alive. One should abstain, as much as is possible, from violence toward any living creature. Everything, including rocks and stones as well as plants and animals, is in some sense alive. The idea of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, is heavily stressed by the Jains, having far-reaching implications for them.

There are five types of beings in the Jain universe, each type having one through five senses. These are grouped accordingly, beginning with the five-sensed beings (human beings, infernal beings [inhabitants of hell, or the lower regions], and some animals) down to the one-sensed beings (or *nigodas*—vegetable bodies, earth bodies, water bodies, fire bodies, and wind bodies—possessing only the sense of touch).¹⁵

While it is worse to cause harm to a higher being than to a lower being, the Jains carry the doctrine of *ahimsa* to its ultimate. Ideally, one should not harm any kind of being. This can only be accomplished by the Jain monks, who do as

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 355-56.

¹⁵ A. L. Basham, "Basic Doctrines of Jainism," in *Sources of Indian Tradition*, compiled by W. T. de Bary, S. Hay, R. Weiler, and A. Yarrow (New York: Columbia UP, 1958).

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little as possible and are supported in this by the lay community. The path to salvation involves purifying the soul of its contaminations with matter. As long as the soul is enmeshed in matter, violence is inevitable, as countless *nigodas* would be destroyed even in the simple act of taking a walk.¹⁶

Dietary restraints are thus very prominent for the Jains. Meat, alcohol, honey, or any of the five kinds of figs are forbidden. The single-sensed *nigodas* are especially present wherever sweetness or fermentation is involved. Thus, consuming honey or alcohol brings untold millions of these *nigodas* to an untimely and violent death.¹⁷ However, since this does not involve violence against higher beings, Jains may on occasion consume medicine with honey or wine in it, but they may *never* consume meat. Even meat from an animal that has died a natural death contains innumerable *nigodas* and must be absolutely avoided.¹⁸

Jains are decidedly ascetic. Their vegetarianism arises from the necessity of purifying the soul of its attachments to and contamination from matter. The ultimate objective is denial of the body and purification of the soul, as a necessary step to win the soul's release from matter.

4. Islam. Originating in the divine revelation to Muhammad in early 7th-century Arabia, the *Qur'an* speaks of a single God who is creator and sustainer of the universe. To Him belongs all that exists on earth and in heaven. Islamic theology traditionally has focused on religious questions regarding God's nature, His relationship to His creation, human destiny, and the laws that govern community life. Issues involving the relationship of humans to other forms of life, such as animals and the natural world, are treated indirectly for the most part. And yet, God is clearly implied as ruling all of creation, not just human beings. Non-injury to life-forms and compassion for all living things are rarely explicitly mentioned. However, a sense of the generous beauty and abundance of the earth pervades Islamic texts. All things belong to God and should be treated accordingly. Sacred places in which humans are forbidden to slay animals except in self-defense play a pre-eminent role in Muslim culture. The existence of these sacred sites where slaughter is forbidden suggests a spiritual aversion to the violence inherent in killing animals, even when its occasional necessity is recognized.

For Muslims, meat that is acceptable to eat is called *chahal*, the flesh of "clean" animals that have been properly slaughtered. Scavenger animals, for example, are forbidden as food. It is also taught that animal sacrifice indebts humans to those creatures whose suffering transfigures their own. That an animal could be surrogate for another implies Islam's conception of the commonality of all creaturehood.

¹⁶ Jagmenderlal Jaini, *Outlines of Jainism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1916).

¹⁷ Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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5. Judaism. Among present-day Jews, only a minority eat no meat. It is recognized, however, that the Hebrew Bible records in Genesis that the first diet of humankind was vegetarian. Even the animals did not eat meat:

God also said, "I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on the earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living creature." So it was; and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Gen 1:29-31)

Jewish writers have noted that immediately after giving these dietary laws, God saw that everything He had made was "very good" (Gen 1:31), implying inclusion of even the vegetarian diet. After Noah's flood, however, meat consumption was permitted:

"Every creature that lives and moves shall be food for you; I give you them all, as once I gave you all green plants. But you must not eat the flesh with the life, which is the blood, still in it." (Gen 9:3-4)¹⁹

Parallel passages in Deuteronomy (12:23-24, 27-28) imply that the injunction against eating blood is fulfilled if a person pours the blood "out on the ground like water." Talmudic commentators agree that Adam was not permitted to eat flesh. But after the flood, eating meat was permitted (Sanhedrin 59b).

Upon their settlement in Canaan, the Israelites were also permitted the use of animal food, but under careful restrictions, which tended to lessen the evil results. The use of swine's flesh and other unclean animals was prohibited. Of the "clean" meats permitted, the eating of the fat and the blood was strictly forbidden. Only healthy animals could be used for food. No creature that had died of itself, or from which the blood had not been carefully drained, could be eaten.

Some Jewish writers argue that the original meat-free diet was the one God intended for all humankind. Permission to eat meat was granted by God only after it became apparent that humans were going to go their own way regardless of what God told them. One Jewish author observes: "Only after man proved unfit for the high moral standard set at the beginning was meat made part of the humans' diet."²⁰ Accordingly, while it would not be a violation of the law to eat meat, it would be morally superior to abstain.

¹⁹ Some vegetarians have argued that this passage actually supports vegetarianism, since it is impossible to drain the blood entirely from the animal. Others have only quoted the phrase "But you must not eat the flesh" out of context. Both the Ebionites in the 1st century AD, and the Society of Bible Christians in the 19th century, argued that blood could never be entirely drained from the animal.

²⁰ J. Hurewitz, "The Care of Animals in Jewish Life and Lore," in *The Jewish Library*, vol. 1, ed. L. Jung (London: Soncino, 1968).

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Jewish writers also describe the considerable evidence in the Hebrew Bible that God's ultimate hope is for a world in which no animals are killed, even by other animals. This portrays a world that, in respect to diet, is like the Garden of Eden. Through the prophets God promises a world where even the now-carnivorous animals will again be vegetarian. The wolf, sheep, leopard, calf, lion, cow, bear, cobra, and little child will all live peacefully with each other: "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for as the waters fill the sea, so shall the land be filled with the knowledge of the Lord." (Is 11:9). This prophecy is repeated in Isaiah 65:25.

Many Jewish materials also note that animals are regularly included in God's solicitude in the Hebrew Bible:

a. In Exodus, animals, as well as humans, are included in the observance of the Sabbath (Exod 20:10, 23:12). The Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue (Exod 20:8-10) along with Exod 23:12 and Deut 5:12-14 are used by Rashi to reason that animals must be free to roam on the Sabbath day and enjoy the beauties of nature. The fact that animals are even mentioned in the Decalogue expresses the importance of compassion for animals in Judaism. Rabbi J. H. Hertz, in commenting on Exod 20:10, writes: "It is one of the glories of Judaism that thousands of years [ago] it so fully recognized our duties to animals."²¹

b. God's covenants include animals. A striking example of this is in Hosea: "Then I will make a covenant on behalf of Israel with the wild beasts, the birds of the air, and the things that creep on the earth, and I will break the bow and sword and weapon of war and sweep them off the earth, so that all living creatures may lie down without fear" (Hos 2:18).

God's covenant included the animals. This is not the first time. The much-earlier Noahic covenant made after the flood did the same:

God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now make My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, all birds and cattle, all the wild animals with you on earth, all that have come out of the ark. I will make My covenant with you: never again shall living creatures be destroyed by the waters of the flood . . ." (Gen 9:9-11)²²

²¹ J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 298.

²² Steven Bouma-Prediger makes the same argument: "After Noah built an altar and made a sacrifice, God resolved never again to curse the ground because of humankind and never again to destroy the earth by water. And God once again blessed the humans, repeating the words given before violence and wickedness entered the world: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (9:1; 9:7; cf. 1:28). Only this time, significantly, God does not include the command to subdue (*kabash*) and have dominion (*rada*) over the earth and its creatures (1:28). . . . Taking the command to rule into their own hands, mistaking dominion for domination, the human earth-creature had perverted its royal responsibility and polluted the earth. This time, however, God explicitly grants permission to eat meat (9:3; cf. 1:29-30), so long as the blood, or life force, is not consumed. Though humans are now carnivores, respect for life is still the rule. But as one might expect, fear and dread come upon their prey.

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And when speaking to Jonah, God also includes animals in His description of His mercy toward the city of Nineveh (Jonah 4:11).

c. Humans also have an obligation to relieve the suffering of animals. In Proverbs it is stated that, “A righteous man cares for his beast” (12:10). Deuteronomy 22:4 enjoins a person to assist a fellow-countryman’s ass or ox which is lying in the road. In Exod 23:5, this obligation is extended to the ass or ox of even an enemy.

d. In Exodus (21:28-32) we find that animals, along with humans, are held responsible for their actions.

e. The Psalmist writes that “[God’s] tender care rests upon all his creatures” (Ps 145:9); and that God provides food for both humans and animals (Ps 104:24-30).

f. In Proverbs the ant is praised for its industriousness (6:6-8). Rock-badgers, locusts, ants, and lizards are said to be “wise beyond the wisest” (30:24-28).

g. Human beings and animals suffer a common fate. Eccl. 3:19-20 states, “For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.”

Several Talmudic commentators conclude that one can infer from these and other passages that relieving the suffering of an animal is a biblical law (Baba Mazia 32b). It is apparent that animals are entitled to consideration, even if they

“And then God again (cf. 6:18) establishes a covenant (*berit*). Six times in chapter 9 the text speaks of a divine covenant . . . From the crescendo of God’s remembering (8:1) we come to the majesty of God’s covenanting (9:8-17). . . .

“With whom does God establish a covenant? Clearly, the text speaks of a covenant made by God, but it is not, as is often thought, mainly a covenant with Noah. This covenant, rather, is established with the earth and its plethora of creatures. The covenant with Noah (6:18) includes every living creature.... Bernhard Anderson summarizes the matter:

“The Noahic covenant, then, is universal in the widest sense imaginable. It is fundamentally an ecological covenant that includes not only human beings everywhere but all animals—every living being (*nepesh hayya*) of all flesh that is upon the earth (9:16 repeating what was said in 6:19).

“Two more features of this covenant merit comment. This covenant is an everlasting covenant (*berit olam*). It is not a temporary agreement or provisional pledge but a covenant in perpetuity. It is, furthermore, an unconditional covenant. Unlike the more reciprocal Mosaic covenant, in which conditions are imposed upon the people, God unilaterally and unconditionally establishes this covenant upon the people, God unilaterally and unconditionally establishes this covenant with the earth. This everlasting covenant rests solely on God’s commitment.

“With whom does God make a covenant? God covenants with the earth and all its creatures. An everlasting covenant. An unconditional covenant. God covenants with us his faulted people and with this his groaning earth. The God who remembered Noah and all the animals in the ark also remembered the earth. God, through his . . . life-giving Spirit, put the pieces of our dismembered home planet back together again.” Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 98, 99, 100.

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are to be used for farm work or to be slaughtered. Even the process of slaughter itself is carefully regulated. The procedures are dealt with in the Talmud.²³

Presently, Jewish vegetarians argue that the compassion for all living things mandated by a reverence for God's creation is most obviously expressed in *kashrut* (kosher) dietary laws. Many commentators, including Roberta Kalechofsky and Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, claim that *kashrut's* prohibition against killing all but certain kinds of animals, and even then only in a humane manner, is a codification of the divine concession to humankind's bloodlust. It is a systematized attempt to wean the appetite until one attains the spiritual maturity to forgo flesh foods entirely.

But *kashrut* is not only a remnant of the original divine intention. It is also one obvious way, as Roberta Kalechofsky points out, to integrate the holy into the basic human act of eating.²⁴ Rabbi Abraham Kook suggests that God provided many laws and regulations related to the consumption of meat as a reprimand, and also as a reminder that animals' lives are being destroyed—in the hope that this would eventually lead people back to vegetarianism in the messianic period.²⁵

In light of these claims, present Jewish vegetarian writers argue that a meatless diet is a logical extension of the Judaic spiritual tradition. Rabbi Kook, the first chief rabbi of the newly formed nation of Israel, even argued that returning to a nonviolent diet is one of the necessary conditions for the Messiah's coming. He maintained that if this is so, as the prophet Isaiah said (11:6-7), then a diet that approximates the ideal of peaceful harmony among all creatures does indeed make straight the way for the Lord.

Jewish writings point out that the Old Testament often implies a meatless diet. In the Song of Songs, the divine bounty is mentioned in terms of fruits, vegetables, vines, and nuts. The book of Deuteronomy also contains descriptions typical of the Torah's positive depiction of the non-meat diet:

For the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a

²³ Only specially trained slaughterers, who must be God-fearing, observant Jews, can be employed. The knife must be sharper than a razor, without the slightest indentation. The killing consists in cutting the esophagus and the trachea, severing the jugular vein and carotid arteries. This causes practically instantaneous unconsciousness. While not all sacrifices involved slaughtering for food, all slaughtering for food (in accordance with the law) implied a sacrifice. In Lev 17:3-4 it is stated that "any Israelite who slaughters an ox, a sheep, or a goat, either inside or outside the camp, and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence to present it as an offering to the Lord shall be guilty of bloodshed: that man has shed blood and shall be cut off from the people"

²⁴ Kerry S. Walters and Lisa Portness, ed., *Religious Vegetarianism: From Hesiod to the Dalai Lama* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2001), 95-96.

²⁵ Kook, *Vision*, Sections 1-7. Also Rabbi Shlomo Riskin: "The dietary laws are intended to teach us compassion and lead us gently to vegetarianism." ["A Sabbath Week," *The Jewish Week*, Aug. 14, 1987, 21.

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land of olive trees and honey; a land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it. . . . And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. . . . I will give you the rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your corn, and your wine, and your oil. (Deut 8:7-10; 11:14)

Similar sentiments are also found in the prophets:

I shall return My people from captivity, and they shall build up the waste cities and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine from them, and they shall make gardens and eat the fruit from them, and I shall plant them upon their land. . . . Build houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. (Amos 9;14-15; Jer 29:5)

The Essenes, a prominent group within Judaism during Jesus' time, connected sacrifices and meat eating. Josephus states that the Essenes "did not make sacrifices" and adds that they lived in the same way that the Pythagoreans did among the Greeks, being vegetarian. Philo states that "they did not slaughter living creatures." Porphyry also writes that "all meat is forbidden for the Essenes."²⁶ Clement of Alexandria, an early leader of the church and a noteworthy vegetarian, also wrote that meat eating and animal sacrifice were interconnected.²⁷

The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD by the Romans made it impossible for Jews to offer sacrifices at the Temple, rendering the relationship of meat-eating to sacrifices problematic. Apparently there was considerable debate about this among the Jews. In the Babba Bathra (60b) there is an account of this debate. Rabbi Yishmael said, "From the day that the Holy Temple was destroyed it would have been right to have imposed on ourselves the law prohibiting the

²⁶ Carl Skriver, *Die vergessenen Anfänge der Schöpfung und des Christentums* (Bad Beltingen, Germany: Order of the Nazoreans, 1977), Section II, Part 3. (English translation, *The Forgotten Beginnings of Creation and Christianity*, now in manuscript.) Porphyry, Philo, Josephus, and Pliny the Elder all report the Essenes as primarily vegetarian.

²⁷ He states: "Sacrifices were invented by men to be a pretext for eating flesh." Clement of Alexandria, *On Sacrifices*, Book VII. Cited in J. Todd Ferrier, *On Behalf of the Creatures* (London: Order of the Cross, 1983), 19.

Any slaughtering exclusively for the sake of food was bloodshed. One scholarly commentator on this passage remarks that "the import of the old tradition is that eating the flesh of a domestic animal must be accompanied by a rite." There is the implication that the slaughter of animals without such sacrifice is idolatry, for further down the biblical writer states, "They shall no longer sacrifice their slaughtered beasts to the demons whom they wantonly follow. This shall be a rule binding on them and their descendants for all time" (Lev 17:7). It is interesting that much the same thing was taking place in other parts of the world at this same time. Both in India and Greece there was an increasing identification between meat consumption and a religious sacrifice; meat could only be eaten if the animal was sacrificed.

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eating of flesh.”²⁸ After the destruction of the Temple, apparently many Jews gave up meat-eating altogether, and in fact, meat consumption nearly died out at the time.²⁹

The Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote about the Jewish wars with Rome, described the basic principle of all Judaic laws as mercy. The laws, he said, do not neglect the care of animals: “Ill-treatment even of a brute beast is with us a capital crime.”³⁰

In the *Tanchuma*, a set of homilies from the 5th century AD, written by Tanchum Bar Abba, we read:

If men embark on a sea voyage and take cattle with them, and should a storm arise, they throw the cattle overboard, because people do not love animals as they love human beings. Not so is the Lord’s love. Just as he is merciful to man, so is he merciful to beasts. You can see this from the story of the flood. When men sinned the Lord decided to destroy the Earth. He treated both man and beast alike. But when he was reconciled, he was reconciled to both man and beast alike.³¹

In the Middle Ages Yehudah Ha-Chassid wrote, “The greatest sin is ingratitude. It must not be shown even to the brute. That man deserves punishment who overloads his beast, or beats or torments it, who drags a cat by the ears, or uses spurs to his horse . . .”³² In the 19th century Shalom Rabinowitz (1859-1916) wrote a story entitled “Cruelty to Living Creatures,” devoted to a child’s sorrow at the fate of a little fish which is shortly to be eaten.³³

The modern Jewish vegetarian movement arose in the 19th century with the publication of Aaron Frankel’s book *Thou Shalt Not Kill, or the Torah of Vegetarianism*. The late Rabbi M. Kosowsky, who was not a vegetarian, stated that vegetarianism was “the highest pinnacle of ethical achievement.”³⁴ Rabbi David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, is emphatic: “As it is halachically prohibited to harm oneself and as healthy, nutritious vegetarian alternatives are easily available, meat consumption has become halachically unjustifiable.”³⁵

²⁸ Rabbi Joseph Rosenfeld, “The Religious Justification for Vegetarianism” in *Tree of Life*, ed. L. Pick (Cranbury: A. S. Barnes, 1977). Also, Rabbi Yehuda Ben Batheira, the Talmudic sage, states that the obligation to eat meat for rejoicing only applied at the time when the Holy Temple was in existence. He adds that after the destruction of the Temple one can rejoice with wine. This is the basis of Rabbi Yishmael’s convictions. The reason that the rabbis did not make such a law was that they felt that most Jews were not ready to accept such a prohibition. *Pesachim* 109a.

²⁹ J. J. Berman, *Shehitah* (New York: Block, 1941).

³⁰ N. N. Glatzer, *The Writings of Josephus* (New York: Meridian, 1960).

³¹ Joe Green, “The Jewish Vegetarian Tradition,” Johannesburg, South Africa, Oct. 1969. Cited in Richard H. Schwartz, *Judaism and Vegetarianism* (New York: Lantern, 2001), 215.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Rabbi David Rosen, “Vegetarianism: An Orthodox Jewish Perspective,” in *Rabbis and Vegetarianism: An Evolving Tradition*, ed. Roberta Kalechofsky (Marblehead: Micah, 1995), 54.

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Christianity. The Christian tradition is linked with and informed by the many concepts of Judaism on diet, due to the inclusion of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament into the Christian canon. The religion of both the Old and New Testaments is not a religion of asceticism, such as in Buddhism and Hinduism, where by refusing to eat and drink one avoids being contaminated by matter and thus can draw closer to God.³⁶ As Steven Bouma-Prediger writes: “The God of the Bible defines Himself as the God of life. And in fact, eating and drinking are often linked with worship. The Bible also prescribes, both explicitly and implicitly, a special diet in tune with the God of creation, the God of life.”³⁷

In the history of the Christian Church, though the meatless diet has never been demanded of its adherents, we find many who chose it:

—James the Just, the brother of Jesus and first head of the church in Jerusalem after the death and ascension of Jesus, was a vegetarian. Both Hegisuppus and Augustine testify that James was not only a vegetarian but was *raised* as a vegetarian.³⁸

—Both Athanasius and his opponent Arius were strict vegetarians. In fact, many early church fathers were vegetarian, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Heironymus, Boniface, and John Chrysostom.

—Basilus the Great, in the 4th century, was a vegetarian who discussed the morality of eating meat:

The steam of meat meals darkens the light of the spirit. One can hardly have virtue if one enjoys meat meals and feasts. . . . In the earthly paradise there was no wine, no one sacrificed animals, and no one ate meat. As long as one lives frugally, the luck of the house will increase; the animals will be safe; no blood will be shed; no animal will be killed.³⁹

—Many monasteries, both ancient and modern, have practiced vegetarianism. Boniface (672-754) wrote to pope Zacharias that he had begun a monastery that followed the rules of strict abstinence, whose monks do not eat meat nor enjoy wine or other intoxicating drinks.⁴⁰

—In the modern era, John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, extolled the virtues of the meatless diet: “Thanks be to God: since I gave up flesh and wine, I have been delivered from all physical ills.”⁴¹

³⁶ Bouma-Prediger writes: “Because of who Christ is and what Christ does, there is gospel for us and the earth. Because Christ is the one in whom all things hang together, we know that the world is a cosmos and not chaos. Because Christ took on human flesh, we believe matter matters” (125).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cited in C. Skriver, op. cit., II, 4.

³⁹ Ibid., III, 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., III, 1.

⁴¹ Quoted in Steven Rosen, *Food for the Spirit: Vegetarianism and the World Religions* (San Diego: Bala/Entourage, 1990), 108.

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—Others have recognized the psychological, even spiritual, benefits of the non-flesh diet. Albert Einstein said, “It is my view that the vegetarian manner of living, by its purely physical effect on the human temperament, would most beneficially influence the lot of mankind.”⁴²

Issues of Continuity/Discontinuity with Judaism are regularly discussed in the Christian tradition. Discontinuity with OT dietary regulations is often maintained. It is important to note, with regard to diet, however, that Israel’s dietary stipulations were God-ordained:

The food laws are seen in the Pentateuch as a product of God’s revelation and not as an invention of a priestly school or other special group of people in Israel. Gispén underlines it: ‘In my opinion we must not forget that in the laws of clean and unclean we have not to do with the thoughts of the people of Israel but with the divine revelation given through Moses and Aaron.’⁴³

Some argue that the Jewish distinctions between clean and unclean meat are no longer binding today in the Christian era. Jiří Moskala’s important book, *The Laws Of Clean And Unclean Animals In Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, And Rationale: An Intertextual Study*,⁴⁴ clearly documents the universal nature of the divine mandate regarding permissible meat consumption. The distinction between clean and unclean meats is clearly evident in the early chapters of Genesis long before the Jewish nation was in existence. And later, when the clean/unclean principle is again highlighted in Lev 11, at the end of the discussion there is the keyword “holy” (*kodesh*):

The conclusion of this passage begins with the self-presentation of the Holy God. His holiness must be present among the people of Israel. The heart of the formula is repeated twice: “Be holy for I am holy. . . . It is noteworthy that both Leviticus (11:44-45; 20:25-26) and Deuteronomy (14:2) show that the regulations about clean animals have reference to Israel’s election. As God chooses and separates His people “out of all the nations that are on the face of the earth” to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Deut 7:6; Exod 19:6), so He calls for a distinction between animals. In the NT the

Some of history’s greatest humanitarians were vegetarians and/or strongly in favor of vegetarianism. These include Plutarch, Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, Jean Jacques Rousseau, General William Booth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Dr. J. H. Kellogg, Horace Greeley, Susan B. Anthony, Leo Tolstoy, Upton Sinclair, H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Albert Schweitzer, and Mahatma Gandhi. Jewish humanitarian vegetarians include Isaac Bashevis Singer, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Franz Kafka, and Isaac Leib Peretz, as well as several chief rabbis (cited by Schwartz).

⁴² Ibid., 109-110.

⁴³ Moskala, 282, citing W. H. Gispén, “The Distinction Between Clean and Unclean.” In *Judtestamentische Studien*, ed. A. H. de Boer, 5:192.

⁴⁴ Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 2000.

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same texts are used to stress the election and solemn task of Christians (1 Pt 1:15-16; 2:9).⁴⁵

Grunfeld is also insightful:

The scope of the dietary laws is not only the human body, but the whole human personality as an inseparable entity. This is in complete accord with the fundamental conception of Judaism, which always strives at a unity of matter and mind, body and soul.⁴⁶

In the NT Jesus Himself calls for the same complete commitment to God of mind, soul, and strength (i.e., Mark 12:33).

Presently, some Christian writers cite Peter's vision as evidence that the OT stipulations between clean and unclean meats are now superseded, yet Peter clearly understood that the meaning of the vision had nothing to do with diet, but was instructing him in cultural issues. God's response to Peter is crucial. God never asks Peter to eat the unclean animals, but to stop calling the clean animals *koinos*, defiled by their association with the unclean. Some modern versions have mistakenly translated the word *koinos* as "unclean" in several NT passages, but it simply does not mean "unclean." For example, in Rom 14:14, 20, Paul does not say that no foods are "unclean" (as in the RSV—that would be another Greek word—*akathartos*). He says that no food is *koinos*, "common," defiled by association with the unclean. Paul is rejecting the current Judaic principle of defilement by association, and not the law of clean and unclean foods. To be faithful to the apostle Peter's understanding of his vision, it cannot be used to argue against the divine stipulations of clean/unclean meat.⁴⁷

Perhaps the largest and most significant group of Christian vegetarians today is found within the Seventh-day Adventist tradition. This Protestant denomination recommends vegetarianism to their members, of whom nearly one half do not eat meat. Those who do chose to eat meat are careful to observe the clean/unclean distinction. Because of their dietary practices, Seventh-day Adventists have frequently been the object of scientific studies involving the relationship of diet to health. Published results have consistently found that Adventists live longer and enjoy better health than the rest of the population in the United States.

Ellen White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, wrote expansively on the importance of diet. She speaks of the significance of

⁴⁵ Moskala, 294, 292.

⁴⁶ Isador Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, vol. 1 (London: Soncino, 1972), 13.

⁴⁷ See Colin House, "Defilement by Association: Some Insights from the Usage of *koinos* in Acts 10-11," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 143-153. See also Richard M. Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration: A Critique of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational' Model," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 1992), 122-123.

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the diet given by God in the Garden of Eden and discusses many issues involved in eating meat:

Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs. The eating of flesh is unnatural. We are to return to God's original purpose in the creation of man. . . . Is it not time that all should aim to dispense with flesh foods? How can those who are seeking to become pure, refined, and holy, that they may have the companionship of heavenly angels, continue to use as food anything that has so harmful an effect on soul and body? How can they take the life of God's creatures that they may consume the flesh as a luxury? Let them, rather, return to the wholesome and delicious food given to man in the beginning, and themselves practice, and teach their children to practice, mercy toward the dumb creatures that God has made and has placed under our dominion. . . .

Meat is not essential for health or strength, else the Lord made a mistake when He provided food for Adam and Eve . . . It is a mistake to suppose that muscular strength depends on the use of animal food. The needs of the system can be better supplied, and more vigorous health can be enjoyed, without its use. The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood.... Those who eat flesh are but eating grains and vegetables second hand ... How much better to get it direct by eating the food that God provided for our use!⁴⁸

White was also sensitive to the grave problem of diseased animals:

Flesh was never the best food; but its use is now doubly objectionable, since disease in animals is so rapidly increasing. . . . Could you know the nature of the meat you eat, could you see the animals when living from which the flesh is taken when dead, you would turn with loathing from your flesh meats. The very animals whose flesh you eat, are frequently so diseased that, if left alone, they would die of themselves; but while the breath of life is in them, they are killed and brought to market. You take directly into your systems . . . poison of the worst kind, and yet you realize it not. . . . In many places fish become so contaminated by the filth on which they feed as to be a cause of disease. This is especially the case where the fish come in contact with the sewage of large cities. . . . Thus when used as food they bring disease and death on those who do not suspect the danger.⁴⁹

The treatment of animals raised for slaughter also concerned White:

⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diets and Foods*, 380, 395, 396.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 384, 385.

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Think of the cruelty to animals that meat-eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God! . . . some of the processes of fattening [animals] for market produce disease. Shut away from the light and pure air, breathing the atmosphere of filthy stables, perhaps fattening on decaying food, the entire body soon becomes contaminated with foul matter. . . .

Animals are often transported long distances and subject to great suffering in reaching a market. Taken from the green pastures and traveling for weary miles over the hot, dusty roads, or crowded into filthy cars, feverish and exhausted, often for many hours deprived of food and water, the poor creatures are driven to their death, that human beings may feast on the carcasses. . . . Those who use flesh foods little know what they are eating. Often if they could see the animals when living and know the quality of the meat they eat, they would turn from it with loathing.⁵⁰

White viewed diet holistically, discussing how the physical and the spiritual natures are affected by what is eaten. She urged that diet is linked not only to health, but also to holiness, recalling the OT principle:

The intellectual, the moral, and the physical powers are depreciated by the habitual use of flesh meats. Meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities. We say to you . . . your safest course is to let meat alone. . . . The morality caused by meat eating is not discerned; if it were, we would hear no more arguments and excuses in favor of the indulgence of the appetite for dead flesh. We have plenty of good things to satisfy hunger without bringing corpses upon our table to compose our bill of fare. . . . The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul.⁵¹

White exhorts the development of healthful eating habits motivated by the desire to glorify God in our bodies and to preserve physical and spiritual health.

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 315, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 385, 388. In *Ministry of Healing*, 315-16, White continues: “The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them.

“What man with a human heart, who has ever cared for domestic animals, could look into their eyes, so full of confidence and affection, and willingly give them over to the butcher’s knife? How could he devour their flesh as a sweet morsel?”

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 391; *Ministry of Healing*, 315.

Conclusion

The major world religions surveyed in this paper have all manifested dietary concerns. It is the position of this paper that the diet proposed in the Judeo-Christian tradition is the most wholistic, involving ethical, ecological, eschatological and spiritual issues. Of significance for Evangelical Christianity would be the positive results of various scientific studies on such groups as Seventh-day Adventists suggesting that vegetarianism, based on the scriptural principles found also within Judaism, markedly yields even present benefits.

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The Cross of Christ: Theological Differences Between Joseph H. Waggoner and Ellen G. White

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Since the beginning of Ellen G. White's ministry within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, people have held a variety of opinions regarding her writings and doctrinal authority. The official position of the Church has been that her writings are a source of inspiration for godly living in preparation for Christ's second coming. Although the Scriptures are accepted as the infallible authority and standard of belief and practice, Mrs. White's writings have also constituted a secondary authoritative source of doctrinal truth and provide the church with guidance, instruction, and correction.¹ While most Adventists will readily consider her writings as a source of spiritual guidance and inspiration for daily living, many have dismissed White's doctrinal authority for various reasons. One such reason is that, supposedly, Ellen White was strongly influenced by her friends and early Adventist pioneer church leaders. It is contended that her writings were simply (or often) a reflection of the ideas of other writers in her entourage. Given these assumptions, she is not considered a significant theological thinker.

There are reasons to believe, however, that this was not the case and that she was a free, independent theological thinker in her own right, guided by the Holy Spirit in her prophetic ministry. She was able to articulate and define doctrines within a particular system of thought (i.e. the great controversy theme, and God's love for lost humanity), to sort out doctrinal difficulties and problems, and to write articles and manuscripts on theological issues that were at variance from some of her most trusted friends. To illustrate this, this article will study her theological understanding of the death of Christ in the 1860s and compare it

¹ See Fundamental Belief 17 and its exposition in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .* (Washington: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 216-229.

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with the writings of Joseph H. Waggoner on the same doctrine. I believe this comparison will not only shed light on Ellen White's own early perspectives on atonement and the death of Christ, a perspective that had a moderating effect upon early Adventist theology, but will also reveal the theological diversity within early Adventism.

The Atonement According to Joseph H. Waggoner

Of Baptist upbringing, Joseph H. Waggoner (1820-1889) became a Sabatarian Adventist in 1852 after an intense period of personal study. Soon thereafter, he began to preach Adventist doctrines and wrote numerous articles for Adventist periodicals and several doctrinal books during his active life and ministry. His prolific and influential writings gave him a strong theological influence within Adventism, and Jerry Davis concludes that "the views of Waggoner went unchallenged for years and in time, many came to view his arguments as the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."²

Of interest to our study is the publication in 1863-1864 of a series of articles on the subject of atonement in the *Review and Herald*. "The Atonement: An Examination of the Remedial System in the Light of Nature and Revelation" appeared in seventeen issues of the denomination's official paper between June 2, 1863, and September 13, 1864. This series was later reprinted in book form under the same title in 1868 and reedited in 1872 (168 pages). A fourth publication of the series appeared in *Signs of the Times* in 1876. In 1884, Waggoner amplified the original series in a volume of 368 pages.³

Waggoner affirmed in his preface that for "all who have faith in the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin, the Atonement is confessed to be the great central doctrine of the gospel."⁴ Yet his basic view on atonement centers around the thought that atonement is more than a sacrifice and involves more than the salvation of mankind; it "is a vindication of justice by an offering to a broken law."⁵ While Waggoner upheld the substitutionary and vicarious nature of Christ's death as the penalty for humanity's transgression of the law of God, he was careful to point out that this was not a "vicarious atonement," for Christ's death as the sacrificial victim is different from the atonement.⁶

² Jerry Morten Davis, "A Study of Major Declarations on the Doctrine of the Atonement in Seventh-day Adventist Literature" (MA Thesis, Andrews University, 1962), 7. My original idea to do this comparative study came after reading Davis' thesis some years ago. LeRoy E. Froom also addressed Waggoner's contributions to early Adventist theology in his *Movement of Destiny* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1972), 167-187.

³ In this edition, the 1884 revisions to the original 1863 presentation are of no theological consequence; the theology is identical. Since this edition is more readily available, all subsequent references to Waggoner's ideas are taken from it.

⁴ Waggoner, *The Atonement: An Examination of a Remedial System in the Light of Nature and Revelation* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1884), iii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

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Waggoner's biblical and theological understanding of atonement was strongly based on and limited to the Old Testament ceremonial systems of sacrifices, as presented in the book of Leviticus. Adopting a rigid reading of such texts as Leviticus 4:22-26, Waggoner concluded that the biblical view of atonement is one that must include the ministry of a priest within the sanctuary and that it is only at the end of such a ministry that atonement occurs. From his analysis of the Old Testament, Waggoner saw three steps leading to a complete atonement: (1) the sinner laid his hands on the offering and confessed his sins, (2) the sinner killed the offering, and (3) the priest then made the atonement in the sanctuary. Waggoner was careful to argue that a complete distinction must be made between the offering of the sacrifice and the making of atonement to God.⁷

Transposing this view to the meaning of the death of Christ, Waggoner argued that Jesus's death could only be the preparatory sacrifice for the atonement, since he was killed by sinners. Calvary could not be the atonement in itself because in the Old Testament, the atonement was an activity performed only by the priesthood in the sanctuary. He further argued that while on earth, Jesus was a descendant of David, not of Aaron. Therefore, he could certainly fulfill the offices of prophet and king, but not of priest. It is only after his ascension to heaven, according to Hebrews 7, that Jesus took on also the office of priest after the order of Melchizedek. The atonement is what Christ is doing in heaven now with the merits of his own shed blood by the application of the benefits of his sacrifice to the lives of repentant sinners.⁸

Waggoner's logic is impressive, for if Christ's death completed the atonement, what then would be the need for the intercessory ministry of Christ in heaven after his ascension? "If his mediatorial work was completed when he was on earth . . . then he cannot be a mediator now! and all that the Scriptures say of his priesthood on the throne of his Father in Heaven, there making intercession for us, is incomprehensible or erroneous."⁹ But what Waggoner perhaps failed to see in his study of biblical atonement was instances where sacrifices were offered in the Old Testament and atonement done without the priestly ministrations of blood in the sanctuary (e.g. Leviticus 6:8-13; 7:1-6). This certainly implies that sacrifices have atoning merits of their own before any ministrations in the sanctuary.

The theological reasons behind Waggoner's limiting atonement to the ministry of the priest in the sanctuary should not be overlooked. He and other contemporary Seventh-day Adventist theologians, such as Uriah Smith, feared that confusing Christ's substitutionary death on Calvary with a completed atonement would lead irrevocably to antinomianism, immorality, and universalism. If the

⁷ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

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atonement is complete at the cross, they argued, then Christ died for all men and their sins have been atoned for, so consequently, all will be saved. Such a view leads to a depreciation of the law of God and to immorality. To avoid this dilemma, Smith argued that another mistaken conclusion is resorted to by some theologians, “which is that Christ did not atone for all men on the cross, but only for a chosen few, whom God purposed to save.” But predestination, they argued, also leads to antinomianism and immorality. Waggoner and Smith were thus emphatic that atonement could be accomplished only by a priest in the sanctuary and only after Christ ascended to heaven, and that the merits of Christ’s sacrifice are applied only to repentant sinners.¹⁰

Ellen G. White’s Understanding of Atonement

At about the same time as Waggoner published his series of articles on the atonement, Ellen White (1827-1915) published in 1869 a small pamphlet titled “The Sufferings of Christ” and the same year published it a second time in *Testimonies for the Church*, number 17.¹¹ This pamphlet was republished a few more times: in 1879 as a series of articles in *Signs of the Times*, in 1885-1886 in *Present Truth*, and in *Bible Echo* in 1892. From this pamphlet on the sufferings of Christ, and other parts of her writings, it is evident that White’s own views on atonement were not concordant with Waggoner’s views, and the differences were more than mere semantics.

In “The Sufferings of Christ,” White describes the sufferings Christ experienced during his life, his ministry, and the events surrounding his death on the cross in order to save humanity. In this context, uses the word atonement three times.¹² In contrast to Waggoner, however, she never refers to Christ’s heavenly priestly ministry in this pamphlet. The pamphlet discusses only the sufferings of Christ from his incarnation to Gethsemane and Calvary. Rather than limiting atonement to Christ’s heavenly ministry, as Waggoner does, White refers to atonement only in reference to the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus.

Her first reference to atonement occurs in the first paragraph and highlights a broader understanding of the subject than that held by Waggoner.

“In order to fully realize the value of salvation, it is necessary to understand what it cost. In consequence of limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. The glorious plan of man’s salvation was brought about through the infinite love of God the Father. In this divine plan

¹⁰ Ibid., iv; [Uriah Smith], “The Atonement: Not Made On the Cross—In Process Now,” *Review and Herald*, January 30, 1894, 70.

¹¹ Now in *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948), 2:200-215. All subsequent references to this pamphlet will be from this edition.

¹² Ibid., 200, 213, 215.

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is seen the most marvelous manifestation of the love of God to the fallen race.”¹³

Her other two references occur at the end of the pamphlet and also highlight the limited views of atonement which lead some people to a depreciation of Christ’s sufferings and death and of the salvation provided to sinners. One may wonder to what extent White wrote this pamphlet as an attempt to redress what she considered to be faulty or incomplete views of the death of Christ.

For centuries, theologians have attempted to explain the purpose and meaning of Christ’s death. Multiple theories, from the subjective Socinian exemplarist model to the objective Anselmic satisfaction theory, have been proposed, and a multitude of arguments have been discussed to support or reject various aspects of these theories. However, most evangelical scholars have argued along with Leon Morris that the reasons for Christ’s death are multifaceted, and no single theory embraces the totality of what God intended to do at the cross.¹⁴ What is perhaps most fascinating is to discover that within the sixteen pages of this pamphlet Ellen White embraced all the major theories of atonement and supported a broad understanding of the reasons for Calvary. Many of these views she expounded were clearly not within the scope of Waggoner’s understanding of what the sufferings and death of Christ meant.

The most basic aspect of Ellen White’s theology centers on the death of Christ as a demonstration of the love of God for lost humanity. “Who can comprehend the love here displayed,” she wrote. “All this in consequence of sin! Nothing could have induced Christ to leave His honor and majesty in heaven, and come to a sinful world, to be neglected, despised, and rejected by those He came to save, and finally to suffer upon the cross, but eternal, redeeming love, which will ever remain a mystery.”¹⁵ Moreover, she also affirmed that such a demonstration of the love of God morally influences humanity to do right. “Eternal interests are here involved. Upon this theme it is sin to be calm and unimpassioned. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. . . . The contemplation of the matchless depths of a Saviour’s love should fill the mind, touch and melt the soul, refine and elevate the affections, and completely transform the whole character.”¹⁶ She also wrote that reflecting on the events of Calvary will awaken sacred emotions in the Christian’s heart and remove pride and self-esteem.¹⁷ The manifestation of such divine love at the cross was the means of reconciliation

¹³ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁴ Leon Morris, *Glory in the Cross: A Study in Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 80.

¹⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:207.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

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between the Father and humankind.¹⁸ Here we obviously see that White agreed with the subjective aspects of the theory of atonement espoused by Abelard.

But in the same pamphlet she supported aspects of many objective theories. In ways reminiscent of Hugo Grotius' governmental theory, she affirmed that Calvary was a vindication of God's character, law, and just government. "His death did not make the law of no effect; it did not slay the law, lessen its holy claims, nor detract from its sacred dignity. The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father's law in punishing the transgressor, in that He consented to suffer the penalty of the law Himself in order to save fallen man from its curse. The death of God's beloved Son on the cross shows the immutability of the law of God. . . . The death of Christ justified the claims of the law."¹⁹

Since the time of the early church, the classical theory of atonement affirms that Calvary was the sign of Christ's ultimate victory over the powers of evil and Satan. This view was also held by Ellen White. "He was about to ransom His people with His own blood. . . . This was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished."²⁰ At the cross, "Satan was then defeated. He knew that his kingdom was lost."²¹

For White, Christ's death was also a substitutionary death—Christ died our death and bore our sins. "Christ consented to die in the sinner's stead, that man, by a life of obedience, might escape the penalty of the law of God."²² At Calvary, "The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law."²³ "The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law."²⁴

One final aspect of atonement, and perhaps one of the first ones to be rejected in our modern world, is the understanding that Christ died in order to appease or propitiate the just wrath of God toward sin and sinners. This Anselmic (and Pauline) aspect of atonement was clearly affirmed by Ellen White. "Could mortals have viewed the amazement and the sorrow of the angelic host as they watched in silent grief the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from the beloved Son of His bosom, they would better understand how offensive sin is in His sight. The sword of justice was now to awake against His dear

¹⁸ Ibid., 211-212.

¹⁹ Ibid., 201.

²⁰ Ibid., 209.

²¹ Ibid., 211.

²² Ibid., 200-201.

²³ Ibid., 209.

²⁴ Ibid., 203. White argued as well that Christ's substitutionary death is the means by which sinners can be justified by faith. "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed'" (*Desire of Ages* [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1898, 1940], 25).

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Son.”²⁵ “But bodily pain was but a small part of the agony of God’s dear Son. The sins of the world were upon Him, also the sense of His Father’s wrath as He suffered the penalty of the law transgressed. It was these that crushed His divine soul.”²⁶

This pamphlet was not a unique publication of Ellen White on the subject of atonement. In 1870, in the chapter titled “The Plan of Salvation” in volume 1 of her four-volume work *The Spirit of Prophecy*,²⁷ she makes a similar use of the word atonement in regard to the death of Christ as the appointed means to redeem humanity after the Fall of Adam and Eve. The same application of the word atonement is also included in an expansion of this chapter under the title “The Plan of Redemption” in her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, published in 1890.²⁸ Clearly and consistently, Ellen White viewed the sufferings and death of Christ as the core events of the plan of salvation and used the word atonement to describe their effect in favor of lost sinners.

From statements in her other writings, we find other significant affirmations of the importance and centrality of Calvary in her theology, statements at variance with Waggoner’s theology. Unequivocally, she stated that atonement was accomplished at the cross. Commenting on Abel’s sacrifice, she wrote, “Through the shed blood he [Abel] looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted”²⁹ “Our great High Priest completed the sacrificial offering of Himself when He suffered without the gate. Then a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people.”³⁰ Perhaps White’s clearest such statement is the following from 1901, “He [the Father] planted the cross between heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. ‘It is enough,’ he said, ‘the atonement is complete.’”³¹ Waggoner would never have made such a statement.

Also in contrast to Waggoner, White believed that Christ was both sacrifice and priest on the cross, and thus could minister a sacrifice of atonement on Calvary. “As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of a common priest, so Christ emptied Himself, and took the form of a servant, and offered the sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim.”³²

²⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:207.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁷ *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1870), 1:44-54.

²⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1890), 63-70.

²⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 72.

³⁰ Manuscript 128, 1897.

³¹ *Review and Herald*, September 24, 1901.

³² *Southern Watchman*, August 6, 1903.

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Ellen White certainly agreed with Waggoner's fears that a deficient view of atonement would lead to antinomianism and immorality. But in contrast to Waggoner, she emphasized the impact upon one's life of the sufferings of Christ from his incarnation to Golgotha as the antidote to these problems. A true understanding of the cross and the character of God will lead one to realize that God's law could not be abrogated or abolished at the cross, in fact, it was because the law of God could not be changed that Christ had to die. She believed that an accurate picture of Christ's sufferings and death on behalf of sinners will also influence one to turn to God in repentance and transform the life of a repentant sinner.

Having contrasted White's thoughts on atonement with those of Waggoner, we must avoid giving the impression that her views were totally opposite his. White's understanding of atonement was certainly different from Waggoner's but did not totally disagree with his biblical understanding of Christ's intercessory ministry in heaven. A few examples will illustrate her thought. In 1911 she wrote, "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."³³ Along the same thought she wrote in 1893, "Jesus is our great High Priest in heaven. And what is He doing?—He is making intercession and atonement for His people who believe in Him."³⁴ Statements such as these indicate that her understanding of atonement also includes Christ's ministry in heaven. In fact, already her pamphlet on "The Sufferings of Christ" pointed to Christ's entire life of suffering as part of her concept of atonement.

For the casual reader, her use of the word atonement may seem confusing, but a survey of White's writings reveals that she uses the word atonement in three different ways, from a specific, focused meaning to a broad meaning. As we have seen, in a fair number of instances the word is used to describe Calvary as a complete atonement.³⁵ In these cases, the meaning of atonement is specific and focused on a single event, the cross. In some other places, atonement takes on a broader meaning and includes the work of atonement of the high priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. In these instances, she refers to Christ ministering the benefits of his complete atoning sacrifice on behalf of repentant sinners³⁶ or, in a few instances, refers to this work of Christ as atonement also.³⁷ Christ's heavenly ministry is thus seen as an integral part of his

³³ *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911, 1950), 489. See also *Ibid.*, 421, 428, 623.

³⁴ *Review and Herald*, August 22, 1893.

³⁵ See, for example, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 72; *Signs of the Times*, August 25, 1887; December 30, 1889; June 28, 1899; *Review and Herald*, September 24, 1901.

³⁶ See, for example, Manuscript 29, 1906; *Early Writings*, 260.

³⁷ See, for example, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1926), 370; Manuscript 69, 1912. Some will argue, however, that her statements on

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work of redemption. Her third use of the word atonement is broader still. As we have seen in the pamphlet on “The Sufferings of Christ,” White uses the word atonement in reference to Christ’s entire life of suffering.³⁸ In this and other instances, her understanding of Christ’s work of atonement becomes almost synonymous with Christ’s entire work of redemption and thus includes not only the cross as the central event of atonement, but also all that Christ is doing to save humankind from the moment the plan of redemption was devised before the foundation of the world to the final eradication of sin at the end of time.³⁹ Here, atonement is a process in time whose parts cannot be divorced.

To help us grasp this early Adventist understanding of atonement, one should keep in mind that early Adventism did not conceive its theological system within the Aristotelian presuppositions of the Augustinian and Calvinist systems in which an immovable and impassible God exists only in timelessness. Crucial events of the plan of redemption are consequently the results of decrees God has proclaimed from all eternity. Nothing new as such can be done by God, and the entire plan of redemption is predetermined in God’s eternal foreknowledge. Adventism adopted a different system of thought in which God actually interacts with humanity within time and space during various events of salvation history. In this system, God’s foreknowledge of future events is only descriptive of human responses and not prescriptive. This drastic difference in philosophical and theological presuppositions allowed Waggoner and White to see all the events of the plan of redemption, including atonement, as a linear process in which God is genuinely engaged rather than only a series of preordained punctiliar events shaped in the mind of God in eternity past.

Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary which refer to Christ applying the benefits of his atoning sacrifice to believers should be viewed as her dominant understanding of this phase of Christ’s ministry and that one should not make a case of her other statements where she refers to atonement per se being done in heaven. It is argued that her 1901 statements on the two phases of the priesthood of Christ gives support to this understanding. “He [Christ] fulfilled one phase of His priesthood by dying on the cross for the fallen race. He is now fulfilling another phase by pleading before the Father the case of the repenting, believing sinner, presenting to God the offerings of His people” (Manuscript 42, 1901). While these two phases are complementary, the complete atonement on the cross is the dominant event of Christ’s work.

³⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:200, 213, 215. “We should take *broader and deeper* views of the life, sufferings, and death of God’s dear Son. When the atonement is viewed correctly, the salvation of souls will be felt to be of infinite value” (Ibid., 215, italics supplied).

³⁹ “Human science is too limited to comprehend the atonement. The plan of redemption is so far-reaching that philosophy cannot explain it. It will ever remain a mystery that the most profound reasoning cannot fathom. The science of salvation cannot be explained; but it can be known by experience. Only he who sees his own sinfulness can discern the preciousness of the Saviour” (*Desire of Ages*, 494-495). Other examples of a synonymous use of atonement and plan of salvation include *Desire of Ages*, 565-566; *Great Controversy*, 503; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1956, 1980), 5:1101; Manuscript 21, 1895.

Conclusion

This study attempts to illustrate the theological differences on the doctrine of atonement between two Adventist pioneers, Joseph H. Waggoner and Ellen White, who both wrote on the subject at about the same time in the 1860s. While Waggoner limited atonement to the work of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, White centered her concept of atonement on the sufferings and death of Christ. For White, Calvary is the crucial and central event for the atonement of humankind. Christ's death on the cross demonstrates the love of the Father for a lost humanity, is the means of reconciliation, influences men and women to abide by a higher moral standard, vindicates the character, law, and just government of God, is a substitute for our sufferings and eternal death as a consequence of sin, and appeases the just wrath of God. While White accepted the importance of Christ's atoning ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, she also clearly referred to the cross event as a complete atonement. In contrast, Waggoner readily agreed with many of these subjective and objective aspects of the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ, but refused to tie them to atonement *per se* and considered the cross only as the preparatory means for Christ's atoning work in the heavenly sanctuary after his ascension.

Ellen White's thoughts on atonement conveyed a breadth of meaning that was far more comprehensive than that of some of her contemporary Adventist theologians and friends. Although she agreed with some of their concepts on atonement, she had her own marked theological differences. This comparison also illustrates the fact that doctrinal diversity existed in early Adventism, even in such crucial doctrines as atonement.

In 1901, Ellen White penned the following statement on the theological significance of the death of Christ, a statement that reflects the christological depth of her thought: "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption,—the Son of God uplifted on the cross."⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ *Gospel Workers* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1915), 315.

The Sabbath Commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12–15

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A comparison of the Sabbath commandment in Exod 20:8-11 with the same commandment in Deut 5:12-15 is intriguing. On one hand, the similarities between the Decalogue in Exod 20 and the one in Deut 5 are impressive. On the other hand, there are a number of differences which may puzzle the reader and may raise all kinds of questions. In this short article we will list the similarities and differences first, take a brief look at the Sabbath commandments in Exod 20 and Deut 5 individually, and then focus more extensively on the Sabbath commandment as found in Deuteronomy.

I. Similarities and Differences Between Exod 20:8-11 and Deut 5:12-15

The following list contains the Sabbath commandments of Exod 20 and Deut 5 in a rather literal translation. Such a display allows for an easy comparison. Similarities appearing in exactly the same places are underlined. Those found in different places within the two passages are printed in bold.

Exodus 20

⁸ **Remember** the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Yahweh your God; you shall not do any work, you and your son and your daughter, your male and your female servant and your cattle and your sojourner within your gates.

Deuteronomy 5

¹² Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as Yahweh your God commanded you.

¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Yahweh your God; you shall not do any work, you and your son and your daughter and your male servant and your female servant and your ox and your donkey and any of your cattle and your sojourner within your gates, so that your male servant and your female servant may **rest** as well as you.

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¹¹ For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹⁵ **You shall remember that** you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to do (observe) the Sabbath day.

This list shows that there is a high degree of correspondence in the first three verses of both lists. Yet, even in this part the Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy is longer than in Exodus.

(1) Whereas Exod 20:8 starts with “remember,” Deut 5:12 begins with “observe.” The word “remember” is also found in Deuteronomy, but only in 5:15. Although different words are used, the concept is the same. Both verses—Exod 20:8 and Deut 5:12—emphasize that the Sabbath should be kept holy. Deut 5:12 adds a phrase which is not found in Exodus “as Yahweh your God commanded you.” Thus, the first verse of the Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy contains a homiletical expansion. It reminds the hearers and readers of the ultimate source of authority. We will return to this important observation later.

(2) Exod 20:9 and Deut 5:13 are completely identical.

(3) The third verse in both lists is again quite similar. Deuteronomy inserts “and” before “male servant,” adds “your ox and your donkey” and the word “any” (literally: “all”) before “your cattle,” and elaborates on the male servant and female servant at the end of this verse. The term “to rest” is found here, which in Exodus occurs in the last verse. Whereas in Exod 20:11 God rested, in Deut 5:14 humans rest.

So far we have mainly found expansions of the Exodus text in Deuteronomy. However, with the last verses little similarity is found between the two Sabbath passages. A number of words correspond, namely “Yahweh,” “the Sabbath day,” “therefore,” “earth/land,” and “for/that.”¹ But the theme is quite different. Whereas Exodus focuses on creation, Deuteronomy stresses deliverance from Egypt and thus redemption. Theologically, the two concepts are complementary² and point to the rich theological meaning of the Sabbath.³ The Sabbath reminds us of creation. The Sabbath is also clearly linked to salvation. Deuteronomy expands its meaning by making it a memorial of redemption.

Looking at some important vocabulary the following picture emerges:

¹“Earth” and “land” are translations of the same Hebrew word. However, in Exodus the entire earth is addressed, whereas in Deuteronomy the term is limited to the land of Egypt. The English words “for” and “that” are also translations of the same Hebrew term.

²Cf., P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 157.

³Cf., Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary 6A (Dallas: Word, 1991), 118.

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Term or Phrase	Number of Occurrences in Exodus	Number of Occurrences in Deuteronomy
Sabbath	3	3
Day	6	4
To sanctify / keep holy	2	1
Yahweh	3	4
(Yahweh your God)	1	4
(as Yahweh your God has commanded you)	–	2
Six	2	1
Seventh	2	1
You shall / shall not do all your work	2	2
To serve / servant	1	4
(your male servant and your female servant)	1	2
To do	3	3
(to do—God)	1	–
(to do—humanity)	2	3
The heavens, earth, sea, and all which is in them	1	–

This list points to some of the important differences in both passages. Most of them are due to the expansions in Deuteronomy and the different reasons for Sabbath keeping provided in both. The emphasis on creation in Exod 20:8-11 produces creation-related language (“the heavens, earth, sea, and all which is in them”), highlights the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest more frequently and uses the verb “to do” not only for humanity but especially for God in his creative activity, whereas the emphasis on redemption in Deut 5:12-15 stresses servitude and serving as well as liberation from it. Therefore, in the Deuteronomy passage the word family “to serve” is employed more often than in the Exodus passage.

The phrase “as Yahweh, your God, has commanded you” is found twice in Deut 5:12-15, but not at all in Exod 20:8-11. This accounts for the more frequent use of the divine names in the Deuteronomy passage. Whereas Exod 20:8-11 uses most of the time one of God’s names, “Yahweh,” Deuteronomy employs the phrase “Yahweh, your God” only. Thus, it is more personal in tone. On the other hand, the Exodus passage sounds more universal.

Whereas Deut 5 mentions the act of keeping the Sabbath holy once, Exod 20 uses the Hebrew word twice. However, in Exod 20 it is humanity that is once called to keep the day holy and God who makes it holy. The reference to Gen 2:2-3 requires a repetition of the term in Exod 20. God’s sanctification of the Sabbath is absent in Deut 5 because the reference to creation is replaced by the reference to the Exodus experience.

Nevertheless, both commandments share a common outline:

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1. First command:	Remember / keep the Sabbath holy	Exod 20:8; Deut 5:12
2. Second command:	To work six days	Exod 20:9; Deut 5:13
3. Third command:	Not to work on the seventh day	Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14
4. Reasons:	Creation / Salvation	Exod 20:11; Deut 5:16

The major difference between the two forms of the Sabbath commandment is not in the calls to remember the Sabbath but in the reasons provided for keeping it holy. Even though the reasons are different, the charge to keep it remains the same. However, the origin of the Sabbath is not stated in Deuteronomy. The Sabbath is not instituted because of the Exodus from Egypt. The Sabbath is based on creation. But the people are called to obey the commandment because of creation and because of salvation, as experienced in the exodus.

II. The Sabbath Commandment of Exodus 20

The Sabbath commandment in Exod 20 starts and ends with the same three Hebrew words, forming what is called an inclusion. An inclusion is like an envelope encompassing other material.

Remember	<i><u>the day of the Sabbath to keep it holy.</u></i>	Exod 20:8
Therefore Yahweh blessed	<i><u>the day of the Sabbath and made it holy</u></i>	Exod 20:11

In Exodus 20 there is a special emphasis on the holiness of the Sabbath. This holiness and the divine blessing of the day are associated with a historical act, namely the six-day creation. The commandment can be outlined as follows:

The holiness of the Sabbath: command	Exod 20:8
Work on six days: command	Exod 20:9
No work on the seventh day: command	Exod 20:10
The holiness of the Sabbath: God's example in creation and his blessing	Exod 20:11

Exodus 20:11 is important in that it makes a statement about the origin of the Sabbath and offers a reason for its observance, namely God's creative activity. God created the earth and life on it and instituted the Sabbath right in the beginning of world's history. Verse 11 discusses what the Lord was doing during the creation week. Four areas are mentioned: heaven, earth, sea, and all that is in them. However, with regard to the seventh day three activities of God are stressed: He rested, blessed the Sabbath, and made it holy. They are found in the same order in Gen 2:2-3.⁴

⁴The term "to rest" is repeated in Gen 2:3. The verb "to rest" in Gen 2 is different from the verb "to rest" in Exod 20. In Gen 2 *šābat* is used, pointing to the Sabbath, which is not directly mentioned in Gen 2. Exod 20, which talks about the Sabbath, uses a synonym (*nūaḥ*).

III. The Sabbath Commandment of Deuteronomy 5

The Sabbath commandment in Deut 5 also contains an inclusion, but it is somewhat different. Instead of the three Hebrew words found in the beginning and at the end of the Exodus passage, only two correspond directly in Deuteronomy, namely “the Sabbath day.”⁵ The infinitive “to keep it holy” is replaced by the Hebrew word translated “to keep.” However, in addition, we find a phrase at the beginning and the end of the passage that does not occur in Exodus:

Observe <i>the day of the Sabbath</i> to keep it holy	
as <i>Yahweh your God commanded you</i>	Deut 5:12
. . . therefore <i>Yahweh your God commanded you</i>	
to keep <i>the day of the Sabbath</i>	Deut 5:15

Deuteronomy 5 stresses that the keeping of the Sabbath is commanded by “the LORD your God.” In addition, there is a strong emphasis on God’s redemptive activity, which—like creation in Exod 20—is a historical act. The Sabbath commandment of Deut 5 can be outlined in the following way:

Observance of the Sabbath: commanded by Yahweh your God	Deut 5:12
Work on six days: command	Deut 5:13
No work on the seventh day: command	Deut 5:14
Observance of the Sabbath: commanded by Yahweh your God who has led you out of slavery	Deut 5:15

Whereas in Exodus the remembrance of the Sabbath is associated with creation, in Deuteronomy God’s people are called to keep Sabbath as they remember their liberation. In both cases the element of remembering and looking back at the great things which the Lord has done is present. God acts in human history. His mighty acts are remembered when keeping the Sabbath. But the act of remembering has also a prospective outlook, i.e., remembering in order to obey.

IV. Deuteronomy’s Sabbath Commandment in Its Context

After having observed the basic similarities but also the differences between the two Sabbath commandments, we now have to ask the question, How can we explain these differences?

We have noticed that the Sabbath commandment in Deut 5 contains the phrases “as Yahweh your God commanded you” and “therefore Yahweh your God commanded you.” These phrases differ only with regard to the first word. However, such phrases are not limited to the Sabbath commandment. “As Yahweh your God commanded you” is repeated in the next commandment: “Honor

⁵Cf., Christensen, 117.

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your father and your mother, as Yahweh your God has commanded you . . .” (Deut 5:16). It is found again in Deut 5:33 outside of the Decalogue, but still in the same context. Whereas the singular was used within the Ten Commandments, now the plural is found: “. . . as Yahweh your (plural) God has commanded you (plural).” A similar formula occurs in Deut 5:33; 6:1, 17, 20, 25. The plural may indicate that in Deuteronomy we have a “sermon” addressed to the people.

Moses is speaking to Israel. He reiterates the Ten Commandments as well as other laws and admonitions. While reciting the Decalogue he inserts the words “as / therefore Yahweh your God has commanded you,” thus emphasizing that the Ten Commandments are of divine origin and are authoritative. In Exod 20:1 we read: “Then God spoke all these words, saying.” Deuteronomy is different: “The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, while I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain. He said . . .” (Deut 5:4-5). Obviously, in Exodus we find the Ten Commandments as proclaimed by the Lord,⁶ whereas in Deuteronomy Moses affirms the Decalogue.

While Moses repeats the Ten Commandments, he apparently comments on them in several places. These comments are minor and do not alter the meaning or authority of God’s law. In the Sabbath commandments only the reasons for keeping the seventh day differ. In Deut 18:15, which points to Jesus, God calls Moses a prophet. As the people of Israel were obliged to obey what Moses told them in the name of the Lord, so people are called to obey the prophet like Moses, Jesus,⁷ who proclaimed his law in the Sermon on the Mount. The comments of Moses on the Decalogue were made under prophetic inspiration. His comments provide additional insights into the will and character of God, although on the literal level they were not part of the Decalogue proclaimed by God on Sinai. In Deuteronomy, Moses may have expressed the significance of the Ten Commandments for Israel, whereas through the reference to creation the Decalogue in Exodus is more universal.⁸

Deuteronomy 5:22 refers back to the Sinai experience, declaring that there a theophany occurred; there God spoke to Israel; there the Decalogue was written on tables of stone. The phrase “and he added no more” stresses that the Decalogue was limited in content. No other commandments were part of it. It “highlights the special ‘canonical’ authority of the Decalogue.”⁹ “These words” are the Ten Commandments as found in Exod 20, which were repeated in a slightly modified way in Deut 5. It is important that we do not stretch this verse

⁶See Exod 20:18-23; Deut 9:10

⁷See John 6:14; Acts 3:17-26.

⁸See, e.g., footnote 1 and the usage of the term “earth/land” in both passages.

⁹Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 84.

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beyond what it is trying to say. Obviously, the Decalogue as found in Exod 20 was written on tables of stone, but the repetition by Moses in Deut 5 is still in agreement with the version proclaimed by the Lord himself.¹⁰ A close look at verse 22 reveals that

the strict chronological order of events is not the main concern of the narrative. According to Exod. 19-34 the tablets containing the decalogue were not delivered to Moses until after he had mediated between Yahweh and the people and had received the additional covenant commandments, cf. Exod. 24:12; 32:15f.; Dt. 9:7ff. Through referring to the tablets at this point the author immediately completes the narrative of the decalogue.¹¹

By leaving out a reference to the other commandments, which were not part of the Decalogue, and by postponing them till later as well as by mentioning their inscription on tables of stone immediately after their recitation, Moses stresses the uniqueness of the Ten Commandments and singles them out among the other laws. This means that this text contains a historical gap, yet without being incorrect or untruthful. In many parts of Scripture summaries of events are employed that do not point to every little detail.¹² However, this also means the text cannot be pressed to denote that the precise wording of Deut 5:6-21 must have been the text contained on the tables of stone or that there is a contradiction between Deut 5:22 and Exod 24:12; 31:18, which are based on Exod 20. A literalistic interpretation of the text deprives it of its theological intention.

Therefore, we have to return to the question: What are the effects that Moses' additions have on the Decalogue? We have already noted that the phrases "as / therefore Yahweh your God commanded you" stress the divine origin of the Decalogue as well as of the Sabbath. Since this phrase is repeated in the fifth commandment, it ties together the commandments to keep the Sabbath and to honor one's parents. In both of them the relational aspect is strongly emphasized. Furthermore, the so-called first table of the law, commandments focusing on humanity's relationship with God, and the so-called second table of the law, commandments stressing interpersonal relations, are linked. This concept is enhanced by the specific emphasis on male and female servants, twice

¹⁰Keil and Delitzsch, *Old Testament Commentaries: Genesis to Judges 6:32* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, n.d.), 471, while commenting on Exod 20 state: "But instead of this objective ground for the sabbatical festival . . ., when Moses recapitulated the decalogue, he adduced only the subjective aspect of rest or refreshing (Deut. v. 14,15), reminding the people, just as in Ex. xxiii. 12, of their bondage in Egypt and their deliverance from it by the strong arm of Jehovah, and then adding, "therefore (that thou mightest remember this deliverance from bondage) Jehovah commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day." This is not in variance with the reason given in the present verse [Exod 20:11], but simply gives prominence to a subjective aspect . . ."

¹¹A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 172.

¹²See, e.g., John 20:30-31; 21:25.

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found in verse 14 and elaborated upon in verse 15, when Israel's slavery and liberation are narrated.

"As Yahweh commanded" (vv. 12, 15, 16) communicates awareness that this listing of the Decalogue is a "second delivery" in the dramatic staging of Deuteronomy, a quotation of something already heard in the past. As a "source citation formula" (cf. 4:23; 6:17; 13:6 [ET 5]; 20:17), it signals to the reader that an earlier text is being used. Fittingly, this phrase appears only in the commandments concerning Sabbath and parents, the two that positively "command" (rather than forbid) behaviors. Moreover, since these two commandments are the only ones whose motivations differ from those of Exod 20, "as Yahweh commanded" may stress that the imperatives themselves have been transmitted unchanged, even if the motivations have been expanded.¹³

In Deut 5:15 "the land of Egypt" appears. The same expression is found in Deut 5:6, the first commandment.¹⁴ In addition, the verb "to bring out," the divine name "Yahweh your God," and the term "slave" occur in both verses. In Deuteronomy the Sabbath commandment is in a special way connected to the first commandment. By keeping the Sabbath we accept Yahweh Elohim as the only God and Lord and reject all other gods and idols. At the same time we enjoy liberation and salvation.

But there are not only connections to the first and the fifth commandments. Deut 5:14 contains the addition "your ox and your donkey." Instead of talking about animals in general only, Moses seems to mention ox and donkey deliberately. Ox and donkey are found in the same order and with the same Hebrew words being used in Deut 5:21, the tenth commandment. Thus, the Sabbath commandment and the commandment not to covet are associated. Whoever has found rest in the Lord on the Sabbath day has also found rest from coveting and craving for material goods, especially those which are his or her neighbors'.

Deuteronomy also groups together the commandments in vv. 17-20 with "and." Joining these last commandments together with conjunctions forms them into a cohesive block and creates a concentric pattern of longer and shorter textual units that places the Sabbath commandment at the center of the pattern.¹⁵ Verses 6-11 describe one's duties to Yahweh and vv. 16-21 deal with relationships among humans. By dealing with both these topics simultaneously, the Deuteronomic Sabbath commandment forms a bridge between these two sections.¹⁶

¹³Nelson, 82-83.

¹⁴See also Exod 20:2.

¹⁵In a footnote the author states: "Long (vv. 6-10), short (v. 11), the long unit on Sabbath (vv. 12-15), short (v.16), long (vv.17-21) . . ."

¹⁶Nelson, 81-82.

Conclusion

The Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy agrees completely with the one found in Exod 20 that the Sabbath should be kept holy and that after six days of labor on the specific seventh day, the Sabbath, humanity should rest. There are some differences with regard to the reasons given. Moses, in repeating the Sabbath commandment, has—under inspiration—made some expansions which in an until then unprecedented way have linked the Sabbath commandment to the rest of the Ten Commandments, to the effect that the climax of the Decalogue is the Sabbath commandment. Scholars have recognized this: “Deuteronomy is more explicit than Exodus regarding the Sabbath commandment.”¹⁷ “Deuteronomy’s distinctive formulation of the Ten Commandments increases the importance of the Sabbath.” The Sabbath commandment “is at the center of the [structural] pattern. The Sabbath commandment is given a central, mediating position . . .”¹⁸

Therefore, it is no wonder that in the Book of Revelation the moral law and especially the Sabbath are found center-stage during the last conflict. The Ten Commandments are indirectly and more directly referred to in Rev 11:19; 12:17; and 14:12. In Rev 14:7 the Sabbath commandment, however, according to the Exodus text, is part of the specific end time proclamation of the first angel’s message.¹⁹

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¹⁷Earl S. Kalland, “Deuteronomy,” in *Expositors’s Bible Commentary*, ed. by F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 3:55.

¹⁸Nelson, 81,82.

¹⁹This verse contains the wording of the Sabbath commandment as found in Exod 20:11 and therefore includes a call to observe the Sabbath and honor God as the Creator. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1945), 1:164, in a paragraph entitled “The Third Angel’s Message,” wrote: “. . . they see the fourth commandment living among the ten holy precepts, while a brighter light shines upon it than upon the other nine, and a halo of glory is all around it.”

A Biblical Evaluation of Islamic and Catholic Soteriology

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In presenting Islamic and Catholic soteriology, we come to look at two international monotheistic religions. This article is confined primarily to *The Qur'an*, *The Documents of Vatican II* (1963–1965), the latest *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), and Pope John Paul II's Encyclicals. We will consider soteriology within the theological context of each religion. A biblical evaluation will follow the presentation of each soteriology, with a conclusion at the end. Our focus will be on the official position of each religion, recognizing that individuals within both religions may have a different experience.

Islamic Soteriology in Context

The Koran (*Qur'an*) claims that Islam is the same religion given to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.¹ It alleges that God reveals truth in stages,² so it claims to be a “fuller explanation” of Scripture.³ As such it is “scripture.”⁴ It is a message for all the worlds.⁵ The fuller explanation is about God. Angels came with inspiration to declare that God is one God. So the Koran proclaims the one God called Allah.⁶ Jesus is removed from His role as Savior, so His ministry on earth, His death for all humanity, and His post-ascension intercessory ministry is

¹*The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Elmhurst: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 2001), 42.13, after as *Qur'an*. The poetic style with several lines for a sentence (including a capital letter for each new line) is not followed in this paper, but the exact words, with capitals removed, is the form in which the quotations appear.

²*Qur'an* 16.101, 17.106.

³*Qur'an* 10.37, cf. no distinction between the Books (3.84), cf. similarity with earlier scripture (46.10), “advance me in knowledge,” 814 (20.114), Muhammad is a “Warner” of a series of Warners of old (53.56), and all prophets are from God (2.136), after as *Qur'an*.

⁴*Qur'an* 34.31, cf. 37.37.

⁵*Qur'an* 38.87.

⁶*Qur'an* 2.163.

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replaced by presenting Him as only a human prophet. By contrast, Muhammad is said to be the final prophet who came to give this fuller revelation of God,⁷ allegedly fuller than Christ's revelation. The Koran claims that Jesus predicted that Muhammad would come after Him.⁸ The Koran says Muhammad is a "beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day."⁹ His life is a model for those desirous of obtaining the good goal or eternity (a reward rather than a redemption).

Christ is Not God. The Koran says God is "too high" for any partners (like Christ and the Holy Spirit) to be with Him.¹⁰ In fact, God curses those who think Christ is the Son of God, for there is only One God.¹¹ It is blasphemy to say God had a son, and those saying it will receive "the severest Penalty."¹² They will go to Hell.¹³ In the meantime, Satan's authority is over them.¹⁴

The Koran demotes Jesus to one of the prophets.¹⁵ It claims He did not die on the cross; it only looked like He did.¹⁶ It claims Jesus was taken to God, and nothing is said about what He does.¹⁷ So Islam is silent about Christ's post-ascension intercession in heaven. Islam claims Jesus will return again to earth in the end-time to complete His prophetic ministry and fight the anti-Christ.¹⁸

Yahiya Emerick, author and practicing Islamic believer, claims that "According to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus will speak to the Christians and Jews of the world and convert them to Islam. He will succeed in breaking the worship of the cross and stop the eating of pork . . . Jesus will be the spiritual head of a transnational government of peace." This lasts for forty years, during which time Jesus marries, has children, dies, and is buried in Medina next to the grave of the prophet Muhammad.¹⁹

God and Muhammad. According to the Koran, Judgment is a summons to God and His Apostle Muhammad. "It is such as obey God and His Apostle, and fear God and do Right, that will win (In the end)."²⁰ The exhortation is, "establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and obey the Apostle; that ye may receive mercy."²¹ In that day of Judgment, God "will call to them, and say:

⁷*Qur'an*, 33.40.

⁸*Qur'an* 61.6.

⁹*Qur'an* 33.21.

¹⁰*Qur'an* 23.91–92.

¹¹*Qur'an* 9.30.

¹²*Qur'an* 10.68–70.

¹³*Qur'an* 21.29.

¹⁴*Qur'an* 16.100.

¹⁵*Qur'an* 4.171; cf. an Apostle 5.75.

¹⁶*Qur'an* 4.157.

¹⁷*Qur'an* 4:157–158.

¹⁸Yahiya J. A. Emerick, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* (Indianapolis: Pearson, 2002), 106–108, 206–207.

¹⁹Yahiya J. A. Emerick, 108–109.

²⁰*Qur'an* 24.51–52, cf. 47.33.

²¹*Qur'an* 24.56).

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‘Where are My ‘partners’? Whom you imagined (to be such)?’²² Yet “We shall reward Them . . .”²³ Note the plural “we,” which appears often. This is not Allah and Jesus or the Holy Spirit. This seems to be God and Muhammad, for often God and His Apostle are mentioned together, but other times it may be a plural used of the one God, for it is used even for Old Testament times.²⁴

Salvation by Works. Salvation in Islam is not a gift. It has to be earned through vigorous works. The Koran says, “Do good; for God loveth those who do good.”²⁵ Charity “will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil.”²⁶ “Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord.”²⁷ “He will be their Friend, because they practised (righteousness).”²⁸ A person can “abound in merit.”²⁹ Every person “gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns.”³⁰ “Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in God’s cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of God: they are the people who will achieve (salvation).”³¹

Either the Garden or hell will reward each person. One has to merit entrance into either. “One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.”³² “Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter, and strive therefore with all due striving, and have Faith, they are the ones whose striving

²²*Qur’an* 28.62.

²³*Qur’an* 39.7.

²⁴Here are examples from the first seven Suras: Obey God and the Apostle, *Qur’an* 3.132, 4.59, 4.69, 5.92; He who obeys the Apostle obeys God (4.80); Go to hell if disobey God and His Apostle (4.14); Believe in God and His Apostle And the scripture which He hath sent to His Apostle (4.136); Those who reject our signs, we will cast into the fire (4.56); Come to what God hath revealed and to the Apostle (4.61). Often the plural is used of God, even though He is one: We sent down to thee the Book of truth (4.105); our Signs (5.10; 5.86; 6.39; 6.49; 6. 54; 6.68; 7.36); we appointed twelve captains in Israel (5.12); we ordained for the children of Israel (5.32); we revealed the Law to Moses (5.44); we ordained an eye for an eye (5.45); we sent Jesus the son of Mary (5.46); we have placed enmity among the Jews (5.64); if we did send down an angel (6.8); when suffering reached them from us (6.43); we send the apostles (6.48); our angels (6.61); we showed Abraham the power and laws of the heavens and earth (6.75); many “we” texts, (6.83, 84, 86, 87, 89, 94; 6.111, 112, 122, 123; 6.146; 6.152; 7.59, 65, 72, 73, 80, 83, 84, 94; 7.117, 130, 133, 136, 137, 138, 141, 142, 143, 160, 168, 171, 179); we created you, and made angels bow to Adam (7.11); our messengers of death (7.37). By contrast, “Our Apostle’s duty” seems to be written from the perspective of Moslems, rather than from the perspective of God or Muhammad (5.92).

²⁵*Qur’an*, 2.195.

²⁶*Qur’an* 2.271.

²⁷*Qur’an* 2.277.

²⁸*Qur’an* 6.127.

²⁹*Qur’an* 11.3.

³⁰*Qur’an* 2.286.

³¹*Qur’an* 9.20.

³²*Qur’an* 16.111.

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is acceptable, (to God).”³³ Reward is in direct relation to endeavour.³⁴ “Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, they will attain salvation: but those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide.”³⁵

Concerning the Garden, the Koran says, “enter ye the Garden, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world).”³⁶ The focus is on reward, not redemption. Hell is mentioned repeatedly throughout the Koran and often with the most lurid details. Although the reward is a Garden with streams running beneath it, and that is often mentioned, too, the fear of an eternal hell would be stimulus enough to cause devotees to try to save themselves. The Koran says, “Save yourselves and your families from a Fire”³⁷

Hell. The Day of Judgment is often referred to throughout the Koran. God is “strict in punishment,”³⁸ for “severe is His chastisement.”³⁹ God says, “I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help.”⁴⁰ In Hell, “As often as their skins are roasted through, we shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the Penalty.”⁴¹ In the flames there will be nothing but “the heaving of sighs and sobs.”⁴² There will be great thirst in Hell. But all they have is “boiling fetid water.” “Indeed ye shall drink like diseased camels raging with thirst!”⁴³ Focusing on one sufferer, the Koran says, “In gulps will he sip it, but never will he be near swallowing it down his throat: death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die: and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting.”⁴⁴ That unrelenting punishment for all in hell is described as follows. “And in the midst of boiling hot water will they wander round!”⁴⁵ “(They will be) in the midst of a fierce blast of Fire and in boiling water, and in shades of black smoke.”⁴⁶

The inhabitants of Hell are engulfed in flames, with layers of fire above them and layers of fire beneath them.⁴⁷ God says, “Every time it shows abatement, we shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire.”⁴⁸ (Note the plural “we” again). “For them will be cut out a garment of Fire: over their heads will

³³*Qur'an* 17.19.

³⁴*Qur'an* 20.15.

³⁵*Qur'an* 23.102.

³⁶*Qur'an* 16.32.

³⁷*Qur'an* 66.6.

³⁸*Qur'an* 2.196; 2.211; 3.11; 4.2; 5.98.

³⁹*Qur'an* 11.102.

⁴⁰*Qur'an* 3.56.

⁴¹*Qur'an* 4.56.

⁴²*Qur'an* 11.106. 21.100.

⁴³*Qur'an* 56.55.

⁴⁴*Qur'an* 14.16–17.

⁴⁵*Qur'an* 55.44.

⁴⁶*Qur'an* 56.42–43.

⁴⁷*Qur'an* 39.16.

⁴⁸*Qur'an* 17.97.

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be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their) skins. In addition there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), “Taste ye the penalty of burning!”⁴⁹ Those in hell will cry to God to get out to work deeds of righteousness. But He tells them they must suffer for their past deeds, for there is no helper for wrongdoers.⁵⁰

Biblical Evaluation

The so-called fuller understanding of Scripture in the Koran does not live up to its claim. When Christ came to reveal the Father, He said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). He did so as the God-man among humans. His ministry was an outpouring of God’s love to humans, and His death was the only way they could be saved. Christ taught that God so loved the world that He sent Him to be the Savior (John 3:16). To reject this revelation of God is not a fuller revelation of God, but an attempt to hide the truth about God.

The gift of salvation is denied, for according to Islam Christ did not die, and salvation can only be gained through a rigorous system of works. All the time devotees are focused on what they have to do for God rather than on what God has done for them. Rather than a fuller revelation of God, there is a revelation of one who is unlike God. His demands are heavy, with five times of prayer each day and other works to earn or merit heaven. Constantly believers are reminded of hell in the Koran. The horrors of that place and the unfairness of an eternal punishment for not doing enough good works reveals God as a tyrant. The fact that some in hell want to come out to do good deeds may suggest that they are not merely rebels, for such would curse God. To them God shows no compassion, but only a seeming delight in increasing the torture and keeping it going forever. I submit that the Moslem view of hell without Calvary gives such a distorted picture of God that the resulting system of human works for salvation is a counterfeit replacement for God’s gift of salvation.

Catholic Church

Vatican II is a collection of sixteen documents. It is church-centered. It is the Church’s self-presentation of her nature and mission.⁵¹ The collection is named *Lumen Gentium*, or “light of all nations.” The doctrine of salvation grows out of its understanding of the church. We will look at (1) the function of the Church, (2) the function of Mary, and (3) the function of religious practices.

The Function of the Church. All the documents of *Vatican II* (1963–1965) center on the church. There is a two-fold reality to the Church. First, it is the prolongation of the incarnation. As Pope John Paul II put it, “The

⁴⁹*Qur’an* 22.19–22.

⁵⁰*Qur’an* 35.37.

⁵¹*The Documents of Vatican II*, Gen. ed., Walter M. Abbott S.J., trans. Joseph Gallagher (Wimbledon: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 15 (1.1.1), after as *Vatican II*.

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reality of the Incarnation finds a sort of extension *in the mystery of the Church—the Body of Christ*.⁵² At the same time, “This is the unique Church of Christ which in the Creed we avow as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. After His Resurrection our Savior handed her (i.e., the Church) over to Peter to be shepherded (John. 21:17), commissioning him and the other apostles to propagate and govern her.”⁵³ So Catholic theology considers the Church the extension of Christ’s incarnational body throughout human history, and a body of Christ that is governed by an apostolic succession throughout human history. This apparently means the Pope and the Magisterium are invested with the continuance of Christ’s saving and priestly ministry. Hence, “Through the Church, we abide in Christ.”⁵⁴ “In that body, the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified.”⁵⁵ This is why confessions to God are made through priests, and Christ is dispensed through the sacraments. The Church and its priesthood stand between the believer and Christ.

The eternal Father plans to “assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ.”⁵⁶ The Church is universal,⁵⁷ and is “the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery.”⁵⁸ It is the “instrument” for achieving union with God and unity of humanity.⁵⁹ Christ made the Church “mystically into His own body. In that body, the life of Christ is poured into the believers, who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ . . .”⁶⁰ “In pursuit of her divine mission, the Church preaches the gospel to all men and dispenses the treasures of grace.”⁶¹

The Eucharist is the central way of dispensing salvation. *Vatican II* expresses it as follows: “As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which ‘Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed’ (1 Cor 5:7) is celebrated on an altar, the work of our redemption is carried on. At the same time, in the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 10:17) is both expressed and brought about.”⁶² The priest, “[a]cting in the person of Christ” . . . “brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and offers it to God . . .”⁶³ The priest “alone can complete the building up of the Body in the

⁵²*The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, ed. J. Michael Miller, C.S.B. (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), 357 (*Redemptoris Mater*, 4)

⁵³*Vatican II*, 23 (1.1.8), parenthesis supplied.

⁵⁴*The Documents of Vatican II*, 19 (1.19).

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 20 (1.1.7).

⁵⁶*Vatican II*, 15 (1.1.2).

⁵⁷*Vatican II*, 16 (1.1.2).

⁵⁸*Vatican II*, 16 (1.1.3).

⁵⁹*Vatican II*, 15 (1.1.1).

⁶⁰*Vatican II*, 20–23 (1.1.7–8).

⁶¹*Vatican II*, 303 (4.5.89).

⁶²*Vatican II*, 16 (1.1.3).

⁶³*Vatican II*, 27 (1.2.10).

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Eucharistic Sacrifice.”⁶⁴ “For it is the function of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit who renews and purifies her ceaselessly, to make God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible.”⁶⁵

Bishops “channel the fullness of Christ’s holiness.” Through the sacraments “they sanctify the faithful.”⁶⁶ The Church can even be called “the universal sacrament of salvation.”⁶⁷ This is because Christ is present in the Church. The Church “receives from him ‘the fullness of the means of salvation.’”⁶⁸

The function of the Church is similar to the function of Mary. Both give birth to God’s Child or children. Just as the Holy Spirit gave birth to Christ through Mary, so He continues to give birth to Christians through Mother Church. *Vatican II* states,

The Church, moreover, contemplating Mary’s mysterious sanctity, initiating her charity, and faithfully fulfilling the Father’s will, becomes herself a mother by accepting God’s word in faith. For by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God. The Church herself is a virgin, who keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse. Imitating the Mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity.⁶⁹

The Function of Mary. In his opening message to the Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII began by saying, “Mother Church rejoices today that, by the singular gift of Divine Providence, the longed-for day has finally dawned when under the auspices of the virgin Mother of God, whose maternal dignity is commemorated on this feast—the Second Vatican Council is being solemnly opened here beside St. Peter’s tomb.”⁷⁰ Near the end of his speech he implored, “O Mary, Help of Christians, Help of Bishops, of whose love we have recently had particular proof in thy temple of Loreto, where we venerated the mystery of the Incarnation, dispose all things for a happy and propitious outcome and, with thy spouse, St. Joseph, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, intercede for us to God.”⁷¹

The Council examined the role of the Virgin Mary in the economy of salvation. In Christ’s ministry on earth she did not have a passive role, but cooperated in the work of human salvation and was united with Christ in His saving work. Even at the cross, “There she united herself with a maternal heart to

⁶⁴*Vatican II*, 36 (1.2.17).

⁶⁵*Vatican II*, 219 (41.21).

⁶⁶*Vatican II*, 51 (1.3.26).

⁶⁷*Vatican II*, 79 (1.7.48).

⁶⁸*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori: Liguori, 1994), 220 (830), after as *Catechism*.

⁶⁹*Vatican II*, 92–93 (1.8.64).

⁷⁰*Vatican II*, 710.

⁷¹*Vatican II*, 719.

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His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth.”⁷² She was “united with Him in suffering as He died on the cross.”⁷³ Pope John Paul II, in his second Encyclical, says, “No one has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the Crucified One, the mystery of the Cross, the overwhelming encounter of divine transcendent justice with love: that ‘kiss’ given by mercy and justice.” She entered an “incomparable sharing in the messianic mission of her Son.”⁷⁴

Catholic theology claims that unlike all other humans, Mary was not born with a sinful nature; nor did she sin. The *Catechism* says that “Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by special grace committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.”⁷⁵ The Council said Mary was “preserved free from all guilt of original sin, was immaculate, and taken up body and soul into heaven.” There she “was exalted by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords . . .”⁷⁶ “Queen of all” is translated “Queen of the Universe” in Pope John Paul II’s sixth Encyclical.⁷⁷ *Vatican II* says that in heaven, she does “not lay aside this saving role, but by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation.” No wonder the Church gives her the titles of “Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix.”⁷⁸

Although Catholic theology says that Mary has a subordinate role to Christ,⁷⁹ yet it is Mary who is uplifted as their “exalted model.”⁸⁰ Moreover,

in the most holy Virgin, the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle. Yet the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin. And so they raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues. Devotedly meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church with reverence enters more intimately into the supreme mystery of the Incarnation and becomes ever increasingly like her Spouse.⁸¹

Pope John Paul II says Mary

⁷²*Vatican II*, 89–90 (1.8.58).

⁷³*Vatican II*, 91 (1.8.61).

⁷⁴*Encyclicals*, 133 (*Dives in Misericordia*, 9.2; 9.3).

⁷⁵*Catechism*, 104 (411).

⁷⁶*Vatican II*, 90 (1.8.59).

⁷⁷*Encyclicals*, 397 (*Redemptoris Mater*, 41.1).

⁷⁸*Vatican II*, 91 (1.8.62).

⁷⁹*Vatican II*, 92 (1.8.62).

⁸⁰*Vatican II*, 93 (1.8.65).

⁸¹*Vatican II*, *Ibid.*

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is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is. In this sense, we call her the *Mother of Mercy*: our Lady of Mercy, or Mother of Divine Mercy; in each one of these titles there is a deep theological meaning, for they express the special preparation of her soul, of her whole personality, so that she was able to perceive, through the complex events, first of Israel, then of every individual and of the whole of humanity, that mercy of which 'from generation to generation' people become sharers according to the eternal design of the Most Holy Trinity.⁸²

Mary is not only a type of the Church,⁸³ but is considered the "Mother of the Church." Because the Church is the Body of Christ and the prolongation of the incarnation, Mary is looked to as the mother of the Church, just as she is mother of Christ. *Vatican II* exhorts Catholics to be devoted to Mary and honor her with "special reverence." For in "all perils and needs, the faithful have fled prayerfully to her protection."⁸⁴ *Vatican II* urges that veneration of images of the Blessed Virgin, together with those of Christ and the saints, be "religiously observed."⁸⁵

As the Mother of God, Mother of the Church, and Queen of Heaven, Mary allegedly intercedes in heaven. *Vatican II* calls upon Catholics to "pour forth persevering prayer to the Mother of God and Mother of men. Let them implore that she who aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers may now, exalted as she is in heaven above all the saints and angels, intercede with her Son in the fellowship of all the saints."⁸⁶

Besides her intercession in heaven, Mary evidently has a major role in getting the gospel of salvation to the world. The Document on Missions ends with the Fathers and the Roman Pontiff praying that "through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, the nations may be led to the knowledge of the truth as soon as possible . . ."⁸⁷

The Function of Religious Practices. The *Catechism* devotes seventy-four pages to "Christian Prayer." It speaks of the Church's prayer to the "holy Mother of God." There are two movements to these prayers: "the first 'magnifies the Lord' for the 'great things' he did for his lowly servant and through her for all human beings; the second entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus, because she now knows the humanity which, in her, the Son of God espoused."⁸⁸ Both movements have to do with Mary.

⁸²*Encyclicals*, 133, (*Dives in Misericordia*, 9.3).

⁸³*Catechism*, 252 (967).

⁸⁴*Vatican II*, 94 (1.8.66).

⁸⁵*Vatican II*, 95 (1.8.67).

⁸⁶*Vatican II*, 96 (1.8.69).

⁸⁷*Vatican II*, 630 (13.6.14).

⁸⁸*Catechism*, 642–643 (2675).

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For Catholics, praying the rosary is an integral part life. Traditionally it has consisted of fifty small beads in a circle. Four large beads divide the smaller beads into equal sections. On the large beads is said the Lord's Prayer (four recitations), but the fifty small beads are for prayers to the Virgin Mary. Doing the rosary calls for three repetitions of the fifty-four prayers. Mary is central to the rosary. It is of interest that prayer beads are an ancient practice, probably used first by Buddhists. Today Buddhists, Moslems, and Catholics use them.⁸⁹ Although the Catechism says, "Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ" as in the rosary,⁹⁰ it also says devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship." She is honored as Mother of God "to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs." The rosary is called "Marian prayer" and the "epitome of the whole Gospel," expressing devotion to the Virgin Mary.⁹¹

On October 22, 2002, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of *Vatican II*, and to begin his 25th year as Pope, John Paul II released his Encyclical *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. He noted that the rosary is the "very heart of Christian life." Mary obtains for the faithful "the abundance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit." It is through her intercession that the Holy Spirit is poured out, and by her intercession she obtains things from the heart of her Son. The Pope says "to pray the rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother." He affirms, "although the repeated Hail Mary is addressed directly to Mary, it is to Jesus that the act of love is ultimately directed, with her and through her." Note that at best Mary comes between the believer and Christ. The Pope mentions that the church grants indulgences to those who cite the rosary. The Pope adds to the Rosary meditation works of Christ during His public ministry, but says nothing of His present intercessory ministry in heaven. But he has much to say about the intercession of Mary.⁹²

The Pope concludes by saying,

May this appeal of mine not go unheard! At the start of the twenty-fifth year of my Pontificate, I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the loving hands of the Virgin Mary, prostrating myself in spirit before her image in the splendid Shrine built for her by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary. I willingly make my own the touching words with which he concluded his well-known supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary: "Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary

⁸⁹*World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Field Enterprises, 1973), 16:437.

⁹⁰*Catechism*, 650 (2708).

⁹¹*Catechism*, 253 (971).

⁹²Cited from the Encyclical on the web site www.newadvent.org/docs/jp02rd.htm.

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of Pompeii, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted. May you be everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in heaven.”

Even though in *Vatican II* and the *Catechism* there is mention of Christ as the sole mediator, it is not without Mary’s intercession being given prominent place. The *Catechism* says of Mary, because “she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself. ‘Let it be to me according to your word.’ By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: ‘Thy will be done.’”⁹³ At best Mary’s intercession is linked with Christ’s. Christ’s intercession does not stand alone without the need of Mary’s intercession.

In fact, Mary is the focus of prayer throughout life.

By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the ‘Mother of Mercy,’ the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender ‘the hour of our death’ wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son’s death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise.⁹⁴

The Church believes Mary is more than the Mother of the Church, for she “has become the mother of all the living.” It seems that because she gave birth to Christ, she is elevated to being the Mother of God, and as such, the Mother of all humans.

Besides Mary, there are the saints, selected by the Church, that also intercede in heaven. “Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.”⁹⁵ The Church is the place “for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament,” and pilgrimages are “very special occasions for renewal in prayer.”⁹⁶

Biblical Evaluation

Church as Bride of Christ. Although Catholic theology presents Christ’s life, death and intercession, it adds to the biblical data. Nowhere in Scripture is the Church likened to Mary, as a Mother to Christians as Mary was to Christ. Rather, Scripture likens the church to the bride of Christ (Hos 2:19; Jer 3:14; 2 Cor 11:2). Christ is the head of the church (Col 1:18). The Holy Spirit is the great Administrator of the early church (Acts 2:33; 4:31; 6:10; 7:55; 8:15–17,

⁹³*Catechism*, 643 (2677).

⁹⁴*Catechism*, 644 (2677).

⁹⁵*Catechism*, 645 (2683).

⁹⁶*Catechism*, 647 (2691).

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29, 39; 9:17, 31; 10:19–20, 44; 11:15, 24; 13:2, 9, 52; 15:28; 19:6; 20:22–23; 21:11) and Christ is the only Mediator between God and humans (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), which leaves no room for Mary and the saints interceding, even in a subordinate role.

No Special Status to Mary. On one occasion when Jesus was talking to the crowd, someone told him that his mother and brothers wanted to speak to Him. “He replied, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’” (Matt 12:47–50). Clearly He did not consider His mother any different from others who do the will of His Father. At the marriage in Cana, when the wine ran out, and his mother told Him about that, He answered, “‘Dear woman, why do you involve me? . . . My time has not yet come’” (John 2:4).

There is no biblical statement from Christ that Mary had a unique and inseparable part of His saving ministry. Just because He was born through Mary did not give her a privileged status. The choice of Mary was no different from the choice of Israel in the Old Testament, or the choice of the Church in the New Testament. All these chosen avenues were sinful humans needing salvation, and as such God uses them. As sinners all are totally dependent upon Him for salvation. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

All Humans are Sinners, Including Mary. Scripture is clear that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). This includes Mary. There is no biblical basis for an immaculate conception and a sinless life of Mary. It follows that there is no biblical support for Mary as a type of the Church, with the Church allegedly virginal and immaculate. There is no biblical basis that Mary ascended to heaven at her death to become the Queen of Heaven. The only queen of Heaven mentioned in Scripture provoked God to anger. She was a part of Judah’s theology when truth perished (Jer 7:17–28; cf. 44:17–30). The Queen of Heaven was a counterfeit god, prayed to by Judah in its rebellion against the only true God. Isaiah and Jeremiah were sent by God to warn Judah of its false theology.

If Mary really was the Queen of Heaven, she would be an addition to the Kings, the royal three of the Trinity. In fact, if she is able to hear the prayers of believers around the world, and be present with them in life, represent them to the Son, and help them at the moment of death, and lead them to Jesus, then she must have the gift of omnipresence that is a prerogative of God alone. Mary would have to be divine to be able to do what Catholic theology says she does. The way Mary is adored and prayed to deflects attention away from the only Savior-Intercessor and comes between the believer and Christ. There is a striking parallel between Judah’s apostate adoration of the Queen of Heaven and that of the Catholic church.

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Christ was Sacrificed Once Only. Scripture says Christ “appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26). “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people” (Heb 9:28). The focus on “once” (*hapax*) means it was not necessary to repeat it, yet the Eucharist as defined and celebrated is a repetition of Calvary. It is the priest creating and crucifying Christ. Whether realized or not, this unending sacrifice of Christ, at the will of priests, calls in radical question the once-for-all unique sacrifice of Calvary. It cheapens it and fails to comprehend the enormity of the all-availing sacrifice of Christ. Just as Christ’s intercession means there is no need for others in heaven to intercede, so His sacrifice does not require others to sacrifice Him again and again. Just as other human intercessors in heaven deflect attention from the intercession of Christ and come between Christ and believers, so His repetitious sacrifice in the Mass deflects attention from His once-for-all sacrifice at Calvary and comes between Christ and believers.

It isn’t only the ministry of Christ that has been handed over to the Church, but Christ Himself, for it is priests of the Church that allegedly make Christ present in the bread and the wine (Transubstantiation). No wonder Catholics worship the host as Christ. Here the emblem of Christ’s body comes between the believer and the risen Christ.

Scripture is clear that one act of Adam brought sin to all humans and one act of Christ (Calvary) brought salvation to all humans (Rom 5:18). “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:21–22). However, not all will receive the gift of salvation (Rom 5:19): only the “whosoever believeth in Him” of John 3:16 will not perish. Scripture says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21). Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Christ as Only Mediator Between God and Humans.⁹⁷ In Scripture there is no place given to the intercession of Mary and saints. This is why the Book of Hebrews says so much about Christ’s post-ascension intercession in heaven.

⁹⁷This article does not discuss the biblical view of death, although it is germane to the topic. For if the dead do not live on after death, then Mary and the saints are dead. Scripture says the dead sleep (Dan 12:2), they know nothing (Eccl 9:5), their thoughts have perished (Ps 146:4), they have no love, hatred, or jealousy (Eccl 9:6), and they will be resurrected at Christ’s return, and not precede the living to heaven (1 Thes 4:16–18). This is why Christ promised to come and get his people in the second advent (John 14:1–3). God alone is immortal (1 Tim 6:16), and the saints do not have innate immortality, but receive immortality in their resurrection, not at death (1 Cor 15:53–54). Satan’s first lie to Eve was that she would not die (Gen 3:4), but sin brought death (Rom 6:23), not a continuance of living after dying. If life was a natural transference to further living because of innate immortality, then Calvary would not be necessary, and hence the doctrine of salvation would be irrelevant. Calvary gifted forgiven sinners with future eternal life (Rom 5:18–19), even though eternal life in Christ now abides within (John 3:36). For more, see Norman R. Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998), 276–298.

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Never once are Mary or the saints mentioned. In fact, the keyword of Hebrews is “better.” Christ’s intercession is better than Old Testament priests who interceded prior to Christ’s coming. The intercessions of Catholic priests, Mary, and saints have no meaning after Christ’s better intercession has come. In fact, no other person can intercede in heaven, for the prerequisite for Christ’s intercession in heaven is His death. “Having obtained salvation, with His own blood, He entered once for all into the holy places” (my translation, Heb 9:12, cf. 7:27).⁹⁸ This is why Hebrews speaks of His sacrifice as better than the sacrifices of Old Testament priests. Calvary authenticates Christ’s intercession. No human intercessors qualify.

Another prerequisite for Christ’s intercession in heaven was His suffering human temptations. “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18). “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb 4:15–16). Christ fully understands and doesn’t need humans to help him. Note how the believer has direct access to Christ’s intercession. The believer does not need to go through priests, the Church, Mary, or saints. Christ opened up this direct access, which was not present when Old Testament priests interceded. Any return to a pre-crucifixion status of priests fails to comprehend the new reality in Christ’s life and death.

Christ has “a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens” (Heb 7:25–26). Clearly Christ meets the need of humans and does not need any help from other human intercessors, even if they were qualified, which they are not. Christ promised, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14). Paul affirmed, “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19). The Holy Spirit makes this possible, not human intercessors. “We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Rom 8:26–27). Clearly the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, divine authors of salvation, are the only Ones able to help sinners. No human sinner can contribute anything.

⁹⁸Just as Jewish priests needed a sacrifice to offer in their work in the sanctuary (Heb 8:3), which was a type of Christ, so Christ needed His own sacrifice. He entered the holy places (*ta hagia*: not confined to the Most Holy place; NKJV, NIV, Phillips; or to the Holy place, KJV, RSV, NASB).

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The very thought of other intercessors reveals a failure to comprehend the love of Christ for humans, the love of the Father who gave His Son for the world, and the love of the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us. There is no member of the Godhead who needs human intercessors. Christ once said He would not need to pray to the Father to get Him to love people, because He already does (John 16:26–27). Hebrews says, “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rom 8:31–32). Christ’s high priestly intercession rebukes Satan the accuser of humans (Zech 3:1–7).⁹⁹ The Catholic view of Mary putting in a good word to Christ fails to comprehend the all-sufficiency of the words of a Savior-Advocate and the Holy Spirit-Intercessor. Christ “is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who can separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:34–35). Paul lists a number of things that attempt to separate the believer from Christ. He concludes that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:39). For the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love each member of the human race. The idea of human intercessors fails to comprehend the depth of this love, and such a failure ends up separating many sincere Catholics from God by approaching Him through human mediators. Why cling to Mary and the saints and flee to them for help, throughout life and even in death, when the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the only ones who can help them?

Biblical Soteriology Jettisoned. The greatest need for Catholic soteriology is to believe in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and cling to that death, and not to representations of it in every Mass. Further, their greatest need is to look to Christ in His present mediatorial work of intercession in heaven, rather than cling to alleged intercessions of Mary and saints in heaven and intercessions of priests on earth. The confessional is confessing to a priest instead of confessing to Christ as High Priest (Heb 4:16). Dispensing of Christ through the Eucharist is receiving Christ through priests rather than through the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–18). The Eucharist, Mary, saints, and the Church all come between the only Savior of humans and those who have accepted Him.

Foundational Problem: The Place of Scripture in Catholic Theology. Although many true biblical and gospel insights are found in Vatican II, the *Catechism*, and the *Encyclicals* of John Paul II, they are negated by the additional human ideas that are mixed with them. This should come as no surprise, as the Church places human traditions as equal with divine revelation in *Vatican II*. It says, “there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same

⁹⁹Note in Zechariah 3, the intercession is on behalf of Joshua, and in opposition to Satan his accuser. This is an insight (type) into the cosmic controversy, where Christ stands up for His people. “For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb . . .” (Rev 12:10–11a).

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end.”¹⁰⁰ Note that tradition is called sacred and is placed before Scripture. This is no accident, for hermeneutically it is tradition that interprets Scripture in Catholic theology. This is why the non-biblical additions are found in their doctrine of salvation.

Vatican II says, the “task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰¹ By contrast, Scripture has a role in interpreting itself (*sola scriptura*) and reveals Christ as upholding Scripture (Matt 4:22, 31–42; Luke 24:27). His teaching unfolded the intent of Scripture, rather than adding to it and changing it, as is done in Catholic tradition. As seen above, Scripture upholds Christ as the only mediator between God and humans because He alone died as their sacrifice.

The second document of *Vatican II* is about revelation. It is significant that the document on the church precedes the document on revelation, rather than the other way round. The document on revelation states that the apostles left bishops to succeed them, handing over to them their teaching role in order to keep the gospel whole and alive in the Church for all time. Hence, this sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is finally brought to see Him face to face (cf. 1 John 3:2).¹⁰² Here the teaching role of the bishops is put on the same level as that of the apostles, yet human traditions are mixed with their teaching. Yet it is from that mixed teaching that bishops look at God, rather than seeing Him fully and adequately revealed in Scripture.

So the responsibility of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, is entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, which exercises its authority in the name of Christ. The document claims that this teaching office is not above the word of God, for it serves it by teaching only what has been handed on. It listens to it devoutly, guarding it meticulously, and explaining it faithfully by its divine commission and by help from the Holy Spirit. It draws from this one deposit of faith the divine revelation which it presents for belief.¹⁰³ But this apparent obedience to the Word is not the final word, “for all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God.”¹⁰⁴

The central fact is the continued rejection of the sole authority of Scripture or the *sola scriptura* principle of the Reformers. If interpretation of Scripture is under the judgment of the church, then any interpretation in the future could

¹⁰⁰*Vatican II*, 117 (2.1.9).

¹⁰¹*Vatican II*, 117–118 (2.2.10).

¹⁰²*Vatican II*, 115 (2.2.1).

¹⁰³*Vatican II*, 117–118 (2.2.10).

¹⁰⁴*Vatican II*, 117–121 (2.2.10–2.3.12).

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issue from that premise. The fact that Catholic tradition is placed on par with Scripture, and even called the word of God and looked to as judge over the meaning of Scripture, clearly suggests that Catholic theology maintains church authority over biblical authority, the premise against which the Reformers revolted in the sixteenth century. So at the foundational level the Catholic Church remains unchanged.

The problem with putting the church, human reason, or feelings in authority is that they tend to take the place of Scripture as authority and overlook the evaluation of humans as found in Scripture. Humans are by nature finite, whereas God is infinite. Because humans are finite, they need to receive input from the Infinite. Humans, left to their own reason, feeling, or church organization, are still in the realm of the finite. Furthermore, humans are not only finite but sinners. Finiteness and sinfulness are two reasons humankind need an authority outside of itself, either individually or collectively. Humanity needs God and His infinite, trustworthy self-revelation in Scripture.

The Reformers battled against the authority of the church. The church claimed to be the ultimate authority in deciding about Scripture, both in choosing which books were canonical and how they should be interpreted. By contrast, Calvin speaks of the “full authority” of Scripture as from God and, as such, Scripture should be believed as if one had heard God speak its words from heaven.¹⁰⁵ Luther said, “I put my confidence in no other faith, but in the Word of God.”¹⁰⁶ They revolted against the external human authority of the church, which had rejected the innate authority of Scripture.

If Scripture is emptied of the Word of God, at least the church is filled with Him—even though both are under the supervision of an infallible Magisterium. Relative to infallibility of the church, *Vatican II* says Christ willed His Church to be endowed with infallibility to define a doctrine of faith and morals from the deposit of divine revelation, which it must religiously guard and faithfully interpret. This is the infallibility the Pope enjoys by virtue of his office.¹⁰⁷ Revelation is removed from Scripture and is made present in an interpreter. This means authority has vacated Scripture and taken up residence in the pope.

Basic to the Church as authority is the idea that the Church is the prolongation of the incarnation through history. This means that Jesus Christ is ontologically present in the Church and that what it does and decides is the work of Jesus Christ. So Christ can be ontologically present in the church but not logically present in Scripture. Authority has moved from the canon to the church.

¹⁰⁵Calvin, *Institutes*, 68–69 (1.7.1).

¹⁰⁶Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Table Talk*, vol. 54 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 193.

¹⁰⁷*Vatican II*, 48 (1.3.25).

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Islamic and Catholic Soteriology Compared

Muhammad is a model for Moslems as Mary is for Catholics, whereas Christ is the model for Christians in Scripture. Both Islamic and Catholic theology share a foundational shift away from Scripture. Both have the same hermeneutic, in that human ideas are placed above divine revelation. Muhammad claims to have a fuller revelation than found in Scripture, and the Magisterium claims to have the final understanding of Scripture. The good news of the gospel as a free gift is absent in both. Muhammad denies that Christ died; the Magisterium denies the once-for-allness of Christ's death. Muhammad places human works in place of Christ's gift of salvation, and the Magisterium places human works in place of Christ's death. Muhammad has nothing to say about Christ's intercession in heaven; the Magisterium has much to say about alleged human intercessors in heaven. The Koran and the Catholic Church come between Christ and humans.

One could argue that Moslems pray directly to Allah, whereas Catholics pray indirectly through Mary and the saints allegedly interceding for them. Nevertheless, this doesn't change their works oriented ways to merit salvation. One could also argue that belief in a Trinity among Catholics is better than belief in only one God among Moslems. But this doesn't change the fact that either the Three or the One do not gift salvation.

These two international monotheistic religions are preoccupied more with what humans have to do for God than with what God has done and does for humans. The result is a system of works to earn salvation in both. In different ways, both fail to give proper place to Christ and Calvary in their soteriology. In fairness, it should be said that even those who claim to be evangelicals can also do the same, which points out the importance of the substitutionary atonement that the Evangelical Theological and Adventist Theological Societies proclaims as essential to the gospel.

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