The Editor’s Page

Edwin Reynolds
Southern Adventist University

We apologize for this issue being a bit late. When one depends on voluntary service for every aspect of a venture, from the writing and submission of papers, to refereeing the papers, to revising them as needed, to editing them and preparing them for publication, sometimes the wheels turn slowly and people’s busy schedules pose delays for the process. We are grateful for all who work hard to make this voluntary scholarly endeavor a success. Your patience in waiting for the publication of the issue is also greatly appreciated. We continue to strive to meet our timeline goals as best we are able and trust our readers will understand our exigencies.

The articles in this issue fall into four categories. The first two are carry-overs from the Second International Bible Conference held in Izmir, Turkey, in July 2006, the theme of which was “The Adventist Theologian and the Nature, Mission, and Unity of the Church.” The next two are from the annual Fall meeting of the Adventist Theological Society held in Washington, DC, in November 2006. The theme of those meetings was “The Church in the Public Square.” Then there is one paper by Dennis Pettibone from the annual Spring meeting of the Society held at Andrews University in Michigan the end of March 2007. Its theme was “Current Issues in Eschatology.” Our next issue will have more papers from this symposium. Finally, there are three papers of general interest, unrelated specifically to any of these conferences or symposia.

We trust that you will enjoy the articles in this issue. We solicit your own contributions toward this endeavor. We always need more papers in the pipeline than we have, which is one reason publication gets delayed. Your scholarly contributions will always be appreciated.
Reflections on Organizational Patterns Among Pauline Congregations

Miguel Luna
Ministerial Association, Northern Asia-Pacific Division

There are a variety of forms of church organization in contemporary church denominations. How did these churches adopt their own models of church organization? Would it be possible to grasp a model of church organization from the early church? More specifically, is it possible to understand the way early believers were organized as local and universal church? In considering the structure of the church as it is mentioned in the New Testament, there is always a dangerous tendency to read back into apostolic times the issues and arguments of today’s literature. This paper explores the biblical teachings of church organization in the New Testament and its implications for church organization today.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze early church organization as it is reflected in the book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles. It explores the sources for early church organization and the reason behind that church structure. In addition, it seeks to discover not only how the church was organized, but also how it grew and organized despite persecution and a variety of cultural and philosophical influences.

The Initial Stage of the Church

In calling the twelve disciples, Jesus Christ was beginning a new movement that would grow to become the Christian church. “He called his twelve disciples and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matt 10:1). It is important to note that from this small group of twelve, Jesus inaugurated the basic unit of church organization and mission. As mentioned in verse 5, “these twelve Jesus sent out” (Matt 10:5). The word “apostle” gives the same idea.
From this beginning the disciples were called by Jesus, and they were called to continue Jesus’ mission.

In asserting His declaration to the apostle Peter, Jesus’ Himself expresses His willingness to build His own church. “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock [Jesus] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18). From this statement it is possible to grasp the intention of Jesus to have a church and to have apostles to continue with the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the multiplication of disciples (Matt 28:18-20).

The church, initiated by Jesus, would be a movement that would continue the mission of the One who is now “exalted to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33). Jesus’ purpose for the formation of a community of believers was so clear that He even prayed for those who would be added to this early church nucleus. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me, through their message” (John 17:20). Jesus prayed also for the unity of the community of those who will be united in one body, the church (John 17:21). So, in the last week of His ministry He prayed, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name . . . so that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11). Unity was for Jesus one of the most important aspects of the movement He was beginning. In synthesis, the New Testament church is considered to be an organic body founded upon Jesus Christ with individual members interdependent, yet each having full access to the church’s head, Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 4:25; 2:18).

**The Great Commission**

The Great Commission is found near the end of three gospels and in the first chapter of the book of Acts. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus instructed His disciples to make more disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything He had taught them. Based on the centrality of Christ’s authority, the use of the term disciple in the Great Commission, and the practice of evangelism and church development in the book of Acts, it is expected that God’s plan for carrying out said commission will focus on planting new groups of committed disciples. The book of Acts reveals the way the first-century missionaries implemented the Great Commission. After the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, the church was established in Jerusalem (Acts 2). The gospel spread, and everywhere it went churches were established. The book of Acts records the establishment of local churches in Antioch of Syria, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus, and
Rome. One important example of church development is found in the establishment of the church in Antioch of Syria.

The Antioch Church

As a result of the work of those who were persecuted, “men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:20, 21). This was the beginning of the church of Antioch. Because of this development, the church in Jerusalem sent a disciple to observe and bring reports. Sending a representative suggests that they already had a system of church organization.

It also suggests that they were concerned not only about church organization but church growth. So, “they sent Barnabas to Antioch” (Acts 11:22). As time passed, the church in Antioch became one of the centers for church development, since “a great number of people were brought to the Lord” (Acts 11:24). In order to continue nurturing in Antioch, Barnabas brought Paul there. “So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people” (Acts 11:26). It appears that Paul and Barnabas followed the Jewish pattern of the synagogue in organizing the Antioch church.

After one year of teaching, those who believed and regularly came to the meetings became disciples of Jesus Christ, and for this reason they were called “Christians” (Acts 11:26). They not only got a new name, but they also grew in such a way that Luke mentioned that after one year, the church was led by prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1), which indicates that church leaders were selected according to their spiritual qualifications and spiritual gifts. They even were concerned for the needs of the brothers living in Judea and provided help, “sending their gifts to the elders by Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:30). Sending leaders and sharing gifts suggest that the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch were organized.

It is noteworthy that when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their missionary trip, they reported to the local church that sent them. As Luke mentioned, “from Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the gentiles” (Acts 14:26-27). Evidently making reports of missionary activity was the practice. They were accountable for
LUNA: REFLECTIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

their mission to the church and for sharing the news of their missionary trip with them.

The Ministry of the Apostle Paul to the Jewish Synagogues
The early synagogue helped Jews maintain their identity while living in a foreign and pagan country. It became the center of Jewish social life, serving as school, meeting place, courtroom, and house of prayer. In some towns, synagogues may have even provided lodging for travelers. Synagogues were a place where small groups of Jewish students could read and discuss the Torah and oral tradition. Worship and study, friendship and community celebration, meetings and governing of the community were centered on the synagogue.

The natural place to witness the gospel of Jesus was in the place where Paul and Barnabas were accustomed to study the Scriptures, the synagogue. The first place they visited on their mission trip to Cyprus was the local synagogue, where “they proclaimed the word of God” (Acts 13:5). “From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down” (Acts 13:14). After the reading of the Scriptures, the leaders invited the apostle Paul to speak. Paul explained the purpose of Jesus Christ’s mission and sacrifice, and finally he concluded, “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38,39). Therefore, in their early missionary ministry, the apostle Paul and his associates used the synagogue as a center for evangelization because they were accustomed to its structure.

After they reached the Jews, they also turned to the Gentiles because this was their mission (Acts 13:45-47). Although their ministry focused on the Gentiles, they followed the same method: first they visited the Jews in their synagogues, and then they turned to the Gentiles (Acts 14:1,3). For instance, “in Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish Synagogue” (Acts 14:1). The idea of “as usual” suggests that they made the major approach in teaching the Gospel visiting the Jewish synagogues. And as a result of Paul and Barnabas’ teachings, many new disciples were added to the church. How did they organize? Again following the pattern of the Jewish synagogues, they appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:21-23). They were organized as a local church apart from the local synagogue. Thus the early church organization was
gaining identity and using the synagogue as model for a local church organization.

So it also happened in Thessalonica. “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said” (Acts 17:2,3). Throughout the book of Acts, this was the method of sharing the gospel of Jesus. When they arrived in Berea, they also followed the same method. “On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue” (Acts 17:10).

Interestingly enough, they used the same approach in Athens. “So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). In Corinth, “every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4). In Corinth there was a change of place after the Jews opposed Paul, so he “left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God” (Acts 18:7). The early church also began its meeting at the houses of the believers. “So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God,” we read, so he continues at the house of Titius Justus.

In Ephesus Paul “himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews” (Acts 18:19). And in his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul arrived in Ephesus again, and following his custom, he “entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).

In summary, visiting the synagogues was their strategy for church mission and evangelism as well as a pattern for local church organization. In those places they visited, elders were appointed for teaching and nurturing the believers.

Appointment of Local Church Elders

The first reference to elders in the early church is found when the believers at Antioch sent a relief offering to the “elders” of Jerusalem “by the hand of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:30). The designation of elders was certainly similar to the term used to name the leaders of the synagogue in Judaism, but different in nature. The apostle Paul and his helpers appointed elders in the cities they visited (Act 14:23). It seems that one of the main purposes for returning to the cities they had already evangelized was to appoint elders. “Then they returned to Listra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to
remain true to the faith. We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God, they said.” Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church, and “with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust” (Acts 14:21-23). It seems that they followed the opinion and consent of the whole church in the process of selection.

It is important to note that when the apostle and his associates appointed elders, they used a particular leadership pattern from the Jewish synagogues. The actual leadership of the synagogues included the head of the synagogue (archisynagogos), the minister (Hazzan), and the elders (Zegenim). According to the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles, they selected the term elders to designate the leaders of the local church. As the local church grew, they borrowed at least two categories for leadership: the Zegenim and the Hazzan. The latter had a connection with the idea of service and ministry, as was the case of the church in Philippi.

It was the normal procedure for early church organization to appoint elders in every church. Interestingly enough, when the apostle Paul addressed the Philippian church, he mentioned, “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers [episkopoi] and deacons” (Phil 1:1). Philippi was the first church established on the European continent (Acts 16:11-40), and they already followed the pattern established by these missionary trips. Although he was using the word episkopos in this epistle, the apostle was referring to elders, presbyteron, a word also recorded in the book of Acts. Luke mentions that “Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church” (Acts 20:17). In this case he used the word presbyterous. Later, in his address to the Ephesian elders, he used the word episkopoi; therefore, for the apostle the words were interchangeable (Acts 20:28).

The appointment of elders was also an important work of the associates of Paul, such as Titus and Timothy. He mentioned to Titus, “the reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders [presbyterous] in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). Similarly, he instructed Timothy, “The elders [presbyteroi] who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those who work in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17).

In summary, elders were religious leaders of the early church who governed the believers in local congregations and were responsible for leadership, pastoral care, teaching, and supervision. When discrepancies and doctrinal misunderstanding arose, local leaders gathered together.
with elders and apostles in Jerusalem in order to solve doctrinal questions.

The Council of Jerusalem

The church of Antioch was confronted with a doctrinal debate: the issue was regarding circumcision of those who came to the church from a gentile origin. Should they be circumcised before coming to the Christian community? Some men who came from Judea taught that “unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). In order to solve this issue, the church of Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas, “along with some other believers to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:2). This is the first reference to a church council in which representatives from local churches were selected to discuss a doctrinal issue.

Thus, Paul and Barnabas were “welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them” (Acts 15:4). It seems that the apostles continued in a position of leadership as major overseers of the universal church and were willing to listen to reports on church development. Specifically, “the apostles and elders met to consider this question” (Acts 15:6). So at the Jerusalem Council it is possible to observe two levels of church organization: the first the local churches who sent their elders as representatives, and the second the universal church represented by the apostles, who were empowered to make a doctrinal statement.

In the Council, there was a desire to preserve the unity of the church. For this reason, the church of Antioch did not act independently, but decided to send representatives together with Paul and Barnabas to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem (Acts 15:2, 4; cf. Gal 2:9).

After they had a consensus, the apostles and elders, with the whole church, “decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They choose Judas (called Barsabas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers” (Acts 15:22). So the church in a council had the capacity to send representatives to local churches to teach a doctrinal statement and to clarify the issue of salvation. “The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers” (Acts 15:30-32). As a consequence of the decision of the local and universal church, they were strengthened in “faith and grew daily in
number” (Acts 16:4,5). A very important doctrinal consensus was established under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They agreed, “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Act 15:11). This was the beginning of a formal process by which the universal church discussed doctrinal questions.

Thus, through the Jerusalem Council two levels of church organization were clearly visible. The council operated under the leadership of the apostles (James, Peter, and John), and the whole church was present through their representatives. In other words, the structure of the church was formulated from both universal and local perspectives (Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23).

It is important to note that the apostle Paul in his third missionary journey, when he arrived at Jerusalem, clearly recognized the universal leadership of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. “When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry” (Act 21:17-19).

There was not only a recognized leadership in Jerusalem, but also a monetary contribution from local churches to Jerusalem. “Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gifts to Jerusalem” (1 Cor 16:1-3). There was a recognized universal leadership in Jerusalem as well as recognized leadership in the local churches.

**Universal Leaders of the Church**

As mentioned above, looking to the church development and early church organization, there were two levels of church organization in Paul’s time. First, the local church elders appointed by the apostle Paul and his associates cared for the local needs of the recent community of believers. Second, the universal church leaders such as Paul and his associates functioned as overseers and universal church pastors who cared for the church at large, its nurture and health.

It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul and his associates functioned as major supervisors of the local churches in certain regions. In a certain way these associates were universal overseers under the apostle’s guidance. For instance, from Ephesus, Paul “sent two of his helpers,
Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer” (Acts 19:22). Similarly, addressing the church at Thessalonica, the apostle wrote, “we sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith” (1 Thess 3:2). And after the visitation, Timothy came back with a report to Paul. “But Timothy has just now come to us from you and he has brought good news about your faith and love” (1 Thess 3:6).

Through the instructions that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy, some basic principles for the universal ministry may be understood. It was the apostle Paul who appointed Timothy at Lystra (Acts 16:1). Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him on his second missionary trip (Acts 16:3). Thus, Timothy traveled, sent by Paul, on some specific pastoral missions. For example, he sent Timothy to Thessalonica, Philippi, and Corinth with specific instructions and mission (1 Thess 3:2; 3:6; Phil 2:19; 1 Cor 4:17). Therefore, it is evident that Timothy functioned as a shepherd in a broader category of church organization.

Is there evidence of how Timothy performed his universal ministry? The letters Paul wrote give us some clues toward understanding his ministry. First of all, he was assigned to correct false teachers (1 Tim 1:3; cf. 2 Tim 2:24,25). He was also charged to instruct the members of local churches (1 Tim 4:6). How did he perform his ministry? He was invested with authority, being an example of teaching, preaching, faith, and purity (1 Tim 4:11-14). Timothy was also commissioned to prepare other believers to teach doctrine (2 Tim 2:2).

Another important characteristic of the apostolic ministry was the fact that universal workers addressed churches in the introduction of the epistles. For example, Apollos and Paul were considered “fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9). “Paul, an apostle of Christ by the will of God, and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:1). “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother” (Col 1:1). “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy” (1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:1). There is evidence that Paul had coworkers such as Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:3), Timothy (Rom 16:21), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Mark (Col 4:10), and Luke (Phlm 24). All of them received teaching and instructions from the apostle Paul to conduct the work of teaching and witnessing from a universal perspective.
**LUNA: REFLECTIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS**

**A Unique Form of Church Organization**

Before my conclusion and final remarks, it is important to ask why Paul and his associates chose the synagogue as a model for local church organization. As was mentioned, their strategy for mission and evangelization was to visit the Jewish synagogues and present the Gospel that Jesus was the Messiah.

There was another model that the apostles could use for church organization on both local and universal levels. Paul was very well acquainted with the political system of the Roman Empire, and he declared himself to be a Roman citizen (Act 16:37,38). During his trial and judgment, he recognized clearly the instances of the judiciary and political system of the Roman Empire. He evidently avoided any hint of the hierarchical system of the sort used by the political structure of that time.

Paul was following more than tradition when structuring churches patterned after their synagogues. As a well-trained Pharisee (Phil 3:4-7), he understood the value and purpose of the synagogue. For him it was a house of prayer and a house of Scripture study. Besides, at the center of the synagogue teachings, festivals, and worship was the expectation of the coming of the Messiah. So, in the light of their strategy and constant visitation to the synagogues in their missionary trips, the synagogue constituted a very important place to testify that indeed Jesus Christ, the Messiah, had come and provided salvation not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. Clearly, Paul used this model of church organization that matched the proclamation of the Messiah.

It is also important to observe that Paul was also confronted with philosophical schools of thought throughout his ministry. Although he was aware of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:18), he did not organize another philosophical school called “Christian.”

Contrary to any philosophical school, he emphasized the truth received by revelation and communicated by inspiration (2 Tim 3:16). He also mentioned that the message he was teaching was not his own, but was the message of the Lord (1 Thess 2:13). He received by revelation the message of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11,12). The gospel and church mission was the apostle’s passion and priority.

In summary, the apostle Paul did not follow any political form of government, nor any philosophical school of thought, but he followed the pattern of a religious institution, a synagogue, because it represented the solution for the teaching of Jesus as the Messiah and the form for a unified church organization.
Conclusion

The apostle Paul clearly states that the church was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows in a holy temple of the Lord” (Eph 2:20,21). According to this metaphor, Jesus Christ is the principal foundation upon which the apostles and prophets, and finally, the whole church are laid.

Paul asserts that James, Cephas (Peter), and John “were reputed to be pillars” (Gal 2:9) in the church at Jerusalem. It is important to note that in most cases Peter is recognized as a primary apostle, but primary in the sense of service (2 Pet 1:1). From its beginning, the church was strongly influenced by the preaching and teaching of Peter and John (Acts 3:1, 4:1,13). They took the initiative to fulfill the responsibility given by Jesus, “teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). In those days most of the believers were Jews, and it was not difficult for them regularly to assemble for worship in the synagogues.

As the church grew, it became necessary to include others in the organization. In an initial step, “seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom,” were elected to collaborate with the apostles (Acts 6:1-6). They functioned not only in the “daily distribution” but also, according to the book of Acts, taught, preached (Stephen and Philip), and baptized (Philip) (Acts 6:8-15; 8:4-40).

As a result of the preaching of the Word by the disciples, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria grew (Acts 9:31). The church grew quickly, creating the necessity for supervision by the apostles. For example, Peter traveled to encourage the believers in Lydia, Joppa, and Caesarea (Acts 9:32,36; 10:1,24).

A study of the book of Acts and the epistles shows that the apostle Peter worked primarily among the Jewish believers, and Paul among the Gentiles. Paul notes that he “had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised” (Gal 2:7). In this way, ethnic and regional missionary endeavors were also carried forward.

The church at Antioch became a center for the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles. There, Barnabas and Paul preached to great multitudes (Acts 11:25-26). At the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas, as apostles, went to the Gentiles to share the gospel of salvation (Acts 13:46,47; cf. 2 Tim 1:11). The fact that they were semi-itinerant apostles created the need for permanent supervision by local
church leaders after the apostles left. Thus, in their journey, they appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:23), demonstrating to early believers a basic church organization for the continuation and preservation of the work of all local churches.

From this early church development, it may be implied that church organization functioned administratively at two levels: at a broader level by the apostles and at the local level by locally appointed and ordained elders. The church in its initial organization was led by the apostles, who acted by the influence of the Holy Spirit in appointing local elders who in turn instructed the believers in their local congregations.

The apostles were called upon to validate and enhance the work of the gospel in places away from Jerusalem, and so they made trips to several locations for this purpose (Acts 8:14; 9:26,27,32; 11:1). Soon, the gospel work began in Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea, and a new center developed in Antioch. With the commissioning of Barnabas and Paul as the first Christian missionaries sent by the church, there was soon the beginning of a universal church. When a doctrinal problem tested the identity of the developing church, the Antioch church selected representatives who appealed to the apostles and elders of Jerusalem, whom they evidently believed were qualified to weigh evidence and render a decision (Acts 15:2,6,13-21,22,25,28).

As the apostle Paul established churches throughout the Gentile world, Paul's practice was to ordain elders and charge them with the responsibility of local leadership (Acts 14:23). Later, the apostle refers to a body of "bishops and deacons" who shared the leadership of the church in Philippi (Phil 1:1). Near the end of his life, Paul charged young Titus as regional supervisor to appoint elders in the churches of Crete (Titus 1:5).

**Contemporary Church Implications**

As a result of this study, some implications may be applied for a contemporary form of church organization:

Christ is the head of the church, and the Holy Spirit is His representative.

Christ desires the unity of His church in such a way that there will be distinguishable beliefs and practices reflecting the principles of His kingdom.

Church organization was needed because of church growth and for the accomplishment of church mission.
Early church organization followed the pattern of the Jewish synagogue with which they were familiar.

The local church is the basic unit of God’s church and possesses a local leadership, elders and deacons, responsible for nurturing and caring for the spiritual life of the believers.

Each local church also has responsibility to the total body of Christ, His Church.

There was recognized local and universal church organization. Local churches were led by the leadership of elders and deacons, and universal church by the itinerant apostles and evangelists, such as Paul and his associates.

There was a recognized universal church leadership in Jerusalem.

Doctrinal issues were discussed at the universal level of church organization, as it was done at the Council of Jerusalem.

There were regional territorial assignments to facilitate church mission according to people’s backgrounds and cultures. They visited these provinces and organized churches in their cities.

The mission of the church is a continuation of Christ’s mission for saving the lost, and church organization was established to fulfill that mission; therefore, the church is a divine organism and a human institution. A church without mission is just another institution.

Despite different locations, ethnic origin, cultures, and traditions, the early church was united by a common gospel, mission, and form of church organization.

Miguel Luna is Secretary of the Ministerial Association at the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, with headquarters in South Korea. He has been a religion teacher and dean of the School of Theology in Peru and Hong Kong during the past years. He holds a Ph.D. in Religious Education with a concentration in Systematic Theology from Andrews University. mluna@nsadventist.org
The years immediately prior to the fateful day of October 22, 1844, were marked by much confusion and fanaticism in the ranks of Adventist believers. All who joined the movement accepted its fundamental tenet that Christ would return somewhere between 1843 and 1844; however, Millerite Adventism was not an organized movement, with clearly defined ways of understanding and interpreting Scripture. Thus, during these pre-Great Disappointment years, the leaders of the movement were caught on the horns of dilemma: on the one hand, William Miller, Joshua Himes, and others labored to project a public image of their movement as orthodox and sane; on the other hand, they and their followers believed that all people, not just certain individuals, could interpret the Scriptures for themselves in the light of the Holy Spirit. This resulted, at times, in a variety of bizarre ideas among some of those who joined the movement. Understandably, this jeopardized, to some extent, the credibility of the Millerite movement. This example from early Adventist history illustrates the perennial problem of religious authority in the church.

The dilemma faced by the Millerite leaders was not new; the problem of religious authority arose soon after the ascension of Jesus. During their lifetime, the apostles functioned as a trustworthy source of authority for the primitive Christian community. With their death, however, the

---

problem of authority in the church became evident. This problem has never been fully resolved.

At its best, Christian theology has sought to find a balance between two approaches to religious authority. One approach suggests that the Church has authority over the individual and that the individual should respond with complete trust toward religious authority and its pronouncements. The other approach suggests that the individual is the source of authority, having the right to scrutinize, critique, or reject the pronouncements of the Church. In this paper, these approaches to religious authority are referred to, respectively, as dependence and independence models of religious authority.  

At the risk of oversimplification, the history of religious authority may be explored from the perspective of these two approaches. This is mainly because the problem of religious authority occurs at the point of interaction between these two mutually exclusive forces: dependence and independence. Throughout the history of Christianity, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant ecclesiology has been able to break free from the hold of either force, at times oscillating between both or taking them to their extreme. In recent decades, and especially since the Second Vatican Council, the search for a solution to the problem of religious authority, the “holy grail” of ecclesiology, has intensified on both sides of the Christian spectrum. The issue of religious authority is, I believe, also of interest to Seventh-day Adventists. Let us now, therefore, examine the dependence model, the mode of religious authority prevalent during most of the Christian era.

**Dependence.** During His earthly ministry, Jesus established a community of believers, known in the New Testament as *ekklēsia*. Following His ascension, it was the task of the apostles, as immediate witnesses to the Christ-event, to faithfully preserve the message and to function as the doctrinal authority for the primitive *ekklēsia* (Gal 1:8-12; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Cor 14:37; 2 Cor 10:8). Although the apostles served as itinerant evangelists who established new congregations, there is no New Testament evidence that the apostles ever presided as the heads of local churches. It is clear, however, that they were actively engaged in establishing local leadership and that this system of governance was based on the approach

---

2 As will become evident later in this paper, I am indebted to Sharon Parks for the use of these terms.

3 This paper is limited to the problem of religious authority within Western Christianity.
used in the synagogue.\textsuperscript{4} Within the Christian context, these leaders became known as “elders” (\textit{presbyteroi}), or “bishops” (\textit{episkopoi}), which basically denoted the same office\textsuperscript{5} (Acts 20:17, 28). It appears that the multi-elder system of church governance spread rapidly and became accepted in every Christian congregation during the life of the apostles (Acts 14:23).\textsuperscript{6} Although the New Testament emphasizes the need for church leadership to be dependent upon apostolic testimony, it does not present its readers with an unambiguous picture of the nature of episcopal authority. The scarcity of biblical evidence regarding this matter set the stage for the ecclesiological developments of the post-Apostolic era.

With the rise of various heretical movements, the sub-apostolic Church was, to some extent, forced to address the issue of religious authority. \textit{1 Clement} (c. 96 AD) and \textit{Didachē} (c. 110 AD), as well as the writings of Ignatius (c. 35–c. 107 AD), Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225 AD) and Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200 AD) attest that the vacuum left by the death of the apostles was filled by the leaders in local churches, who all appear to have had equal authority. It is in these writings that we witness the evolution of the biblical system of ecclesial leadership into what became known as the episcopal system of church governance.\textsuperscript{7} With time, the multi-elder system was replaced by the monepiscopate or monarchical episcopate, i.e., one bishop per church, who, it was believed, was historically linked with the apostles through the rite of ordination. The role of the bishop was to govern the church, to lead in worship, and to administer the Christian sacraments.\textsuperscript{8} Most importantly, however, by virtue of his ordination, which allegedly endowed him with the apostolic gift of interpretation, the bishop was to serve as the protector and interpreter of the Scriptures. The bishop protected the apostolic tradition, as well as individual believers, against heresy, by providing correct interpretation of the

\textsuperscript{5} Edmund Hill, \textit{Ministry and Authority} (London: Chapman, 1988), 32.
\textsuperscript{6} Campenhausen, 76.
This later became known as the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, i.e., the belief that the doctrinal authority given to the apostles by Jesus was preserved in a direct and unbroken line of bishops. This doctrine continues to be the linchpin of contemporary Roman Catholic ecclesiology. By the end of the third century AD, the bishops, as successors to the apostles, presided over the lives and beliefs of individuals with unique and powerful authority. The salvation of believers depended on their communion with the bishops, through whom, it was believed, God interacted with His people. The presence of a bishop in the church became indispensable to the existence of the community of faith. Where the true bishops were, there was the Church of Christ. Thus, increasingly, the church came to be defined as the bishops and those in communion with them.

In later centuries, doctrinal authority was centralized in the hands of the Roman bishop, whose official doctrinal pronouncements were identified with the voice of Christ. The height of papal authority occurred in the 13th and 14th centuries, beginning with the reign of Innocent III (1198-1216) and ending with that of Boniface VIII (1294-1303). The Popes of this era claimed authority over both the church and the state. This was clearly expressed in 1302, when, confronted with numerous threats to his authority, Boniface VIII issued a bull, Unam Sanctam, in which both the doctrinal and the temporal powers of the bishop of Rome were strongly asserted, and the unity of the Church under the rule of the Roman pontiff was emphasized.

---

9 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 4.26.2; Cyprian, Letter 62; Peter Hinchliff, Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 40-41.


11 Thus Cyprian wrote: “Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church” (Letter 68.8).

12 At this juncture, it is important to note that within Eastern Orthodoxy, religious authority developed in a more collegial manner. A detailed discussion of religious authority within Eastern Orthodoxy, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

13 For a succinct description of the circumstances surrounding the issuance of the bull, see J. Derek Holmes and Bernard W. Bickers, A Short History of the Catholic Church (New York: Paulist, 1984), 100-02, and T. S. R. Boase, Boniface VIII (London: Constable, 1933), 316-19.
JANKIEWICZ: MODELS OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

This absolute authority of the community, in the voice of the papacy and the bishops, over the individual was confirmed by the Council of Trent (1543-1563) and by the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). Both councils insisted that individual scriptural interpretation must never contradict the official doctrinal teachings of the Church. In communion with the pope, the bishops were the final arbiters of truth. If the Roman Catholic leadership defined a particular teaching or interpretation of Scripture, this was considered truth, even if a more thorough exegesis of the passage suggested an alternate interpretation. This attitude was exemplified in Pius IX’s (1792-1878) famous statement: La tradizione son’io (“I am the tradition,” June 18, 1870).

The Roman Catholic solution to the problem of religious authority, thus, was one of dependence. In this model, the leadership of the community was “the church,” and they held the key to correct interpretation of Scripture. Individuals were expected to demonstrate complete submission and unexamined trust towards authority. They could contribute to theological thinking as long as they were in agreement with the leaders of the community. Thus, within this model, doctrinal assent was of primary importance.

The deficiencies of this model were not comprehensively addressed within the Roman Catholic communion until the Second Vatican Council, when it was suggested that a move away from strict authoritarianism was essential if the Church was to fulfill its missionary mandate. Gaudium et spes (“Joy and hope”), a Vatican II document dealing with the Church’s relationship with the modern world and promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965, advocated “lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought,” which, in the eyes of some interpreters, allowed a measure of

---


theological pluralism within the Church. Unfortunately, the Second Vatican Council was just a brief respite in the history of Roman Catholicism. The irresistible lure of the dependence model has been evident in the pontificates of all post-Vatican II pontiffs. This, however, has not had the desired effect of greater unity and conformity within the church, but has, instead, resulted in fragmentation and division. It should be added that Roman Catholicism is not the only ecclesial community that, deliberately or unthinkingly, has followed the dependence model. It has proven to be irresistible even within some Orthodox and Protestant communities, with equally damaging consequences.

**Independence.** In contrast to the dependence model of the first fifteen hundred years of Christian history, the latter middle ages were dominated by what Jaroslav Pelikan terms, “doctrinal pluralism.” During the 14th century, the authoritarianism of the Roman Catholic Church was challenged in a number of ways, including growing nationalism and secularism, dissatisfaction with the moral condition of the church, and increasing prosperity. Furthermore, the renaissance and humanism brought a new emphasis upon the individual, encouraging a return to original sources rather than a dependence on the official pronouncements of the church. This was the milieu within which the reformation was born and which contributed, in the minds of many, to the upstaging of the mentality of dependence. While Roman Catholicism, at least until the mid-20th century, defended itself against the cultural influences referred

18 During the writing of this article, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger entered the second year of his pontificate as Benedict XVI. Prior to his election, he was the Vatican’s Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a doctrinal watchdog of the Roman Catholic Church. His prefecture was marked by little tolerance toward various post-Vatican II doctrinal aberrations. It remains to be seen if his pontificate will continue along similar lines.
19 In 1998, a renowned Roman Catholic theologian, Cardinal Avery Dulles, wrote in a note to a friend: “I hope that between us (and with much help from others) we can help contain some of the madness than now passes for Catholic Christianity” (my personal collection).
to above, much of Protestantism embraced them. Individualism became the hallmark of Protestantism.

In agreement with the spirit of the age, the reformers taught the doctrines of the “priesthood of all believers” and of Sola Scriptura. Both of these principles emphasized the individual’s immediate relationship with God and with the Scriptures, that is, without the indispensable mediation of the church. It must be noted, however, that the magisterial reformers’ emphasis on these doctrines was based on an attempt to rid the church of various medieval views and practices that had crept in, rather than on a dissatisfaction with the authoritarianism of the church. Luther, for one, insisted on the need for an institutional church, albeit not in the Roman Catholic sense, which would mediate individuals’ access to the Word of God and regulate the spiritual and moral lives of believers. Likewise, John Calvin insisted that one could not have God as a Father unless one considered the church as one’s mother. Like Cyprian, he believed that there was no salvation outside of the church. The vestiges of Roman Catholic institutionalism in the reformers’ teachings were perhaps the reason why they continued to maintain close ties with the state, at times using its judicial structures to enforce uniformity of belief.

Thus, while the magisterial reformers repudiated the dependence model bequeathed to them by Roman Catholicism and attempted to create ecclesiastical structures in harmony with the doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers,” in some ways they continued to perpetuate a mentality of dependence. It was perhaps this ambiguity that prompted Ernst Troeltsch to observe that the magisterial reformation, at best, only modified the Roman Catholic ecclesiology of the middle ages. The Catholic approach, he believed, was simply fitted with a more individualistic veneer, but the medieval attempt to regulate the whole of life, including the personal beliefs of the individual, was still strongly in

23 Pelikan, 173-174; John Calvin, Institutes, 4. 1. 1.
24 Pelikan, 178. Calvin devotes the entire fourth book of his Institutes to ecclesiology. In section 1 of book 4 he states: “there is no salvation out of the church.”
26 The infamous case of Servetus (1511-1553) and the Reformers’ attitude towards the Anabaptists may serve as examples. For a complete account of the events leading to Servetus’ execution, see Roland H. Bainton, Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus (Boston: Beacon, 1953); cf. Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform 1250-1550 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980), 340-351.
27 Bainton, 117-122.
While Troeltsch’s position may be an oversimplification of the complex historical and religious milieu of the 16th century, it nevertheless highlights the problem that plagued the magisterial reformation and was never fully resolved.\footnote{Ernst Troeltsch, \textit{Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World} (Boston: Beacon, 1958), 48, 70. Cf. Bainton, 115.}

In contrast, the radical reformers of the 16th century, represented by various Anabaptist groups and fiercely opposed by the magisterial reformers, recognized the radical implications of these Protestant doctrines and brought them to their ultimate conclusion. While the various groups that came under the umbrella of the radical reformation may have had different agendas, they all agreed that the success of the reformation depended on a complete return to biblical Christianity. The Anabaptists asserted that although the magisterial reformers had emphasized the role of the Scripture, they had not sufficiently freed themselves from Catholic thinking, as evidenced, for example, in their continual support of the alliance between church and state. The Anabaptists fiercely opposed such an alliance, which, they asserted, tended to curtail religious liberty by allowing the use of force to coerce doctrinal uniformity.\footnote{In 1570, Theodore Beza, a Calvinist theologian and Calvin’s successor in Geneva, denounced any form of religious tolerance as “a most diabolical dogma because it means that every one should be left to go to hell in his own way” (Paul Johnson, \textit{A History of Christianity} [New York: Atheneum, 1977], 319).}

Salvation, they argued, in no way depended on church membership or assent to doctrinal formulations handed down from above. Thus, while some groups of Anabaptists produced confessions of faith, such as the \textit{Schleitheim Confession} (1527), for the most part they were “reluctant to issue writings of dogmatic content.”\footnote{Williston Walker, \textit{A History of Christian Church} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959), 327; Bainton, 99-101. It is to be noted that prior to gaining the state’s backing, the Reformers also argued for freedom of religion according to the individual’s conscience.}

For the Anabaptists, the true church of God was in heaven; the church on earth was just an assembly of baptized and regenerated Christians\footnote{Pelikan, 314.} in which “every individual believer had the right to interpret Scripture as he pleased.”\footnote{F. H. Littell, \textit{The Origin of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church} (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 69, 86-87, 89, 95-98.}

\footnote{Alister McGrath, \textit{Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought} (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 182.}
church,\(^{34}\) resulted in many factions.\(^{35}\) Thus, the implications of *Sola Scriptura* and the “priesthood of all believers” were fully realized in the radical reformation, ultimately resulting in the triumph of individualism and subjectivism.

This situation was exacerbated by the enlightenment, which relegated religion to the realm of private experience,\(^ {36}\) as well as by the rise of two prominent, primarily Protestant movements in the 19th and 20th centuries; namely, liberal theology and neo-orthodoxy. Liberal theology emphasized a personal and subjective religious experience, independent of any form of Church authority and, ultimately, even of Scripture. In an attempt to rescue Protestantism from the clutches of liberalism and its attitude toward Scripture, neo-orthodoxy suggested that although Scripture is not the Word of God in and of itself, it becomes the Word of God when read by the individual, guided by the Holy Spirit. Neo-orthodoxy, in true Kierkegardian fashion, affirmed that truth is personal; God speaks to the individual rather than to the community.\(^ {37}\) Individualism, thus, was a hallmark of each of these movements.

In summary, by shifting the locus of religious authority and combining it with a heavy-handed approach to religious dissent, the magisterial reformers inadvertently opened a Pandora’s box of religious individualism which, in the long term, proved hard to control. This was exacerbated by the radicalization of the doctrines of *Sola Scriptura* and the “priesthood of all believers” by the radical reformers, as well as by the influence of the enlightenment upon Protestantism. As a result, “the monopoly of a single confession” was forever broken.\(^ {38}\)

A rudimentary scan of the current Protestant theological landscape leaves one with the impression that there are as many interpretations of Scripture as there are interpreters. This is often observed by Catholic apologists, who suggest that the Protestant tendency to value the individual at the expense of the community is to blame for the proliferation of various denominations and sects within Protestant Christianity. It is alleged that since the reformation, over twenty five thousand new Protestant denominations have been formed.\(^ {39}\)

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
\(^{35}\) Pelikan, 314.
\(^{38}\) Bainton, 211.
In recent years, the excesses of individualism have been recognized within Protestant circles, especially in the United States, and a steady flow of studies dealing with the church have appeared. Some have concluded that the modern Protestant situation is irreparable and have turned to Catholic theology for guidance. As a result, the Roman Catholic Church has experienced an unprecedented rate of evangelical conversions in recent decades. Many of these recent converts have become outspoken and influential Catholic apologists. In contrast, some Protestant writers, rather than being concerned, see increased Protestant individualism as a sign of maturity and hail it as the end of denominationalism.

Faced with the continual delay of the second coming, as well as influenced by the Protestant search for greater understanding of the nature of the church and religious authority, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has initiated its own ecclesiological exploration. Until recently, ecclesiology has received scant attention within Adventist literature, pushed aside by more urgent theological issues within the church. Thus, religious authority within Adventism has tended to oscillate between the two extremes of dependence and independence. For example, when working with potential new members, we encourage them to think independently of their social and religious context. Once they are baptized, however, we expect them to relate to Adventist doctrinal and life-style issues in a more dependent style. Thus, it is plausible to assert that both theological fragmentation and undue authoritarianism within Adventism may be traced to the inability to find a balance between the forces of dependence and independence, a problem recognized within contemporary Adventist theological circles.

As the search for answers continues, modern Adventism stands at a crossroads. We can, like some Anabaptist groups, assert that the church is nothing more than a gathering of people who come together to study

---

40 See, for example, Edmund P. Clowney, The Church (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995); and Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, ed. The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005).
41 Alex Jones, No Price too High: A Pentecostal Preacher Becomes a Catholic (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006); Louis Bouyer, The Spirit and Form of Protestantism (Princeton: Scepter, 2001); David Currie, Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996); Hahn, Rome Sweet Home (1993); Thomas Howard, Evangelical is Not Enough (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984). This is only a sample of many Evangelical authors who have turned their back on Protestantism and have joined the Roman Catholic Church in recent years.
42 George Barna, Revolution (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2005).
Jankiewicz: Models of Religious Authority

Scripture, to pray, and to evangelize, bringing under our umbrella people with a variety of doctrinal convictions—thus emphasizing the independence of the individual and sliding toward fragmentation. On the other hand, we can follow the lead of Roman Catholicism, crushing any form of independence and elevating the spirit of dependence. While there are no easy solutions to the problem of religious authority facing Adventism and much of the Protestant world, I would like to propose a third approach that could perhaps make possible a balance between the mutually exclusive forces of dependence and independence.

Towards a Balanced Approach to the Problem of Religious Authority

The terminology for the model I will now explore is adapted from the work of renowned psychologist Sharon Parks, who developed a stage model of young adult faith development. While Parks’ model is just one among many and may be considered an overly simplistic representation of faith development, it may nevertheless offer some insight to the problem of religious authority.

Parks suggests that the faith of a young adult develops in stages. The first stage of faith development is characterized by dependence upon, and “un-examined trust” toward, one’s social and religious systems. In the second stage, the individual moves toward independence, beginning to question the beliefs of the formerly unquestionable authority, and to identify him or her self as the source of authority. In the third stage, which Parks labels interdependence, individuals recognize their need for community and are willing to surrender some of their independence. For the relationship between community and individual to be successful, however, the community cannot use its norms and beliefs to intentionally limit the individual’s creativity and freedom. In order to continue growing, the individual must have the freedom to question norms and boundaries and to explore new territory. This process, which can only be accommodated by a healthy, secure community, is crucial for the community’s own search for meaning and truth.


44 Parks, The Critical Years, 54.
45 Ibid., 57.
46 Ibid., 61.
How can these insights be applied to the problem of religious authority? As outlined above, the Roman Catholic model required dependence of the individual on authority. In contrast, the Protestant model moved toward independence. As we shall see, Parks’ concept of interdependence echoes the New Testament vision for the church, which, I believe, calls for a balance between strong doctrinal consensus and independence. Let us now take a look at both of these.

The Church and Doctrinal Consensus. In recent decades, sociologists and health practitioners have come to recognize the importance of community, over against the Western inclination toward individualism. Scott Peck, for one, views genuine community as the solution to all of the world’s problems. “There is evil in the world,” he states, “and community is its natural enemy.” Like-minded individuals are encouraged to form genuine, all-inclusive communities, to foster their personal growth, and to protect them from the world’s evils.

Although the Christian community should do and be all of this, the Bible implies that the “church” is more than just a collection of like-minded individuals who come together for the betterment of self and the world. According to the New Testament, the ekklesia had its beginning in Christ, who not only established it to be His agent in the world, but also promised His continual presence within it (Matt 28:20). The church, obviously, is not an individual, but rather, a group of individuals who come together for the purpose of discerning the will of God and living it in their lives. While divine revelation does and should benefit the individual, its primary purpose is to benefit the church, and its goal is fulfilled when the church listens, receives, and responds to its message (Rev 2:7). It is the task of the whole community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret the divine message, to contextualize it, and to formulate its doctrinal boundaries. “The Christian church,” Jaroslav Pelikan notes, “would not be the church as we know it without Christian doctrine.” As Tony Campolo forcefully states, “the Church is a gathering of radically committed believers who realize that any subjective prompting of the Spirit must be confirmed by a group of fellow believers before the individual dares follow its leading.” The Scriptures invite the local community to “test the spirits to see if they be of God” (1 John 4:1-3 NIV). Thus, when an individual hears the voice of God, these insights

should be shared with the community, having confidence that “if all are agreed that the leading is of God,” then it is proper to obey the call.\footnote{Tony Campolo, \textit{A Reasonable Faith: Responding to Secularism} (Waco: Word, 1983), 108}

The importance of community consensus is affirmed by Paul, who states that the church, not the individual, is "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15, NIV). Of course, to protect the integrity of the Scriptures, this statement must be balanced by Paul’s other sayings, such as those found in Galatians 1:9 (NIV): “If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned” (cf. 2 Cor 11:4). These statements clearly emphasize the authority of Scripture over the community. This, according to Bernard Ramm, is the genius of Protestantism, which excludes the possibility of any scriptural interpretation from having the same authority as the Scriptures themselves.\footnote{Bernard Ramm, \textit{The Pattern of Religious Authority} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 56. Ramm adds that the authority of the church “is never final, never unquestionable, and never primary. [It] must always be under the supremacy and lordship of the revelation itself” (ibid., 60).}

While all Christian denominations lay claim to correct interpretation of Scripture, Adventists are in a unique position, as we believe that our most fundamental doctrines, such as the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the state of the dead, are based not only on correct interpretation of Scripture, but also upheld by the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.\footnote{"The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings: ‘Affirmations and Denials,’" \textit{Review and Herald} (July 15, 1982): 659; George Knight, \textit{A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists} (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2004), 37. Cf. R. W. Schwarz, \textit{Light Bearers to the Remnant} (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1979), 67; Nancy Vyhmeister, “Who are Seventh-day Adventists?” in \textit{Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology}, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 7.}

An emphasis on doctrinal consensus need not be seen as a threat, as it provides several benefits. First, a solid doctrinal framework provides a starting point for individual Bible study. As Richard Rice correctly asserts, individuals sometimes attempt an independent study of God’s word without realizing how much they depend on the church for their understanding of the Scriptures. When a believer “overlooks or deliberately ignores the influence of Christian tradition on the way he reads the Bible,” Rice writes, he “actually becomes more, rather than less, susceptible to it.”\footnote{Richard Rice, \textit{Reason and the Contours of Faith} (Riverside: La Sierra UP, 1991), 92.} In other words, a familiarity with the doctrinal teachings of the community not only enhances independent Bible study, it also make
the individual less prone to repeat the errors of theological history. As the 20th century philosopher and novelist George Santayana quipped: “Those who ignore the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.”

Second, to use the Apostle Paul’s terminology, a strong doctrinal framework prevents the community from being “tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching . . .” (Eph 4:14). The purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, given to individual members of the church (v. 11), is to build up “the body of Christ . . . until we all reach unity of the faith” (vs. 12-13). Thus, “unity of the faith” is a goal to which each ecclesial community should aspire (v. 3; cf. Rom 15:5; 1 Cor 1:10). While the church may welcome and encourage new insights that flow from independent Bible study, it is the entire ecclesial community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that is called to decide on the soundness of new teaching (1 John 4:1; 1 Thess 5:21; Phil 1:10). Although “a community-wide discussion is always unwieldy and inefficient . . . it is indispensable to the theological health and spiritual vigor of the community as a whole.”

Finally, doctrinal consensus stands as a buffer against the excesses of independence, individualism, and unrestrained freedom. Every social network, be it secular society, the church, or the family, constrains the freedom of those who choose to join it. In the case of secular society, members have little choice but to subject themselves to the exigencies of the community. In the case of family, especially adult members, or a religious community, this submission is and should be voluntary. Whether voluntary or not, however, the success of a relationship between community and individual depends, to a degree, on how individuals relate to communal restraints and whether or not they are willing, if necessary, to give up their freedom for the benefit of the community. Ramm notes: “unguided, undisciplined, and unchallenged freedom is no great blessing. . . The highest spiritual personality is realized by the surrender of a measure of freedom in obedience to a person, a system of moral teaching, or an institution.”

The community may, at times, need to protect itself from particularly aggressive individuals whose aim is its destruction. Such situations, however, are rare and need to be approached with extreme caution and Christian love.

An ecclesial community that emphasizes doctrinal consensus is, however, constantly tempted by authoritarianism or dependence. The

---

53 Fritz Guy, Thinking Theologically (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1999), 43.
54 Ramm, 42.
temptation is particularly strong when Christian communities elevate their own scriptural interpretation as the final bastion of all truth. A balanced approach to the problem of religious authority, however, must guard itself against the dangers of authoritarianism. This can be accomplished in several ways. First, the church must acknowledge its dependence on the authority of Scripture. It is the Bible, rather than a particular interpretation, that is the Word of God, and that should, in all circumstances, be seen as the authority for the Christian community.

Second, the church must recognize that scriptural interpretations may vary, depending upon circumstances. This is perhaps why, throughout their history, Seventh-day Adventists have tended to avoid what George Knight calls ‘creedal rigidity’ and have allowed for the possibility of further developments in scriptural teachings. In Adventist circles, this dynamic approach to church teaching is known as ‘present truth,’ a concept that allows for revision of the doctrinal statements. This understanding of truth was endorsed by early Adventist pioneers to guard Adventism from lapsing into its own form of scholasticism, a malady that inhibited creative Protestant theological thought during the 17th and 18th centuries. More recently, this concept of ‘present truth’ was outlined in the preamble to the ‘Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists’ (1980).

Finally, a balanced approach to the problem of religious authority, however, must guard itself against the dangers of authoritarianism. This can be accomplished in several ways. First, the church must acknowledge its dependence on the authority of Scripture. It is the Bible, rather than a particular interpretation, that is the Word of God, and that should, in all circumstances, be seen as the authority for the Christian community.

Second, the church must recognize that scriptural interpretations may vary, depending upon circumstances. This is perhaps why, throughout their history, Seventh-day Adventists have tended to avoid what George Knight calls “creedal rigidity” and have allowed for the possibility of further developments in scriptural teachings. In Adventist circles, this dynamic approach to church teaching is known as “present truth,” a concept that allows for revision of the doctrinal statements. This understanding of truth was endorsed by early Adventist pioneers to guard Adventism from lapsing into its own form of scholasticism, a malady that inhibited creative Protestant theological thought during the 17th and 18th centuries. More recently, this concept of “present truth” was outlined in the preamble to the “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” (1980).

As George Knight has noted, however, it must be affirmed that the dynamic and ever unfolding understanding of truth was never to be understood as a blank check for fundamental doctrinal change, as “certain non-negotiables” did, and continue to, exist. Finally, a balanced

55 George Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 21.
56 For an extended discussion on the nature of “present truth,” see Knight, 17-28.
57 See, for example, Ellen White, Testimonies to the Church (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:706-709.
58 The full text of the preamble is as follows: “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”
59 Knight, 24. Knight notes the tension between the negotiable and non-negotiable aspects of Adventist doctrines present in the writings of Ellen White. On the one hand, she concedes that all “all our expositions of Scripture” may not be “without an error” and “the fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible.” On the other hand, Ellen White appears to have
approach to authority can defend itself against authoritarianism by recognizing the value of the individual. It is to this that we now turn.

**The Individual.** Many faith development theorists believe that individuals may not reach spiritual maturity unless, at some point in their journey, they move in opposition to authority. This may be a difficult and painful time for both the community (or family) and the individual, especially if the community functions in an authoritarian manner and resists the individual’s move towards independence. Much pain can be avoided, however, if the community recognizes that independence is a necessary part of human development; and if, rather than defending its rights, the community provides a nurturing environment within which the individual is safe to explore. It is only within such an environment that individuals can develop trust, learn to recognize the value of their own judgments, and begin to take responsibility for deciding between competing claims of truth. While the move towards independence may at times result in the individual’s rejection of communal beliefs, this risk must be taken, as, ultimately, it not only facilitates the growth of the individual, but also enriches the community’s own understanding of truth, thus preventing its stagnation. Consequently, rather than being a threat to the community, the individual’s move towards independence provides opportunity for the growth of the community.

---

strong convictions that the early Adventists had the truth. “It is a fact that we have the truth, and we must hold with tenacity to the positions that cannot be shaken; but we must not look with suspicion upon any new light which God may send, and say, Really, we cannot see that we need any more light than the old truth which we have hitherto received, and in which we are settled.” Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1946), 35; Idem, *Review and Herald*, August 7, 1894, 497. See Knight, 25-27, for a discussion of this issue.


61 Dudley, 36-38.


63 The Gospel of Luke appears to provide some support for the existence of this process in the life of Jesus. While His development differed from that of other teenagers due to the circumstances of His birth, we may draw some analogies. In Luke 2:41-52 we
While recognizing the limitations of “stage of faith” theories, these insights may nevertheless help us understand the limitations of an authoritarian system of church governance. Within such a system, the emphasis is on unquestioning acceptance of communal beliefs, to the neglect of individual exploration of the scriptural message. Any deviation from the doctrinal status quo evokes strong emotions and fierce opposition. A religious community functioning in this mode often sees itself as the medium between God and the individual, thus downplaying individuals’ God-given ability to search for “truth.” It must be remembered, however, that while God, through His Spirit, reveals Himself to the community, He also speaks to individuals within the community. This is perhaps what Paul had in mind when he admonished the Thessalonians: “Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast to what is good” (1 Thess 5:19, KJV). For these reasons, individual reflections on communal beliefs, although sometimes threatening to the community, must be expected.

To the adolescent who rebels against the establishment, and to the theologian who explores new territory, the church must provide a safe and nurturing environment. Although independent thinking may ultimately result in the individuals’ rejection of communal beliefs, a communal attitude of love and nurture may prevent negative feelings on the part of those who leave and may faciliitate their return to the community. It certainly has a positive impact on those remaining within the community. In my youth, I was discouraged from asking questions about church beliefs. The thought was that questioning resulted in doubt. Such thinking still prevails in some quarters. I believe that a church with a balanced approach to religious authority, a church that recognizes the value of the individual to the community, can not only withstand, but should also encourage, independent thinking. Encouraging individuals to think independently should not be seen, as a call for arbitrary and indiscriminate

find Jesus for the first time individuating from the faith of His parents. Ellen White writes: “in the answer to His mother, Jesus showed for the first time that He understood His relation to God” (Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1940], 81).

64 David R. Larson recently wrote that “stage of faith” thinking can be limiting because it can leave the mistaken impression that spiritual development is invariable, smooth and cumulative (David R. Larson, “Is Thinking of ‘Stages of Faith’ Itself a ‘Stage’?” http://www.spectrummagazine.org/onlinecommunity/sabbathschool/070618larson.html (Accessed, June 28, 2007).

65 Ellen White, Testimonies to the Church, 5:708.
doctrinal revision, but rather, as an invitation for some individuals within the church to search their Bibles, meditate, and pray, and then, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, suggest ways in which the biblical message may be made more relevant to their own generation. Ellen White makes this salient observation regarding intellectual growth and development:

Agitate, agitate, agitate. . . . The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God’s people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine . . . When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what…

While there is no doubt that Ellen White stood for the “pillars of our faith,” she clearly upheld the value of “independent thought.”

Thus, a balanced approach to church authority allows individual expression of faith. Individuals within the community have diverse personalities with different sets of experiences and thus, at times, different approaches to the biblical message. An interdependent community recognizes these differences and considers them an asset, rather than a threat, as they contribute to the church’s understanding of truth. Individual differences inevitably create conflict; however, conflict need not be a threat to the community. Within a community functioning in the dependence mode, which is based on doctrinal unanimity, conflict is highly destructive, as it threatens the foundations upon which the community is based; however, within an interdependent community, conflict, while undesirable and often painful, is seen as an opportunity for re-evaluation and growth. “Truth” that cannot withstand scrutiny may not be worth following.

I believe that for a multicultural, interdependent community of faith functioning within a post-modern context, complete doctrinal unanimity might not be possible. This was recently acknowledged by Jan Paulsen:

There is some theological polarity in our church. Whether they be to the right or the left, reactionary or liberal, they are

---

there. . . . An environment of polarity is sometimes the by-product of uncompromisingly held views—misguided or otherwise . . . What do we do with all that? . . . I say we learn to live with it, with the proviso that the church, in its teachings, programs, and activities, must at all times be visibly loyal to our heritage and our identity.\(^6\)

This is good advice. When doctrinal consensus becomes the only uncompromising goal of an ecclesial community, relationships suffer and fragmentation increases. While wide-ranging doctrinal consensus is indeed a worthy and scripturally supported objective of an ecclesial community, it must also facilitate the growth of individuals towards spiritual maturity and allow a measure of freedom to explore. This can only be achieved if the community responds to the call of Christ: “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

Conclusion

In this paper, I explored, from a historico-theological perspective, two models according to which a religious body may exercise its authority. First, I examined the dependence model, evident primarily within the Roman Catholic communion before the Second Vatican Council. Next, I discussed the independence model, which became the hallmark of much of Protestantism. I then proposed that a balanced approach to the problem of religious authority should be one of interdependence. Without a knowledge of its developmental history, the contemporary church all too often oscillates between dependence and independence, neither of which is ideal. The ability to maintain a balance between these mutually exclusive forces is, I believe, the “holy grail” of ecclesiology. The ideal of interdependence will probably never be attained on earth, where, in Luther’s words, Ecclesia semper reformanda est (the Church is always in the process of reforming herself). This, however, should not preclude the church’s continual effort toward the ideal. While Christianity as a whole is too fragmented to adopt a uniform authority model, I believe that individual faith communities, such as Seventh-day Adventists, have the potential to come close to the ideal of an interdependent model of authority.

Darius Jankiewicz is currently a lecturer in theology at Fulton College, located in Fiji. Of Polish origin, he has been a youth pastor in Greater Sydney Conference, a senior pastor in Tasmania, and a school chaplain in several SDA schools in the South Pacific Division. He holds a Ph.D. in Religion with concentration in Historical Theology from Andrews University. darius@connect.com.fj
The Public Square: Union of Church and State: What We Can Learn from History and Scripture

Norman R. Gulley
Southern Adventist University

Arguments over the “union of church and state” include a connection between the two or a separation of the two, both for mutual benefit. With respect to a connection, the Judeo-Christian heritage offers an advantage to the state, compared to atheism, in upholding biblical values. At the same time, the church is advantaged by tax exemption, protection of property, recognition of ministers and marriages, and freedom to preach religious liberty. With respect to separation, both state and church are free from the potential temptation to repress the other, with the state as neutral (not favoring one religion over another). The state is free to legislate in civil matters, and church members are free to follow the dictates of their conscience.

1 For example, supporting (1) separation from Britain on the grounds of civil and religious liberties (propounded by Puritan, Baptist, and non-Anglican clergy; Glen E. Throw, “The Christian and Rebellion against Authority,” in On Faith and Free Government, ed. Daniel C. Palm (Langham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 50 [after as On Faith], and (2) the sanctity of life against unnecessary abortions.

2 Congress approved a land grant to build the Baptist College (1832, now George Washington University), and a similar land grant to the Catholic Georgetown University (1833); see On Faith, 18.

3 Compare early history: when the American Revolution began, nine of the thirteen colonies had state churches, and all but one of the thirteen colonies used tax dollars to support preachers and church building. Tax-supported provisions were not repealed in Virginia until 1798 and lasted in Massachusetts until 1853. See The Complete Works of Francis A. Schafer: A Christian Worldview (Wheaton: Crossway, 1982), 5:433.
Journal of the Adventist Theological Society

Here are two major views on the relationship of church and state in America: (1) when religion is not allowed to contribute to public debates, this is tantamount to a secular worldview defeating a religious worldview;⁴ (2) religion cannot save a country through politics, only through the gospel, and thus alignment with the kingdom is infinitely more powerful than politics, so that changed lives can impact government.⁵

In 1947, for the first time, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional for government “to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion.”⁶ Law professor Philip Hamburger (University of Chicago) argues: “there are myriad connections between religion and government that do not amount to an establishment, let alone a full union of church and state.”⁷ He argues that there are various degrees of union (from non-establishment to establishment).

Why It Is Important

Christians in America are rightly concerned about the lack of Judeo-Christian values in contemporary society, such as the absence of God, Scripture, and prayer in the upbringing of so many youth (in homes and public schools) and the bombardment of anti-Christian values that daily confront them. They argue that if Christian legislation can prevail, things will get better. Many Christians associate the union of church and state

---

⁴ See Brenden Sweetman, Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006). J. Budziszewski points out that “people who hold incompatible worldviews disagree not only about what is true but also about how to determine what is true,” Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 19. This book examines the contributions of Carl F. H. Henry, Abraham Kuyper, Francis Schaeffer, and John Howard Yoder. I would suggest that a complete separation of church from state (or theology from policy) means that no religious conviction can guide members of Congress. Personal convictions of Senators and Congressmen, true to Scripture, should have a place in policy formation if they are not for sectarian benefit but for societal benefit.

⁵ Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, Blinded By Might: Can the Religious Right Save America? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999). Turning from a political way to bring change (through the Moral Majority), the authors seek change through the gospel alone, without any political entanglements. The Jewish leaders at the time of Christ looked for a Messiah who would give them a political solution to their status under Rome, but God sent Jesus as their Savior for the coming kingdom.


with "taking America back for God." Some argue that America was birthed by white Christian pilgrims, where church and state were united (as in Massachusetts and Connecticut and later in other colonies), and yet others argue that these pilgrims and their successors robbed native Indians of their lands, broke covenants made with them, and massacred millions of them.

Some Christians argue that America became a Christian nation in 1776, when it gained its independence from Britain and was founded on freedom and inalienable rights. They look to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as grounds for claiming America as a Christian nation. Others ask whether America was a Christian nation when later "white Christians loaded five to six million Africans on cargo ships," enslaving some "three million" who survived the awful journeys.

The topic is too broad, requiring a book to do it justice, so this article is confined to instances where a union of church and state have not benefited the church. Four examples are considered: (1) the Constantinian experiment (4th century), (b) the Geneva experiment (16th century), (c) Zurich and Infant Baptism (16th century), and (d) the New England experiment (17th century) and beyond. Only a brief examination is possible. Then we will consider arguments found in contemporary literature on the subject, though representative rather than exhaustive. The final section examines God’s intent for His church with respect to the state, as far as insights from Christ and the NT are concerned. We turn first to the examples from history.

---

8 The Scot Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) wrote the book *Lex Rex* (1644), the "clearest example of the Reformation principle of a people’s political control of its sovereign," which had a great influence on the writing of the U.S. Constitution through John Witherspoon (1723-1794), educated at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, a Presbyterian who followed Rutherford’s *Lex Rex*, was a member of the Continental Congress (1776-1779; 1780-1782), and was the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence (Shaefer, 5:137, 138).

9 See Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), for the way Indians and Africans were treated (98).

10 We will not discuss the medieval church-state (Catholic experience), and the English state church (Anglican experience), although they are important examples of this topic.
Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (ca. 275-337) elevated Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire in A.D. 313. His motive was political: to unite his empire of multiple religions. He must have been impressed with the growing influence of Christianity.

Evidence calls into question Constantine’s conversion to Christianity. He remained a heathen while outwardly an alleged Christian. While blind to the significance of theological disputes, he worked hard to settle them in calling church councils. “He first introduced the practice of subscription to the articles of a written creed and of the infliction of civil punishments for non-conformity.”

For the first three centuries after Christ, the Christian church was persecuted and grew. When Constantine “converted” to Christianity, the persecuted church became powerful. Clergy recognized in this new order “a reproduction of the theocratic constitution of the people of God under the ancient covenant,” except dissenting sects received no benefit and were “subject to persecution from the state and from the established Catholicism.” In other words, the Catholic church fared well in the union with the state, while other churches (dubbed sects) were persecuted by church and state. But the Catholic church still suffered:

The Roman state, with its laws, institutions, and usages, was still deeply rooted in heathenism, and could not be transformed by a magical stroke. The christianizing of the state amounted therefore in great measure to a paganizing and secularizing of the church. The world overcame the church, as much as the church overcame the world, and the temporal gain of Christianity was in many respects canceled by spiritual loss. The mass of the Roman empire was baptized only with water, not with the Spirit and fire of the gospel, and it smuggled hea-

---

11 Constantine’s coins had the name of Christ on one side, and the Sun-god on the other. He never formally renounced heathenism and was only baptized on his death bed in 337. In the year he summoned the Nicean Council (324), he executed his rival and brother-in-law, Licinius (breaching a promise not to), and later killed his nephew, the young Licinius (hardly eleven years of age), and killed his eldest son Crispus. “At all events Christianity did not produce in Constantine a thorough moral transformation. He was concerned more to advance the outward social position of the Christian religion, than to further its inward mission” (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 1st 1910), 3:14-17, quote on 17.
12 Schaff, 3: 32.
13 Schaff, 3:91.
Baptists in Connecticut objected in 1803 to the union of church and state, referring back to what happened in the time of Constantine:

(The) doctrines of the gospel . . . retained much of their primitive purity, until the clergy became corrupted by a legal establishment under the Emperor Constantine, then, when church and world became united, and the clergy furnished with rich livings, and large salaries, the constant and main object of every such establishment, civil and religious oppression united their strength to the great injury of mankind.¹⁵

Early champions for freedom of conscience (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius) were ignored as the union of church and state restricted “religious freedom.”¹⁶ Heretics were not only excommunicated from church, but considered criminals against the state. Hence, in the middle ages the Roman church persecuted, even with death, those disagreeing with her dogmas.¹⁷
Geneva Experiment

The union of church and state in Geneva made it a theocracy. It was a marriage between Calvin’s theology and his control of the state. “Calvin extended the authority and civil government to both Tables of the Law.”18 The first table (commandments 1-4, Exod 20:3-11) refers to one’s relationship to God (religious matters). The second table (commandments 5-10, Exod 20:12-17) refers to one’s relationship to humans (civil matters). The state usually confines its jurisdiction to the second table, but the union of state and church extended the jurisdiction of the state to all ten commandments. This meant that “Offences against the Church are offences against the State, and vice versa, and deserve punishment by fines, imprisonment, exile, and, if necessary, by death.”19 The church in Geneva was a “State Church.” This meant that it was the duty of the State to legislate beyond its civil responsibilities. It was to legislate in religious matters, as well.

Here are some of the laws and legal sentences in Geneva: (1) the number of dishes at meals was regulated; (2) attendance at public worship was compulsory, with monetary fines if the law was not obeyed; (3) watchmen were appointed to assure church attendance; (4) a man who heard an ass braying and commented “he prays a beautiful psalm” was banished; (5) men who laughed during a sermon were imprisoned for three days; (6) “The death penalty against heresy, idolatry, and blasphemy, and the barbarous custom of the torture were retained. Adultery, after a second offence, was likewise punished by death”; (7) “A girl was beheaded for striking her parents, to vindicate the dignity of the fifth commandment”; (8) men and women were burned for witchcraft.20

From 1542 to 1546 fifty-eight judgments of death and seventy-six decrees of banishment were passed. During the years 1555 and 1559 the cases of various punishment for all sorts of offences amounted to four hundred and fourteen—a very large proportion for a population of 20,000.21

On what basis did Calvin institute a theocracy? “His arguments . . . are exclusively taken from the Old Testament. The Calvinistic as well as the papal theocracy was legalistic rather than evangelical.”22 Schaff notes

---

18 History of the Christian Church, 8:462.
19 Ibid., 8:463.
20 Ibid., 8:490-492.
21 Ibid., 8:492, 493.
22 Ibid., 8:472.
that “The most cruel of those laws—against witchcraft, heresy, and blasphemy—were inherited from the Catholic Middle Ages, and continued in force in all countries of Europe, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, down to the end of the seventeenth century.”

No wonder “The union of Church and State is tacitly assumed or directly asserted in nearly all the Protestant Confessions of Faith, which make it the duty of the civil government to support religion, to protect orthodoxy, and to punish heresy.”

We find this spelled out in a number of creeds.

Michael Servetus (1511-1553) didn’t believe in the eternal divinity of Christ and opposed infant baptism and predestination. He had other beliefs that need not detain us, but Calvin disliked his theology and considered him “the greatest enemy of the Reformation.” Since Servetus was only a transient in Geneva (in route to Naples), he was not subject to the laws of Geneva. Legally, all Geneva could do was to banish him. But they put him on trial, denied him benefit of counsel, even though the law (1543) provided the same. This was blatantly unfair.

---

23 Ibid., 8:493, 494.
24 Ibid., 8:474.
25 For example, (1) The Second Helvetica Confession (1566), article 30: To a magistrate, “let him draw forth this sword of God against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers, oppressors, blasphemers, perjured persons, and all those whom God has commanded him to punish or even to execute. Let him suppress stubborn heretics (who are heretics indeed), who cease not to blaspheme the majesty of God, and to trouble the Church, ye, and finally to destroy it.” Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 1st 1931), 3:908; after as Creeds. (2) The French Confession of Faith, Gallicana (1559), article 40: God “has put the sword into the hands of magistrates to suppress crimes against the first as well as against the second table of the Commandments of God” (Creeds, 3:382). (3) The Belgic Confession (1561, revised 1619), article 36: God appointed civil leaders and “he hath invested the magistracy with the sword, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.” They “may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship; that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed, and the kingdom of Christ promoted” (Creeds, 3:432). (4) The Scotch Confession of Faith (1560), article 24: (my translation from 16th century English) “Moreover, to Kings, Princes, Rulers and Magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the Religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for Civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true Religion, and for suppressing of Idolatry and Superstition whatsoever: As in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah and other highly commended” (Creeds, 3:475-476).
26 See his system, explained in *History of the Christian Church*, 8:736-757.
27 Schaff’s comment, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:765. Calvin must have disliked the insults Servetus hurled at him during the trial.
28 See *History of the Christian Church*, 8:768.
the Geneva churches consulted said Servetus should be banished, but none suggested execution. But on October 27, 1553, Servetus was burned at the stake. Irwin Polishook says Calvin was “ruthless in suppressing heresy,” and with “few exceptions, the leading Protestants shared the intolerance of the medieval past.”

Castellio writes, “What a tragedy that those who had so lately freed themselves from the terrible Inquisition should so soon imitate its tyranny, should so soon force men back into Cimmerian darkness after so promising a dawn!” Schaff says Servetus’ death had no support in the NT, because “directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel.”


History of the Christian Church, 8:463.


History of the Christian Church, 7: 607.

---

**Zürich and Infant Baptism**

Infant baptism was practiced by all the Reformers, who considered re-baptism a heresy. Anabaptists were those who discovered that infant baptism is not taught in Scripture and argued that baptizing infants is an act without faith, for infants cannot exercise faith. The act of baptism without faith on the part of the baptized goes against salvation by faith, the message of the Reformers in opposition to works in the Catholic system. So Anabaptists rightly saw an inconsistency between the message of the Reformers and their practice of infant baptism.

Zürich was an early city where many Anabaptists lived. Although Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) worked in Zürich to forward the Reformation against the Catholic church, he didn’t go any faster than the city council’s approval in religious matters such as abolishing the mass and images. The Anabaptist leader Conrad Grebel (ca. 1498-1526) opposed the fact that the State should control the Church. But civil rule, not biblical truth, prevailed. In January, 1525, “the city council decided to stand by infant baptism and ordered Grebel and the Brethren to discontinue their movement.” The Anabaptists did not comply, so Grebel and others were arrested and condemned by the State to life imprisonment. One of them (Manz) escaped, then was recaptured and executed by drowning on
January 25, 1527. Anabaptists “were cruelly persecuted in Protestant as well as Roman Catholic countries.” It didn’t matter whether the state was united to Protestant or Catholic churches—persecution replaced proclamation as the arbiter between truth and error. The union of church and state was an affront to the Reformation Scripture principle, where Scripture interprets Scripture (sola Scriptura). Often the union of church and state, rather than Scripture, handed down verdicts. The union of church and state in Protestant countries had become a new magisterium, the same kind of power opposed by Protestants in their battle with the Catholic church.

New England Experiment and Beyond

Background in England. The medieval church ruled the consciences of humans, high and low, for more than a millennium. John Wycliffe (ca. 1330-1384) pointed out the errors of the Catholic church at Oxford University and is considered the “Morning Star of the Reformation.” For that reason, a ban was placed on him and his followers (1428), and later his body was exhumed, burned, and his ashes thrown into the Swift River. In the 16th century, God brought the truth of the gospel (“the just shall live by faith,” Rom 1:17) to Martin Luther (1483-1546), and later the gospel as union with Christ, with God’s sovereignty replacing Papal sovereignty, to John Calvin (1509-1564). But the gospel penetrated only partially into the minds of Luther and Calvin, who both perished.

The 16th century Reformation was mostly confined to continental Europe, although the influence of John Calvin came to Scotland. Because Pope Clement VII refused the king’s request for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, King Henry VIII (1509-1547) broke away from the Catholic church and became the head of the Church of England (Anglican). He seized Catholic monasteries and demanded total obedience to the new religion. Queen Mary I (1553-1558) tried to bring England back to the Roman church, but during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) the church was not considered as Protestant as in Holland and Scotland.

35 History of the Christian Church, 7:607.
36 There are problems with Calvin’s focus on God’s supremacy, not in replacing Papal supremacy, but in replacing God’s love. His double decree, with human election and reprobation decreed by God irrespective of human choice, is not a biblical revelation of the God who loves the world (John 3:16,17).
Some Christians thought the church should follow John Calvin. But Queen Elizabeth steered a middle course between Catholicism and Calvinism, like her father King Henry VIII. Her death brought an end to the Tudor dynasty, and the first of the Stuart line, King James I (1603-1625), ascended the throne and favored the Anglican church. ‘However, he persecuted certain Protestant groups such as the Puritans.” Later, King James II (1685-1688) favored Catholics. Roger Williams commented, “It hath been England’s sinful shame to fashion and change her garments and religions with wondrous ease and lightness, as a higher power, a stronger sword, hath prevailed; after the ancient pattern of Nebuchadnezzar’s bowing the whole world in one most solemn uniformity of worship to his golden image.”

When James I ascended the throne, a thousand clergymen signed a petition opposing church practices they considered inclined to Popery. Six months later, at Hampton Court, the king rejected their petition. So 300 ministers preached against the abuses of the State church, lost their job, some were consigned to prison, and a silent emigration began. The swing back and forth between a Papal and an Anglican state church made no essential difference, for both were tyrannical against other religions, with limited room for religious liberty. These were troubled times in Great Britain.

For example, the punishment for non-compliance to state legislated religion was severe, as described in the story of John Lathrop, a minister in England’s Newgate prison, with its filth, stench, and people of conscience locked into cells with the worst of criminals, who vented their cruelty on them. The cells were dark, damp, cold, small (nine feet by six

---

37 Edwin S. Gaustad, Roger Williams: Prophet of Liberty (New York: Oxford, 2001), 9, 10; see Polishook, 92; Everett H. Emerson, John Cotton (New Haven: College & University, 1965), 21, 22.
40 Emily Easton, Roger Williams: Prophet and Pioneer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 7, 8.
41 King Charles I (1600-1649) tried to “force Scotland to use English forms of worship,” but the Scots rebelled in 1639. Later, civil war broke out in England (1642) with a struggle between factions of Puritans. Presbyterians dominated the Parliament, but Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) sided with the Independents. In 1649 King Charles I was beheaded (W. M. Southgate, “Charles” in TWBE, 3:293, and W. M Southgate, “Oliver Cromwell” in TWBE, 4: 918.
feet), with no bathrooms, and plagued by disease and rats. In this tomb-like space, food was scarce and lacked nutrition—being only water, soup, and bread boiled in water, served once a day. Prisoners were gaunt with sallow faces, and the sane were crowded in with the insane.42

Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud’s persecution caused 23,000 people to come to New England between 1629-1640.43 John Lothrop and thirty-two members of his congregation arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, September 18, 1634.44

**Pilgrims.** The Virginia Company of London brought Anglicans to Virginia in 1607, and they became the established church, whereas in Massachusetts, a generation later, Congregationalists became the established church.45 The New England Experiment, in this article, is a comparison between Massachusetts and Rhode Island in the early formation of those colonies, between the Congregational and Baptist churches with respect to the state, perhaps best contrasted by John Cotton and Roger Williams, both graduates of Cambridge University and pastors who fled from persecution in England.

The Puritan movement began in England in the 1560s and 1570s.46 Fifty years later, in 1620, the Mayflower took 66 days to cross the Atlantic with 102 passengers and 20-30 crew packed into cramped quarters.47 Although they wanted to improve their lot, perhaps 50% of them wanted to improve their church experience, which they hoped possible due to the 3000 miles between them and the English king and the Anglican church.

Pilgrims who escaped to the new world included Puritans, who remained loyal to the Anglican church and to England, wanting to purify the church from within, thus forwarding the Reformation. Others were separatists, like Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and John Lothrop, who separated from the Anglican church and England in order to create a separate and thus a reformed church in the new world. Both sides were

---

43 Holt, 223.
44 Holt, 222. The Lothrop family were forefathers of four United States presidents: Ulysses S. Grant, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush.
reformers and likened their mission to a new exodus, leaving behind slavery (state church persecution) to cross the Red Sea (Atlantic) to arrive in Canaan or the New Jerusalem (New World), an analogy applied at other times in history.\(^{48}\)

The Puritans were Calvinists,\(^{49}\) and I concur that theirs was “a theology of Divine sovereignty rather than Divine love.”\(^{50}\) They wanted to establish a theocracy in the new world as Calvin had in Geneva, and this included a number of rigid rules.\(^{51}\) The English Calvinists brought the doctrine of persecution with them, and they persecuted other religions much as the Anglican church did in England.\(^{52}\) It follows that Puritanism gave rise to “Pharisaism” and was “ruthless in inflicting its will upon dissenters and those whom it judged sinners.”\(^{53}\)

For example, the Massachusetts Bay colony organized like a new state with one religion (Anglican) following its charter from England. They ended up persecuting just as they had been persecuted. Among many others, they banished Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. Hutchinson claimed direct revelation from God, thus making Scripture


\(^{49}\) Perry Miller and Tomas H. Johnson, *The Puritans* (New York: American Book, 1938), 56. Roger Williams did not like the Geneva theocracy (Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 97). Although Calvinism was being refined (see Perry Miller, *Errand Into The Wilderness* [New York: Harper & Row, 1956], 50-60), the intolerance of religious freedom was the same in Geneva and Massachusetts.

\(^{50}\) *History of the Christian Church*, 8:261.

\(^{51}\) Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 23. There were differences in church policy, but the New Englanders complied with social philosophy, so “in any one society only one orthodox regime should be allowed and that the civil magistrate should suppress and, if necessary, extirpate every form of ecclesiastical or doctrinal dissent.” Heresy was punished; all citizens, church members or not, were compelled to attend church and pay taxes to support the clergy. A charter from King Charles I to the Massachusetts Bay colony delegated it to act as in England “to suppress heresy and put subversives to death” (24). “Religious freedom was not a part of the colonial inheritance in America. The mass of immigrants expected uniformity of worship and demanded the persecution of notorious dissenters. Even those who fled from the Old World because of persecution had no intention of favoring religious freedom in America. Persecuted and persecutor alike agreed that liberty of worship should be forbidden.” Polishook, *Roger Williams*, 1.

\(^{52}\) Polishook, 3.

GULLEY: THE PUBLIC SQUARE: UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE

secondary, and Roger Williams argued that the state church in Massachusetts meant a civil magistrate was placed over the clergy to enforce religious matters. Furthermore, the use of the civil sword to enforce religious compliance was not the way to reform the church. Rather, it was the way to produce hypocrites, persons who merely complied outwardly to escape persecution. So the exercise was counter-productive and made the church in even greater need of reform. Williams rejected persecuting persons for differing religious beliefs, believing that freedom of conscience was far more important. In the 1650s Puritans “executed three Quakers." In 1692 “the colonists hanged (not burned) nineteen persons for practicing witchcraft.” Membership in the church was required for citizenship in Massachusetts.

Perry Miller and Thomas Johnson comment:

There was almost always an element of narrowness, harshness, and literal-mindedness associated with Puritanism, enough to justify some of the criticisms of the bishops and some of the condemnations that have been made on the Puritan spirit in recent times.

David Hull notes (among other things) that 17th century Puritans portrayed “God as indeed a stern disciplinarian and one not to be trifled with,” yet with a caveat that God is not savage enough to place his “helpless captives” in “protracted writhings." I would suggest, however, that Calvin’s theology of God’s eternal hell for those He doesn’t choose to save calls this statement into question, for eternal burning of those God doesn’t love is as severe a view of God as one could imagine. Puritans considered the reprobate as “monuments of his (God’s) severity.” John Cotton, who was trained at Cambridge University but persuaded by Calvin’s theocracy and his part in the death of Servetus, had a large impact

58 David D. Hall, Puritans, 13.
on Massachusetts (he arrived in 1633). Six years later he became a Congregationalist, and the union of church and state was illustrated by the civil magistrate excommunicating a church member, which was “a type of papal excommunication.” Cotton opposed democracy, promoting government by governors, not by people. “The theory that America, at least the northeastern portion of it, was a haven for the persecuted had never been accepted by John Cotton.” A law passed in 1644 forbade the existence of a Baptist church in the colony of Massachusetts.

Roger Williams and Rhode Island. Williams was a graduate of Cambridge University who arrived in Boston in 1631, two years before John Cotton. Though a Calvinist, Williams was so different from Cotton and the Puritans that they banished him from Massachusetts (1635) because he respected those who differed with him in matters of religion. He fled south during the winter (1635-1636) and befriended Indians. He believed in “soul liberty.” His greatest work was *The Bloudy Tenet, of Persecution, for Causes of Conscience* (1644), which notes how church and state union since Constantine (Geneva, Massachusetts) has harmed the church, for the church is not Christian if it persecutes, for Jesus used no secular weapons, only love. (Cotton and Williams debated these issues). Williams recognized that churches can excommunicate members for spiritual matters, but to persecute for matters of conscience was wrong. Nearly all of the critics of Williams relied upon the OT views of

---

61 Ibid., 97, 98 (quote 98).
62 Ibid., 100, see “antidemocratic provisions of Congregationalism,” 228.
63 Ibid., 229.
65 Even though John Cotton thought he was trying to be purer than anyone else and thought it God’s will that he was banished from Massachusetts (Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 28, 29. How harsh to banish Williams in the cold of a New England Winter, all in the name of Christ and Christianity.
66 For an excellent summary see Gaustad, *Roger Williams*, 89-97, and the debate between Williams and John Cotton (98-100). For practicing his Baptist faith, Obadiah Holmes was tied to a post in Boston’s marketplace and received 30 lashes with a three-pronged whip on his bare back (Sept 5, 1561). Roger Williams was furious, and in a letter to Governor John Endicott of Massachusetts, decried this barbaric treatment in the name of Christianity (101-104). Williams said it was “impossible for any man or men to maintain their Christ by the sword and to worship a true Christ . . . and not to fight against God . . . and to hunt after the precious life of the true Lord Jesus Christ” (Gaustad, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 24). Holmes resided in Rhode Island and went on a preaching mission to Massachusetts (ibid., 23, 24 [in some ways reminiscent of Servetus in Geneva]).
dealing with religious offenders. 68 Williams showed respect for Indians, including their religion and language. He learned their language and traveled with the Algonquins, and wrote A Key into the Language of America (1643). “Williams was perhaps the only educated colonist willing and able to cross the cultural barrier between English and Native Americans in early New England.”69

We need to remember the early history of America when we read president Lincoln’s Gettysburg address (Nov 19, 1863): “Four score and seven years ago our fathers, upon this continent, founded a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Lincoln spoke about 1776, and not about Massachusetts Bay colony and those that followed a rigid union of church and state, so different from Roger Williams and Rhode Island. Roger Williams used the metaphor of a hedge or wall of separation of church and state long before Jefferson.70 Rhode Island was the last of the 13 original colonies to approve the U.S. Constitution (May 29, 1790), delaying until the Bill of Rights was added.71 Rhode Islanders were the earlier forefathers that grasped the understanding of liberty of which Lincoln spoke, and were thefirst Americans to accept all humans as equal, whatever their differences—racial (Indians, English) or religious (Baptists, Quakers, Anglicans, separatists).

Williams lived as a Christian (unlike other nominal Christians). He was troubled that in the name of Christianity Indians were deprived of their land without due compensation.72 Rhode Island became “the safest refuge for liberty of conscience.”73 Williams invited persecuted Baptists and Seventh Day Baptists to Rhode Island and became a Baptist. He said: “I believe their practice comes nearer the practice of our great founder Jesus Christ than other practices of religion do.”74

Religious Establishment and Beyond. Two hundred years after the pilgrims first landed in the new world, the New England Baptists had a

---

68 Polishook, Roger Williams, 32.
70 Nathan O. Hatch in “Foreword” to Gaustad, Liberty, ix.
72 Gaustad, Roger Williams, 17.
73 Ibid., 29.
74 Longacre, Roger Williams, 97.
minority status compared to the Congregationalists. This is why the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut wrote to President Thomas Jefferson (October 1801) and months later (January 1, 1802) received his famous reply about the separation of church and state. Philip Hamburger argues that Jefferson disliked the power of clergy in Massachusetts and Connecticut. On the other hand, “no Baptist organizations made separation their demand. Instead, Baptists focused on other, more traditional, claims of religious liberty.”

New England church establishments collapsed in the 1820s and 1830s. One could argue that in its place, a growing fear of the Catholic church in America developed. In 1832 pope Gregory XVI issued his encyclical *Mirari Vos* condemning the separation of church and state.

For Americans, the crisis of slavery eclipsed worry about Catholicism, but by 1870 Elisha P. Hurlbut, former judge of the New York Supreme Court, “argued that there was an irreconcilable conflict between ‘Democracy and Theocracy’—a conflict ‘stronger and fiercer’ than between ‘freedom and slavery.’” He argued that “the theocracy of Rome and the democracy of America, being utterly antagonistic, have no other way to peace, but by an entire separation.” With respect to Calvin’s Geneva, Schaff says: “The union of Church and State rests on the false assumption that all citizens are members of the Church and subject to its discipline.” This applies to all the experiments considered above.

---

75 As late as 1774, James Madison deplored the imprisonment of Baptists in Virginia because five or six were in “close jail” for publishing religious ideas, mostly orthodox. See *On Faith*, 9.

76 Hamburger, 144-162. “Although Jefferson took justifiable pleasure in his contributions to religious liberty, he was indifferent to the religion of most of his countrymen and downright hostile to their religious institutions. Not until he came under scrutiny as president did he publicly suggest that he considered religion essential to the preservation of liberty. Even then, unlike many of his contemporaries, he certainly did not consider American religious groups and their clergy valuable for this purpose” (482).

77 Hamburger, 177. There is no record that Baptists used the president’s letter to promote separation (see 163-189).

78 Hamburger, 198.

79 Hamburger, 230, 231. It should be noted that “many clergymen persisted in their adherence to a version of Calvinism and, on this account, envisioned the church as the religious and moral guide for the state.” They hoped the “connection” between church and state “would flourish all the more profoundly in the absence of an establishment” (230).

80 Hamburger, 247.

81 *History of the Christian Church*, 8:489.
The Augsburg Confession is the founding manifesto of Protestantism. It was issued in 1530 after Martin Luther, on October 31, 1517, nailed the 95 Theses, or arguments, against the practice of indulgences on the door of the Catholic Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Article 28, “Of Ecclesiastical Power,” includes the following:

Therefore, since the power of the Church grants eternal things, and is exercised only by the ministry of the Word, it does not interfere with civil government; no more than the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government deals with other things than does the Gospel. The civil rulers defend not minds, but bodies and bodily things against manifest injuries, and restrain men with the sword and bodily punishments in order to preserve civil justice and peace. Therefore the power of the Church and the civil power must not be confounded. The power of the Church has its own commission to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments. Let it not break into the office of another; Let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world; let it not abrogate the laws of civil rulers; let it not abolish lawful obedience; let it not interfere with judgments concerning civil ordinances or contracts; let it not prescribe laws to civil rulers concerning the form of the Commonwealth. As Christ says, John 18, 33: My kingdom is not of this world; also Luke 12, 14: Who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Paul also says, Phil. 3, 20: Our citizenship is in heaven; 2 Cor. 10, 4: The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the casting down of imaginations.  

Contemporary Arguments

J. Budziszewski writes: “Evangelical Christians have been conspicuous in the American public square since colonial days.” He notes that conventional wisdom says their reentry into public affairs began with “the spectacular rise of the fundamentalist Religious Right in the 1970s,” but he suggests that “the founding in 1941 of the National Association of Evangelicals” is a better reentry date. Ronald Reagan’s presidential victory in 1980 heartened conservative Christians. “Suddenly, faith and politics seemed a promising match.”

---

82 http://www.nationalcenter.org/AugsburgConfession.html
84 Comment on flap of the book, Blinded By Might: Can the Religious Right Save America, by Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999).
Later, when the Moral Majority petered out, the Christian Coalition took over and became the new evangelical presence in political activism. Conservative evangelicals become a force in politics. Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson’s book *Blinded by Might* (1999) shows that both movements failed in their mission to stop abortion and pornography and to restore the American family in order to bring about a new world built on “traditional values.” They tried to build the kingdom of God through their own works (political means), which is just as impossible as earning salvation through one’s own works.

The failure of these movements was due to mixing two kingdoms, human and divine. They were repeating what had failed at the time of Christ. “Many of the religious leaders,” said Cal Thomas, “and even his disciples were looking for a political deliverer to break the grip of Roman rule. They wanted a Messiah who would give them heaven on earth, end their oppression, and put them in charge. But Jesus would have none of it. His kingdom, he said, ‘is not of this world’ (John 18:36).”

There is an important distinction between (1) using the state to push one’s religious agenda, which has happened often in history, and (2) allowing religious values to inform politicians in making decisions for the good of all citizens. The first method overrides the religious freedom of those whose beliefs differ from those held by the state-enforced religious ideas. The second method takes into consideration the broader context (beyond the merely secular) for addressing moral issues like abortion and euthanasia.

Philosopher Brendan Sweetman, in his book *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square* (2006), considers secular and religious ideas that are brought to the political table. He argues that secularism and religion are both worldviews. Furthermore, he argues that secularism is a religion. I know this to be true from my study of evolutionary theory. It takes faith to believe foundational premises of evolution, and once secularism has been accepted, the believers become as ardent as any believer who has faith in the existence of God. In fact, evidence for God is found in nature (intelligent design, ID) whereas evolutionists credit ID to the blind forces of the survival of the fittest and natural selection over deep-time, which

---

85 Ibid., 177.
87 Ibid., 81-83.
GULLEY: THE PUBLIC SQUARE: UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE

takes great faith, given the complexity of the cell—thought simple in Darwin’s day but now proven to be a veritable factory of inter-connected precision machines discovered by biochemists using sophisticated electron microscopy.\textsuperscript{88}

It is no longer acceptable to call secular beliefs reasonable and religious beliefs unreasonable. Secular worldviews cannot claim ownership of the rational realm. It is as appropriate to apply reason to a religious worldview as it is to a secular worldview. Faith-based reason qualifies as a religion, and this must include secularism. Supernaturalism and naturalism both qualify as a religion. Sweetman points out that the ideas of both are based on (1) a written source, such as “the Bible, the Qur’an, John Stuart Mills’ \textit{On Liberty}, Karl Marx’s \textit{Das Kapital}, John Rawl’s \textit{A Theory of Justice}”; (2) an authority like Billy Graham or Richard Dawkins; (3) “a profound personal experience of some kind (e.g., the experience that God is near, the experience that people are fundamentally equal”; (4) on tradition; and (5) on an “appeal to faith.”\textsuperscript{89} Nevertheless, Sweetman concludes: “I am prepared to agree that one should not introduce into the public square religious beliefs based on the above five sources.” He suggests the same policy for the secularist.\textsuperscript{90}

Space does not allow presenting all that Sweetman says in his book. But note his significant statement:

\begin{quote}
We must also note that all positions that are made the basis of law—whether secularist or religious—restrict human conduct. This is true even if an activity is made legal (and not just illegal). If abortion is legalized it also restricts the conduct of religious believers in the sense that although they want to live in a world where abortion is illegal, they are forced to live in a society where it is legal. Almost everyone who contributes to public debates wants some aspect of their views imposed (usually by law) on those who disagree with them.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

Sweetman argues a difference between higher-order and lower-order religious beliefs. The distinction is made between the moral rights of workers, or treatment of the homeless (lower-order) compared to the Eucharist (higher-order). Only lower-order religious beliefs can be

\textsuperscript{88} For example, see Michael J. Behe, \textit{Darwin’s Black Box : The Biochemical Challenge of Evolution} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

\textsuperscript{89} Sweetman, 86, 87.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 89, 117.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 123.
brought to the debate in the public square. So for Sweetman, the phrase “separation of church and state” now means that higher-order beliefs only must be excluded from the public square.

We live in a postmodern world where absolutes are dismissed. Rampant relativism is not conducive to true living, a topic I have addressed elsewhere.\(^\text{92}\) With this in mind, Sweetman is right to state:

> the secularist often approaches many of the topics in dispute in U.S. society mainly from a relativistic perspective, while proponents of the religious worldview approach them from a more objective moral perspective. Most important, secularists often appeal in U.S. society to what I like to call “the rhetoric of relativism.” This rhetoric is used in an attempt to keep traditional religious beliefs and values out of public arguments and debates, while at the same time avoiding a substantive debate about these beliefs and values.\(^\text{93}\)

As Sweetman notes, moral relativism has problems: logical and practical. First the logical problems: Relativists oppose objectivists for imposing moral values on all persons, but by stating that this is wrong, relativists make an absolute moral statement, the very thing they oppose. Now for the practical problem: A true relativist (1) could not criticize someone for stealing his car, (2) could not complain about a bank for overcharging him, (3) could not condemn racism, or (4) could not condemn murder, to name some examples.\(^\text{94}\)

It seems to me that in a secular postmodern world, where relativism does not contribute to life in a pragmatic or practical way, persons with religious values need a place at the table to bring to the debate values that benefit human life. This means that politicians informed by religious values of the lower-order can better contribute to society. Their values enable them to rise above meaningless relativism and speak from a broader context that evaluates the liability of relativism and points to a better way forward. But this in no way allows any religion to legislate higher-order religious doctrines to impose their understanding of biblical insights on others, whether religious or secular. Whatever help religious values bring to the state must never violate the religious freedom of all citizens.

\(^\text{93}\) Sweetman, 234.
\(^\text{94}\) Sweetman, 237.
GULLEY: THE PUBLIC SQUARE: UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE

This is why Chief Justice of Alabama Supreme Court Roy Moore was wrong to place a large monument of the Ten Commandments in the central rotunda of the Supreme Court building, unveiled on August 1, 2001. The monument suggested that the state of Alabama endorses the Christian religion, which is only one of many religions among its citizens. Therefore, by August 21, the Alabama Supreme Court unanimously voted to remove the monument.

I concur with Presbyterian Paul C. McGlasson, a Yale graduate, who said,

As Christians we affirm the separation of church and state. We denounce every effort to establish the Christian religion as the law of the land. The role of the state is to protect religious freedom, not to ensure Christian truth. Thus, the widespread effort to enshrine the Ten Commandments in the public sphere—however well intended—does not spring from the confessing church but from a misguided conservative ideology.  

Writing in The Christian Statesman, Gordon Keddie calls for a “restoration of the so-called blue laws” (Sunday laws), for the state to uphold the law of God. He argues that it is proper for the state to protect Sunday, irrespective of what the majority might say to the contrary, because such legislation upholds God’s unchangeable law. He evidently overlooks that God’s unchangeable law singles out Saturday as the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11), as a memorial of creation (Gen 2:1-3). That’s why Christ said “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27)—for the human race, and not just for the Jewish race. That’s why Christ urged that the same Sabbath law be kept nearly forty years after His resurrection at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction (Matt 24:20), which refutes any change of God’s immutable law in honor of the resurrection. Keddie says God’s law is immutable, but evidently has not understood the biblical meaning of God’s unchanging law.  

Scripture has predicted that a power would “try to change the set times and the laws” (Dan 7:25). This needs to be understood in its original Aramaic. There are two words used for time in Daniel 7:25; (1) id-dan, meaning a span of time (“a time, times and half a time”), and

---

zeman, plural of zimmin, meaning a point in time in the singular and in the plural means repeated points in time. Law is singular in the original, so the text speaks of changing repeated points of time in the Law, which can only refer to the weekly seventh-day Saturday Sabbath.97 This is why Christ urged His followers: “when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand” (Matt 24:15). William Shea insightfully says: “the setting up of the abomination of desolation of Daniel 12:11 can be seen as the union of church and state and what the church set out to accomplish through the power of the state.”98

Churches are uniting on common points of doctrine. CCT means “Christian Churches Together,” an organization that began in the United States in September 2001, and thirty-four churches adopted the by-laws and officially organized in Atlanta in 2006. Among other purposes, the corporation is formed “to speak to society with a common voice whenever possible” and to “promote the common good of society” (Article Three, numbers 6 and 7).99

Biblical Contribution100

98 Ibid., 220.
99 http://www.christianchurchestogether.org
100 Postmodernity, which rejects universals, is not equipped to interpret self-evident biblical truths any more than logical positivism (1923 to Postmodernity), which confined truth-statements to mathematicological and empirical statements, all others being meaningless (including religious statements). In our postmodern age, when truth is truth if it is truth for me and not because it is truth in itself (cf. Kant), the objectivity of divine revelation is exchanged for meaningless pluralism and polyvalence.

Evangelicals who believe in Scripture as trustworthy can evaluate the topic before us with foundational insights not perceived by liberals and humanists who de-construct Scripture, if they give it any time at all. Evangelical epistemology has no room for doubt of Scripture (cf. René Descartes’ approach to reality, 1596-1650), or posit a different God in the OT and NT (as did the Gnostic Marcion, d. ca. 160), but approach all Scripture as God’s infallible revelation meant to inform and inspire. Evangelicals ask the Holy Spirit to make clear His authorial intent in Scripture. I have written more on logical positivism in Systematic Theology: Prolegomena, 1: 54-75.

One week before giving this paper, I discovered Gregory Boyd’s book The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church. It was a great inspiration to me, and I highly recommend it. All evangelicals need to read this book, for it has important biblical insights that space restricts from inclusion in this arti-
1. “God is love” (1 John 4:8b) means the Trinity experience an inner history of eternal reciprocal love and created Adam and Eve to image that love. The Trinity are three Persons in an eternal freedom of equality, where each one loves the other two more than Himself. The intent of the Trinity was that humans reflect this love in the finite sphere, through the indwelling of God’s love within them.

Selfless love was not new to Christ in becoming the God-man. It was the overflow of the Trinitarian love outward that had always existed inward, as the very essence of God. Here is the profound eternal depth of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, who didn’t enter the world as a conquering King, but as a helpless babe. He left the royal throne of glory where He was praised, adored, and loved and began a long, lonely journey as the Man of sorrows, acquainted with human grief and struggle, often misunderstood, hated, spied on. He came to His own and His own received Him not.

2. Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:44-48).

Christian love reveals a citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, and makes Christians and the church the salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13, 14), for it springs from union with the King of kings, rather than from union with state and rulers. Unbelievers need to see the gospel in the lives of all Christians who want to follow Jesus, be like Him, and fulfill His intent for His church in these challenging times. Israel/Judah were tempted to replace God by heathen deities (Jezebel and Baals, 1 Kings 18:4-19:2). This illegitimate union (with other gods in place of God) is called “prostitution” (Hos 4:10). In the book of Revelation a woman represents (a) true followers of Christ (Rev 12) and (b) false followers of Christ (Rev 17). The woman of Revelation 12 is persecuted (vs. 6,13,17), and the woman of Revelation 17 persecutes (v. 6). The persecution involves coercion of worship (worship or be killed; Rev 13:15, note how many times worship is used in the chapter). This forced worship under death decree reminds us of Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan decree to worship his image or be thrown into the furnace (Dan 3:4-25). Note Nebuchadnezzar’s theocracy (pagan worship-state union) also issued a harsh coercive decree after the fiery furnace deliverance (Dan 3:29). The woman of Revelation 17 is described by God’s angel as “the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries” (Rev 17:1b,2). This “woman was drunk
Christians, particularly because “the god of this age” has done so much to keep the gospel from them (see 2 Cor 4:4).

3. In Christ’s day Israel hated the oppressive Romans and thought more of their temporal freedom than of telling their captors how to gain eternal freedom. They were bent on restoring the theocracy for selfish reasons. At the same time Christ gave up His freedom in heaven in order to tell the good news to Israel and others of how to gain eternal freedom—in Him. Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews” (John 18:36). He rebuked Peter for using the sword in response to His capture (John 18:11). The union of church and state (Jews and Romans), although temporary, put Christ through terrible torture, staggering injustice, inhuman humiliation, and the worst death possible: crucifixion. All hell broke loose through that uniting of church and state, yet Jesus did not retaliate in kind, bore it all with longsuffering and dignity, because He was filled with the “fruit of the Spirit,” which is “love” with its attributes of “joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (Gal 5:22,23).

4. Calvinistic predestination must be evaluated by Calvary, and not the other way round. Jesus “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Contrary to the Calvinistic TULIP, atonement is unlimited, but is it universalism? Jesus answers: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. And this is the verdict: God has placed his seal of approval on those who believe in his Son” (John 3:16-18). The death of Jesus for all humanity was hidden from unbelievers by Christian persecutions.

with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (Rev 17:6). She is called “Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes” (Rev 17:5, reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon). Here is a union of church and state that persecutes fellow Christians. The book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus our Lord and of Christ through His followers. The reader is urged to neither add to nor take away from this book, for such acts have eternal consequences (Rev 22:18,19). Here is a call for Christians to carefully study the book of Revelation to see if this last prophetic teaching in Scripture is speaking about a union of church and state which will bring a final persecution of Christians by Christians, and what this means to the topic before us, which would need a separate article to explore.

102 All the 16th century Reformation leaders advocated persecution for those they considered heretics, and so were not different in this respect from the Catholic church. The statue of Zwingli in Zurich has him standing with a Bible in his right hand and a sword in his left hand.

103 The death of Jesus for all humanity was hidden from unbelievers by Christian persecutions.
world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16, 17). Christ’s mission is global, but belief or disbelief in Him causes one to “perish” or receive “eternal life.”

What did Jesus mean by “perish”? The Greek is μὴ ἀπολέσαι, an aorist, middle subjunctive verb meaning “destroy.” That’s why “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Christ said it first in Eden: “you will surely die” (Gen 2:17b) if disobedient, but Satan countered to Eve “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:6a). Who was right? Think of it this way. Jesus believes in religious liberty, for salvation is given to those who choose to believe in the Giver and His gift. Jesus respects human freedom to respond to His love. Jesus draws people to Him without coercion. Those who accept His death in their place will live eternally. Those who refuse to come to Christ and accept His gift “perish,” for Jesus allows them their choice to be separated from Him, the source of eternal life. Jesus died to redeem and to destroy the devil (Heb 2:14, cf. 1 John 3:8b), and if the devil perishes, why not his followers? Hell fire is biblical, but needs to be understood in the context of Christ’s word “perish,” for fire consumes, so the result (not process) is everlasting. If we believe God tortures forever, what is wrong with church and state torturing for a fraction of that time? Doesn’t one’s view of God cause one to want to be like

---

104 See H. C. Hahn, “Destroy, Perish, Ruin,” DNTT 1:462-465. This agrees with annihilation in Scripture (Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 5:3; 2 Thess 1:6-10; Rev 11:18). The biblical teaching on hell is a burning fire that consumes. That’s why annihilation is also taught in Scripture. Thus, soul and body is destroyed in hell (Matt 10:28), and the lake of fire is the second death (Rev 20:14). Figurative language that describes some passages about hell (“the smoke of their torment arises for ever and ever,” Rev 14:11) needs to be understood in context. This phrase in Revelation 14.10 is drawn from Isaiah 34:10, which describes the desolation of Edom (“It will not be quenched night and day; and its smoke will rise forever), which is qualified by “From generation to generation it will lie desolate” (v. 10). God’s fiery judgment on Edom did not go out until the city was destroyed. It is not burning today. This fact suggests that the fire is unquenchable until all is consumed. That’s how Jeremiah described God’s fiery judgment on Jerusalem: “I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses” (Jer 17:27b). This happened twice, when the city was destroyed through fire by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. and through fire by the Romans in A.D. 70. The fire didn’t go out until it did what fire does—consumes. This is why Christ’s mission, in part, is described as: “he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). That’s why the eschatological judgment is described as follows: “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. ‘Not a root or branch will be left to them” (Mal 4:1).
Him, and is this why there has been so much torture of others in the name of Christ by Christians?

How can the unselfish eternal reciprocal love in the Trinity ever have anything to do with torturing the reprobate whom they have allegedly never loved? If destiny is based on an arbitrary choice of God in eternal history, why did the Trinity send Christ to tell the world that destiny is based on human choice? And why have a future judgment if the Trinity have already judged in eternity? And why take the gospel to the whole world when it cannot change God’s predestination?

On the cross Jesus pled, “Father forgive them.” His love was unconditional. He loved His enemies just as He taught His church to do. This was His response to the worst religious persecution ever committed by a union of church and state. He died loving everyone, even His persecutors, for Scripture says: If I “surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor 13:3). Can God ever forget those who turned Him down? Can His love for them ever be less than eternal, though hating their sins? Eternal suffering in the heart of God, missing His children who rejected Him, is a view of God compatible with His Calvary love.

I believe this eternal love may illumine a text about the cross: “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). Has this ever been fulfilled? Few were drawn to Him among the rabble at Calvary. Christians have been drawn to Him through two millennia, but when have all been drawn to Him? Not yet. Not until the final judgment, when all bow before Him (Isa 45:23b; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10, 11; Rev 5:13; 15:3; 19:1-6). Although rebels don’t change, they will realize Jesus died for them, He wanted to save them.

5. Jesus said entrance to His kingdom is based on the way we relate to others, for this reveals our relationship to Him. We can only love as He loves when filled with His love. In the end Christ will say: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of those brothers of mine, you did for me” (see Matt 25:31-40), just as He said to Saul, the persecutor of Christians: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4b). Christ changed Saul the persecutor to Paul the proclaimer. Paul declared: “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14), and he also said “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Rom 12:20a, quoting Prov 25:21). Saul could never forget the words of Stephen about those stoning him to death: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts
Gulley: The Public Square: Union of Church and State

7:60:b), which echoed Christ’s “Father forgive them.” Stephen was “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:55a).

Spirit-filled Christians love their enemies, for such is Calvary love. Those devoid of Calvary love cannot enter the kingdom (Matt 25:41-46). Sadly, Christ says, “many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt 7:22,23). Works done in the name of Christianity devoid of Calvary love are evil, for they fail to reflect Christ’s love, and so fail to reveal the gospel to the world in order to win unbelievers to Christ, just as Christ won Saul. This is the foundational problem with the experiments studied above. Calvary love extends the gospel through revealing it in acts as well as words. Calvary love is foreign to secular kingdoms, even if they are a union of church and state, for loving everyone as Christ does cannot galvanize armies to kill enemies. But God’s lavish love for His world, revealed through Christian lives and acts, is the mission Christ gave to His church (Matt 28:19,20), and not through alliances or acts unsupported by Jesus in the NT. 105

Conclusion

The lives of great Christians and the death of martyrs has done more to extend the gospel than all of the crusades,quisitions, “Christian”

105 In OT Scripture God associated with the nation of Israel and its capital in Jerusalem in the most holy place of the temple. He instituted a theocracy (union of church and state) to govern and guide His people. The OT theocracy was a type of the future theocracy, when the new “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16b), the redeemed of all ages, will have God in their midst in the New Jerusalem in the new earth (Rev 21:1-3). Between the past (OT) and the future (New Earth) is the Christian age. Does God intend a theocratic form of church and state in this interim time?

Unlike in the OT, Christ said “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), and taught His followers to pray “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). The central emphasis in Matthew is “the gospel of the kingdom” (4:23; 9:35; 24:14; cf. 26:13). The Greek word “kingdom” (basileia) appears more frequently in Matthew than in the other gospels and nearly three times as much as in Mark. It is the “kingdom of heaven” (4:17; 5:3b; 10b,19,20; 11:11b,12; 13:24,33; 13:44,52; 18:23; 19:12,14 23; 20:1; 25:1), and has drawn near (10:7). There is a present and future dimension to the kingdom, the well known “already-not yet” of the NT. So what is the present dimension?

Christ advised that wheat and tares be allowed to grow together until harvest (Matt 13:27-30). Jesus taught, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (v. 7). “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (v. 9).
theocracies, and religious legislation by states combined. The greatest life and death is that of Jesus Christ. No other life and death has done more to advance the gospel through revealing to hearts and minds that God is love (1 John 4:7-16). Jesus Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), and “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:34,35).  

Christ calls Christians to unite with Him, rather than calling for the church to unite with the state. God calls Christians to extend the kingdom of heaven, rather than them to extend any kingdom on earth. God “sets up kings and deposes them” (Dan 2:21) and calls individuals to be as salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13,14) and hence to kings and kingdoms as He did through Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and Esther in Medo-Persia. But Christ does not call His church to rule any state or any state to rule His church, but to follow Him in servant-leadership to impact the citizens and leaders of states to become citizens of the kingdom of Heaven.

In a post 9/11 world, where terrorism has caused the loss of some freedom to gain an elusive security, we need to be reminded of what happened in 68 BC. In the New York Times (Saturday, September 30, 2006, Robert Harris refers to pagan Rome as the world’s only superpower, and it was dealt it a profound psychological blow when Mediterranean pirates attacked Rome’s port at Ostia in a terrorist attack that destroyed their fleet, resulting in decisions that set them on a path to the destruction of their Constitution, democracy, and liberty. Is history being repeated?  

Some may argue that God punishes in the OT, and will do so, in part, through the “wrath of the Lamb” at the second advent (Rev 6:15-17). God sets up and deposes kings (Dan 2:21b). He has a providential care over the world even though it is the realm where the “god of this age” works (2 Cor 4:4), and humans reap what they sow (Gal 6:7). These are true, but so are the following: (a) Jesus said: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), for the Trinity is as loving as Jesus (1 John 4:7-16); (b) “I the Lord do not change” ( Mal 3:6a), and (c) “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). All God’s judgments should be understood in the light of the words of Jesus: “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:31,32); which is compatible with John 3:16, where God offers a choice—to perish or have eternal life through His judgment for all humans, for “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21a).

http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract
Gulley: The Public Square: Union of Church and State

the end-time? Careful study of Revelation 13 indicates this eventuality, but that is a study for another time.

Norman R. Gulley earned his Ph.D. degree in Systematic Theology from the University of Edinburgh and is Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Southern Adventist University, where he has taught since 1978. He has been a pastor and missionary. He has served as Chair of the Religion Department at Madison College and of the Theology Department at Japan Missionary College. He was also founding Dean of the Graduate Seminary in the Philippines. He has written extensively for leading SDA journals, authored four Sabbath School quarterlies, and written several books—including Christ Our Refuge (Pacific Press, 1996), Christ is Coming! (Review and Herald, 1998), the Prolegomena to a three volume systematic theology (Andrews UP, 2003), and Satan’s Trojan Horse and God’s End-Time Way to Victory (Review & Herald, 2004). He is a past-president of the Adventist Theological Society. ngulley@southern.edu
The Parameters of Social Justice and Natural Law Theory

Edwin Cook

Jewish activists clamored against the secular leadership in Israel, eventually resulting in the death of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995. On March 20, 1995, the Aum Shinryko group in Japan released deadly nerve gas in a Tokyo subway, killing twelve and injuring thousands. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols destroyed the Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City and have been associated with Christian militia movements. What does each of these groups have in common? According to Mark Juergensmeyer, each of these groups may be categorized as religious nationalists. By definition, religious nationalists are those groups that have fundamentalist convictions regarding their religious beliefs and that seek to mold societal values to those beliefs. Juergensmeyer notes a worldwide increase of these groups because they find a lack of societal stability in modern liberal democracies. Religious nationalists perceive the structural pillars of society as being near collapse. They believe that religion, as the formative base of societal values, offers strength, security, and substance that will

2 Ibid., 3.
3 Ibid., 2. “Christian militia movement” is the terminology used by Juergensmeyer; those who would prefer the term Christian Identity Movement may wish to suggest this to him.
4 While one may argue that religious groups are not motivated out of concern for societal collapse, and rather seek to mold society to religious norms for the virtue of the act alone, Juergensmeyer’s statistical data upon which he bases these conclusions indicate otherwise.

64
endure for succeeding generations. Such an increase in religious nationalism can be noted in our global community.

Such an increase in religious nationalism can be noted in our nation as well. Juergensmeyer classifies powerful, politically active religious groups, like those led by Jerry Falwell and (formerly) Ralph Reed, as religious nationalists, since they seek to order American society according to biblical values. An increase in religious nationalism in America has led to an increasing resistance among those in secularist groups. The conflict between religious groups and secularists could correctly be given the title, “The Secular-Sacred War of the 21st Century.” An example of this escalating tension can be noted in a talk delivered earlier this year by Melvin Lipman, President of the American Humanist Association, in which he uses language of conflict and warfare between Christians and secularists:

Timothy LaHaye . . . The author of the Christian fundamentalist Left Behind series, was on the Jerry Falwell show about six months ago, and he said, “We’re in a religious war and we need to aggressively oppose secular humanism; these people are as religiously motivated as we are and they are filled with the devil.”

Karl Rove, Bush’s chief political strategist, at a meeting of the theocric Family Research Council in March of this year, spoke about the “war on secular society,” and he said, “We need to find ways to win the war.” And so, [Lipman says] it’s a war against us, and we need to fight back in this war.

Another Bush administration adviser, Paul Weyrich, said, “The real enemy is the secular humanist mindset, which seeks to destroy everything that is good in this society . . .”

In 2003, speaking to the Christian Coalition, Alabama Governor Bob Riley spoke about a “more important war than the war in Iraq.” He said the war against secular humanists is “a war for the absolute

---

5 Ibid., 19-20.
7 I draw this title from societal commentary in America.
8 This comment is a direct quote from Timothy LaHaye and is reminiscent of the attitude shared by Jesus’ disciples toward the Samaritans when they rejected Jesus, as recorded in Luke 9:51-56.
9 While the term “theocracy” was originally coined by the Jewish historian Josephus when he referred to the Hebrew nation under the direct rule of God based on a covenant relationship, there have been religious groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Puritans, who have adopted the same covenantal theology reflected by their belief in Christianity dominating and controlling government for its own ends.
soul of this country”. He called for a “crusade” to restore the Christian character of America.

Well, friends, I think we should be prepared for a crusade. It’s creeping up slowly . . . Changes are not made all at once. We’re not going to have a government that takes away our rights not to believe all at once.10 But we’ve got to see the signs. We’ve got to see what is happening, and we have to be prepared to defend ourselves.

Last year, after a close Senate vote to approve her nomination to the Federal Court of Appeals, and she was approved, California Justice Janice Rogers Brown said that people of faith were in a war—they keep using that term war. She said they’re in a war against secular humanists, who threaten to divorce America from its religious roots. Brown complained that America has moved away from the religious tradition on which it is founded, and to which we need to get back.11

Such rhetoric, on both secular and religious sides, can hardly be salutary to societal cohesion, and much less does it facilitate meaningful dialogue that seeks for common ground. Indeed, such rhetoric has challenged politicians to seek for common ground among the diverse groups in American society. During a speech delivered at the Sojourners-sponsored, “Call to Renewal” Pentecost conference, Senator Barack Obama suggested a way to find common ground for both groups: “Democracy demands that religious Americans translate their concerns into universal values—and that secularists make room for faith and morality.”12

Finding common ground on moral issues between secularist and religious groups is a formidable task.13 It is to this task that this paper is

---

10 Reference here is made to the position taken by Thomas Jefferson regarding freedom of conscience and atheists when he stated, “The error seems not sufficiently eradicated, that the operations of the mind, as well as the acts of the body, are subject to the coercion of the laws. But our rulers can have no authority over such natural rights, only as we have submitted to them. The rights of conscience we never submitted, we could not submit. We are answerable for them to our God. The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.” The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, “Query XVII: The different religions received into that State?” 2:219-221.


aimed. Finding common ground—the necessity of the times requires it. The unity of our nation demands it. The peace and well-being of each citizen depends upon it.

This paper seeks to demonstrate the integral nature of Social Justice and Natural Law theory. It is necessary at this point to clarify that concepts of Natural Law theory are as ancient as Greek society and that various views of Natural Law theory have existed from that time to the present. Most often, the Roman Catholic Church is identified as the proponent of Natural Law theory and its corollary of moral theology. However, some modern philosophers and ethicists are arguing for a concept of Natural Law that is not based on Catholic notions of moral theology while at the same time upholding a sense of justice that can harmonize with concepts of individual rights common to modern liberal democracies. As Anthony J. Lisska states,

One must not forget one crucial issue, however. Enlightenment philosophy has given Western liberal constitutional democracies its fundamental theory of individual rights.14

Recognizing this crucial point, he further proposes that to formulate a modern concept of natural law theory,

it is necessary that natural law theorists develop an adequate account of rights sufficient to be compatible with liberal democracy. The natural law theory [of Catholic tradition] is not based on themes of Enlightenment philosophy. . . . What must

---

13 Although finding consensus between religious and secular groups may seem impossible, in reality it is not so. The drafting process of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) consisted of groups who were from such diverse backgrounds as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Confucian, and even atheists from Communist Russia. Due to the typical stance of the Roman Catholic Church on Natural Law theory, the last group firmly maintained that the epistemology of the UDHR would not be based on natural law theory, to which the other groups consented. This is why we use the term “human rights” instead of “natural rights” or “rights of nature.”

14 Some scholars may claim that the Reformation produced the fundamental theory of individual rights that have formed the foundation of Western liberal constitutional democracies. However, such a view overlooks the historical reality that Lutheran jurists implemented variations of Roman Catholic canon law to serve as civil laws for the ordering of society. Canon law and its corresponding concepts of natural law, eternal law, and society as an organic entity did not allow for individual liberties. Rather, society was viewed as an organic unit, the Corpus Christianum, an idea that was still retained in the minds of the reformers as reflected by the establishment of Lutheranism in Germany and Calvinism in Geneva.
be developed, therefore, is a substantive theory of human rights . . . [that] does not force the authoritarian repression of individuals in the name of—or under the guise of—ontological theories of the good.  

It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that a modern concept of Natural Law theory offers the most likely solution to “The Secular-Sacred War of the 21st Century.” It offers common ground for secular and religious groups. It offers stability to society and substance to moral values. It gives consideration to the convictions of believers as well as to unbelievers.

Social Justice Defined

To begin, a working definition of social justice must take into account the etymological foundation of the term. Social bears the obvious reference to society. Justice derives from the Latin term Justitia, which itself is a combination of two other Latin terms, Jus (also, ius), meaning law, and itia, translated as—ice. Thus, a fuller, composite definition is “a just ordering of society,” or “an ordering of society according to law,” including such concepts as law, politics, societal institutions (churches, synagogues, mosques, businesses), and the individuals who comprise them. It is upon consideration of such a definition that one finds the intersection of social justice and natural law theory. At this intersection lies the framework for societal governance.

Additionally, social justice conveys the concepts of fairness, equality, and righteousness—all of which find their roots in the over-arching concept of law. From a societal perspective, it includes a vast array of issues, such as abortion, euthanasia, bio-genetics, dignity of the human person, racial equality, labor rights, economic equality, and ecological concerns, among others. I will not here attempt to address all of these, although I will state that natural law, properly assessed, speaks to each of these issues. I will return to one socially sensitive issue of our day at the end of this discourse that falls squarely under the purview of natural law.

Evolution of Natural Law Theory

In its original formulation, natural law theory contained several strands, the primary one of which regarded it as “a higher ideal of justice

to which appeal may be made,” or even “an unwritten law . . . differing from and superior to the written and enacted law of the State.” As formulated by the Stoics, it did include a divine, or transcendental, element and was also viewed as that part of man’s nature that governed moral action. This view was later adapted by Cicero (106-43 B.C.), a Roman jurist influenced by Greek philosophy, who emphasized the notion of “one eternal and unchangeable law for all nations and for all times.”

Ulpian (420 A.D.) differed from Cicero in that he identified three divisions of law: lex civilis (civil law, also known as ius civile), the lex gentiles (law of nations, also known as ius gentium), and the lex naturae (natural law, also known as ius naturae). While this tripartite form of law was known among Roman society, the more common practice identified only two laws: the ius civil and the ius naturale.

In the Institutes of Justinian (533 A.D.), the two divisions of ius civil and ius naturale are used, with little reference to the ius gentium, which was viewed as subsisting under the ius naturale. Of importance to later developments of natural law theory by St. Thomas Aquinas, Isaac Husik points out:

though the Institutes were published in the sixth century and compiled under the auspices of a Christian emperor, there is no reference to the law of the Old Testament, and no attempt made to find a place for it in relation to the ius civile, ius naturale, or ius gentium.

Essentially, Husik notes the absence of any Christian element in the legal corpus at the time of Justinian. Because of this lack, such traditional views of Greek thought regarding natural law theory collided with Christianity, primarily because of the latter’s emphasis upon morality grounded upon a knowledge of God’s will as revealed in Scripture.

In his Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas addressed this historic dissonance between Greek and Christian ideas regarding natural law.

---

19 Ryan, 15.
20 Husick, 386.
21 Ibid., 387.
Building upon the Aristotelian concept of man as a “rational and social being,” Aquinas established natural law upon reason shared with God, giving man access to transcendent moral values necessary for moral perfection.22 From this perspective, natural law is directly associated with the divine sphere.23

Aquinas’ second point, of man as a “social being,” implies the condition of men in society with one another, or defined otherwise, a State. According to the Catholic Church, natural law theory is applicable to all citizens, irrespective of whether they are believers or not. Stanley Hauerwas noted this very point when addressing a group of Catholics during the tenth Paul Wattson Lecture at the University of San Francisco. He stated, “For natural law underwrote the assumption that Catholic moral theology could be written for anyone irrespective of his or her relation to the faith in Jesus of Nazareth.”24 When one considers the legitimization necessary for a state composed of believers and non-believers, such a view of natural law implicitly imposes Catholic moral theology upon all citizens, whether believers or non-believers, since the Roman Catholic Church identifies itself as the final arbiter of natural law interpretation.25

Against such implications in the political and public sphere, early modern exponents of natural law theory among Protestants shifted the focal point of natural law theory from man’s moral perfection to that of social peace.26 Such a shift allowed state legitimization without the consequent moral impositions of the Catholic Church. One of the more known Protestant natural law theorists who contributed to this development was Hugo Grotius (1583-1645).

---


23 Russel Hittinger presents Aquinas’ understanding of the source of natural law as being founded in God, which Hittinger refers to as “the order of priority,” meaning that natural law first existed with God and then man recognized it through reason and nature (Russell Hittinger, “Natural Law and Catholic Moral Theology,” in A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law, Michael Cromartie, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1997), 5-8).


25 “[Natural law] points to God as the lawgiver, and it threatens to bring up for public discussion the claim of the Catholic Church that the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ, is the authoritative interpreter of the natural law” (Charles E. Rice, 50 Questions on the Natural Law: What It Is and Why We Need It [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999], 33).

26 Pufendorf, 13.
Grotius associated divine elements with natural law, but may have introduced the concept of natural law application apart from the divine sphere by his use of the phrase “etiamsi daremus non esse Deum” (“these principles would still be valid, even if we were to grant . . . that there is no God”). While Grotius affirmed a theological rationale for grounding natural law theory and justice, he advocated views at the practical level that tended toward deism, such as “little recognition of either the need for illumination to counteract sin-induced blindness, the importance of wisdom, or the value of revelation in bringing clarity and certainty (as in Aquinas).” Such deistic tendencies—a theological rationale for natural law theory and, thus, legitimization of the State apart from religious creedalism, and rationalistic concepts functioning as the certainty of foundational principles and man’s ability to use reason in constructing a systematic plan from them—contributed to the intellectual and political milieu of the 17th century.

Thus, natural law theory as a basis for social policy and political theory, advocated from a Catholic perspective, orders the following: God, Church, State, and individual. Such an ordering places the individual’s conscience subject to the State as influenced by the moral theology of the Church. The same elements, from a Protestant tradition of natural law,
are: God, individual, and then a bifurcation of allegiance between church and state. Thus, church and state remain in a state of constant tension. Such a view allows the rights of individual conscience to remain inviolable and stresses the individual in relationship to his God without the intermediary of the Church.  

**Modern Revival of Natural Law Theory**

A revival of natural law theory began in the 1940s and has continued to influence theological, philosophical, political, and ethical disciplines to the present. During the Nuremberg War Trials, the World Court could find no basis for condemnation of Hitler and his regime’s crimes of genocide based on the then existing laws in Germany. Through a legal theory referred to as legal positivism, human beings formulated and passed into law the mass execution of other human beings.

Faced with such a dilemma, the World Court recognized the need to appeal to a higher law, one outside of the legal theory that had justified the extermination of millions of Jews. Heeding the outcry of the world community and sensing their outrage of an offended conscience, the World Court’s deliberations resulted in a revival of Natural Law theory.

It is important to note, however, that in response to the atrocities of the Holocaust, the United Nations adopted a secular concept of natural law theory in the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In its medieval conception, natural law emphasized the obligations of man in an objective moral order, much like that envisioned by Thomas Aquinas. Under this system, the state took on a paternalistic  

---

30 In fairness, it is proper to mention that from a Reformed perspective, there is more authority and involvement of the church regarding its individual members. However, Grotius was an Arminian, which meant that he believed and stressed the free will of the individual much more than the Reformed position.

31 This paper intentionally bypasses the American Founding Era and the ideas of the Founding Fathers regarding the law of nature precisely for the reason that their concept of the law of nature diverges from the common understanding of natural law traceable to Thomas Aquinas. The fundamental difference between both concepts is that the law of nature, derived from John Locke, an English philosopher of the Enlightenment, stressed individual rights, as opposed to natural law, which is constructed against the backdrop of an objective moral order that stressed as its corollary an organic concept of society that stifled individual rights, especially in the area of religious convictions, as reflected in the pre-Reformation condition of society dominated by the Roman Catholic Church.

attitude toward its citizens, even to the point of concerning itself with their eternal welfare. However, Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth-century, such as John Locke, altered the concept of natural law to one that stressed the rights of man and individual conscience. The state, through a social contract, then became merely an agent of its citizens. Locke referred to this concept as “the law of nature” rather than the former natural law tradition. Under this system, the rights of the individual citizen were protected from an oppressive state on the one hand, and from the moral dogmatism of religion on the other.

The formulation of the UDHR took Locke’s concept one step further. Rather than employing the term “natural rights” as Locke did, they opted for the term “human rights.” Their rationale was based on the need to distance their concept from the deistic element that formed a subtle part of Enlightenment thought. In order to embrace the atheistic element of the world community, they grounded “human rights” in “the dignity of the human person.” Thus, the UNDHR may correctly be viewed as a secular document that seeks to neither endorse, nor deny the existence of God. It is a document that offers grounds for the protection of the individual who either adopts a theistic worldview, or a non-theistic worldview.

A third example of an appeal to a “higher law” took place in America during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Martin Luther King, Jr., in “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” appealed to that law of justice that is even higher than rulings of the Supreme Court and to that law that called for racial equality. While King was definitely influenced by his Protestant upbringing, one should not overlook the influence of Mahatma Ghandi, a Hindu, upon the formulation of ideas and actions, such as passive resistance, undertaken by King to end racial discrimination.

In each of the previous examples, the historical facts of each case have shown that appeal to a “higher law” can be made without reference to the Roman Catholic Church. In some cases, the appeal has its basis quite apart from any specific religious persuasion and therefore can have a much broader appeal and application to humanity in general.

Benefits of and Objections to Thomistic Natural Law Theory

The most obvious benefit of Thomistic Natural Law theory is that it is established upon a system of laws that give structure and order to society. Such a benefit is in contrast to classical natural law theory, which was devoid of specific content. John Warwick Montgomery points out that natural law theory, at least its classical formulation, was devoid of specific content, thus producing the need for legal realism which was developed to replace it. Thus, Thomistic Natural Law theory avoids that pitfall since it is replete with specific content, as reflected in Roman Catholic moral theology.

There exist, however, some objections to Thomistic Natural Law theory. First, in the most extreme liberal state (theoretically), the concept of law is not even recognized. It is assumed that citizens have inherent virtue and can so order themselves as to maintain a just moral order. From this perspective, Aquinas’ version of state governance is irrelevant because it is founded upon a structure of laws.

Second, modern liberal states view themselves not as the product of theistic (as opposed to deistic) intervention; rather, they see themselves as the product of social compacts drawn up among citizenry. The state is viewed more as the product of men and not so much as a divine institution. As such, there is no “divine right of kings,” as upheld by the Aquinian synthesis. Rather, democratic government is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Such a stance rejects the fundamental purpose of the state under the Aquinian system, which is to persuade its citizenry toward the end of eternal law, namely, adoption of religion and its consequent practice in the life. In a moderate liberal state, such as America, the purpose of government is to protect its citizens in the free exercise of their religious preferences, or lack thereof, and not to guide them in the pursuit of religion. Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr., formerly Assistant Professor of Theology at St. Mary’s University (Catholic) succinctly states:

---

38 Ibid., 118.
From the political and theological left, to the political and theological right, the American idea of religious freedom is hailed as the universally valid theory, one which the Church ought to champion and all people ought to embrace. It is my contention that this is to embrace and celebrate a moral and political system that was designed to erode authentic commitment to revealed religion, especially as represented by the Roman Catholic Church. The extent to which we embrace this theory of religion is the extent to which we jeopardize the freedom of the Church to exercise its divine mandate to propagate the gospel as it sees fit.\footnote{Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr., “Religion as Moral Duty and Civic Right,” in Catholicism, Liberalism, and Communitarianism, Kenneth L. Grasso, Gerard V. Bradley, and Robert P. Hunt, eds. (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), 72.}

Third, all modern liberal states with a democratic political system provide for the rights of the individual. Contrariwise, in Aquinas’ system, the citizenry is viewed as an organic body that needs guidance from an established monarchical head. It does not allow for individual rights. John Adams, well aware of the threats to liberty posed by such a system, exclaimed in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, May 19, 1821, “Can free government possibly exist with the Roman Catholic religion?” Jefferson considered a monarchical form of government as compounding the abuses suffered by its citizens, “If all the evils which can arise among us, from the republican form of government, from this day to the day of judgment, could be put into a scale against what this country suffers from its monarchical form in a week, or England in a month, the latter would preponderate.”\footnote{Thomas Jefferson, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 6:232.}

In summary, Aquinas intertwines concepts of eternal law with natural and human law to produce the epistemological foundation for a strongly theistic state. The political system best suited to such a system is the monarchical form. It enables the state to achieve the end for which it exists, namely to guide its citizenry toward what is for their best good – religion and their eternal welfare. Negatively, however, it is by its very nature opposed to freedom of religious convictions.

\phantomsection
\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{The Dilemma of Law and Liberty}

From a Christian perspective, both Roman Catholics and some Protestants argue that the Ten Commandments can serve as a basis for specific content of a natural law. In Romans 2:14, the issue of those without
the Law being “a law unto themselves” introduces the concept of natural law theory. This exegesis suggests the Law (eternal and God-given) and a law of nature to which all men have access. Based on the grammatical construction in verse 15, the idea of the Law in relation to “conscience” is introduced. This observation implies a standard, the Law, to which the conscience is oriented. Elaborating this point further, Douglas Straton refers to the primary principles of conduct that are found “in all of the major cultures of mankind, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Zoroastrian, Greek, Judeo-Christian, and Islamic.” He concludes by stating,

Finding the main content, then, of the last five of Moses’ commandments, the ethical “laws,” or close parallels to them, widely throughout human civilization, constitutes strong historical or empirical evidence that basic qualities of conscience, or ideas of moral law, are similar or native to mature human life on a universal scale.

Roy B. Zuck succinctly argues, “Therefore, based on ethnology and New Testament usage, the conscience can be defined as ‘the inner knowledge or awareness of, and sensitivity to, some moral standard.’” Zuck’s statement, “some moral standard,” combined with Straton’s observation about the last five of Moses’ commandments, produce specific content of

---

41 Jeffrey Lamp argues that Paul here refers to the Law given to the Jews and which, according to Jewish tradition, had been disseminated among the nations. Thus, while not having the written commandment, Gentiles still had a knowledge of the just requirements of the Law through a quasi-specific revelation by means of oral transmission (Jeffrey S. Lamp, “Paul, the Law, Jews, and Gentiles: A Contextual and Exegetical Reading of Romans 2:12-16,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 42/1 (March 1999): 44-46.

42 Roy B. Zuck, “The Doctrine of Conscience,” Bibliotheca Sacra 126/504 (October-December, 1969): 333; William E. May, “The Natural Law, Conscience, and Developmental Psychology,” Communio (Spring, 1975): 10; John Coulson cogently argues, “To disobey the moral law is to disobey our natures, since they are created by God, the author of that law, and this is perhaps how the metaphor of conscience as an inner voice or dialogue arises.” He further contends (157), “To admit the claims of conscience is to admit the existence of a law which has conditioned that conscience and of a law-giver, the author of that law” (John Coulson, “The Authority of Conscience,” The Downside Review 77/248 [Spring, 1959]: 151);” Allen Verhey argues the same point in “The Person as a Moral Agent,” Calvin Theological Journal 13/1 (April, 1978): 5-6.


44 Zuck, 331.
Natural Law for civil society composed of believers as well as unbelievers.

For Lutherans, such a distinction regarding the first four commandments and the last six is wholly proper. Since the first four commandments deal with an individual’s relationship to his God, then the civil sphere has no authority in coercing the conscience. Martin Luther clearly established a line of demarcation beyond which no earthly or ecclesial ruler could pass when he stated, “Secular government has laws that extend no further than the body, goods, and outward, earthly matters. But where the soul is concerned, God neither can nor will allow anyone but himself to rule.”

Thus, Luther, as opposed to John Calvin, recognized the limits of civil jurisdiction as applying only to the last six commandments. The last six deal with an individual’s relationship toward his fellow man, and thus properly can fall under the category of civil jurisdiction.

Additionally, for those who argue for a Scriptural basis for natural law with specific reference to the Ten Commandments, it can be posited that it provides justification for God’s judgments of unbelievers. Since everyone, according to Scripture, will be judged, it is a logical corollary that there must be some standard of judgment for all, even for those that are biblically illiterate and for unbelievers. Scripture declares that nature testifies of God’s invisible qualities. Even among non-biblical literature, V. A. Rodgers refers to the relationship between “the gods and men, and [divine] law and men’s uneasiness when approaching death for not having kept it.”

Thus, the Decalogue as the basis for natural law theory teaches that all men have some basic knowledge of God and His just requirements, whether obtained through special revelation (the Bible) or through general revelation (nature). Such an understanding by each person justifies God in His judgment of each one.

Finally, since Law, whether the Decalogue or Natural Law, cannot save a person, concepts of either view of natural law theory provide a further impetus for Gospel preaching. The Law, whether the Ten Commandments or natural law, only serves to inform man of its standard and

---

47 Ps 19:1-8; Rom 1:22-26.
to convict when it has been violated. Rendering condemnation, the only remedy and hope for humanity lies in a clear proclamation of the Gospel and of the salvation freely offered by Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the central issue, however, regarding the Ten Commandments as a source of specific content for natural law theory is that it produces a conflict between law and liberty, at least spiritual liberty, for the individual. Some may argue that the Ten Commandments should not be separated, or divided into the “two kingdoms” schema of Martin Luther. Instead, they should be kept intact. The dilemma posed by such a position is that it results in restrictions of individual freedom of conscience in spiritual matters contained in the first four commandments. Such a dilemma is avoided in the Lockean Law of Nature theory.

**Benefits of Lockean Law of Nature Theory**

The most notable benefit of Lockean Law of Nature theory, from a political perspective, is that it provides State legitimation without sectarian dogma. A Law implies a Law-Giver, or Deity. Under the Lockean Law of Nature formulation, Deity combined with national myths sufficiently answer the philosophical questions of national existence, such as, what justification do we have for existence as a nation? and, why do we exist? *Since Deity is a generic reference to a Divine Being, no particular religious creedal formula, doctrine, or dogma is enforced in the public square.*

Such a transcendental element is necessary, as well, to avoid self-justifying nationalism. Only that nation which regards a Being, or Power, higher than itself can pass critical scrutiny upon its actions and motives, recognizing that accountability is a central tenet to national prosperity. Only through such critical self-examination can a nation avoid viewing itself as its own end.

Recognition of accountability to a Divine Being contributes toward rejection of “positivism” or legal realism. Rather than formulating laws based on the judgments of men and lowly temporal considerations, accountability to a Divine Being prompts men to seek true justice with a view to reaching a transcendental standard.

**Benefits of a Modern Natural Law Theory**

A Modern Natural Law theory offers a bridge between believers and unbelievers regarding moral values. Since the foundation of natural law theory resides in the nature of the beings in question—in this case, humans—the principles of natural law have general applicability to all of
humanity since all humans share defining characteristics of the human race.

A further benefit of Modern Natural Law theory is that it provides a concept of church-state separation from a natural philosophical perspective. Without any particular theological perspective as its foundation, the concept of Modern Natural Law theory offers a philosophical platform for state legitimization without any creedal formula imposed by any religious group. Viewed from this perspective, a natural separation between church and state occurs that allows each to fulfill its purposes without undue interference from the other.

Thus, there seems to be much that can be gained from the course followed by the delegates to the United Nations who in 1948 ratified the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Accepting the views of a diverse group of religious and non-religious persons, the delegates formulated provisions for the security of basic human rights that allowed respect for each group represented and that received broad reception.

**Application of Modern Natural Law**

At the beginning of this paper, I stated that modern concepts of Natural Law theory have current application to a sensitive social issue of our day. To that, I now turn. The debate regarding the legal status and the correctness of homosexual marriages is hotly contested.

Most, if not all, Christian groups oppose same-sex marriages and their legal recognition. They base this objection upon a biblical definition of marriage. Liberal groups argue in favor of same-sex marriage based on *individual rights*.

Which position is correct? Where is the common ground? From the perspective of modern concepts of Natural Law, same-sex marriages are wrong and should not be allowed. Consider the rationale behind such a conclusion through the use of several basic propositions. First, the tendency of the human race is toward life. In other words, under normal conditions, any human being seeks self-preservation and life, not death. So, our basic nature, as human beings, is toward continuity of life, or existence, rather than death. Second, based on anatomical considerations, the laws of nature arguably support heterosexual relationships. Such relationships offer the possibility of life through procreation. Third, same-sex marriages, under natural conditions, do not allow for procreation. Such unions would cause the human race to cease to exist within a few generations because there would be no further offspring. In this respect, such unions are against nature. Fourth, such a conclusion, derived from
an appeal to reason and natural law, has application to both Christians and non-Christians because every human being, by nature, \textsuperscript{49} shares the same characteristics of humanity, with distinction being made for gender differences.

The central theme of this paper has been to focus on common ground in the public sphere between believers and unbelievers. In seeking to achieve this balance, this paper has suggested that modern concepts of Natural Law theory present the most viable solution for common moral issues, such as homosexual marriage, as well as providing a reasonable foundation for social justice.

By tracing the historical development of Natural Law theory, it has been shown that the Catholic Church \textit{does not solitarily dominate} concepts of Natural Law. To the contrary, Greek society first captured something of its essence and, much later, Protestant theologians formulated their own understanding of it. In modern times, ethicists and philosophers have advanced ideas of Modern Natural Law theory that are compatible with individual rights and modern liberal democracies.

\textbf{Ed Cook} holds an M.A. in Religious Studies from Southern Adventist University and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Church-State Studies at Baylor University. He is an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister and has authored several articles that have been published in the \textit{Journal of the Adventist Theological Society} and in \textit{Liberty}, a magazine dedicated to religious freedom for people of all faiths.

\textsuperscript{49} The arguments mentioned here in favor of heterosexual marriage relationships are based solely upon nature being defined with respect to anatomical considerations and not the emotional, psychosocial factors that lead some individuals into proclivity toward the same sex. To address such issues is simply beyond the scope and intent of this paper. Additionally, “by nature” as used here in reference to procreation is with the intent of “in a state of nature”, thereby ruling out modern scientific methods of fertilization.
Martin Luther’s Views on the Antichrist

Dennis Pettibone
Southern Adventist University

In the warm ecumenical afterglow of Vatican II, Martin Luther’s identification of the papacy as the Antichrist of Bible prophecy is often seen as narrow-minded, bigoted, and even unchristian. His view, which until recently was shared by a broad spectrum of conservative Evangelical Protestants,¹ is now seen as an embarrassment by some members of churches that retain this interpretation. It is no longer socially acceptable to describe the papacy as the fulfillment of a collection of prophecies regarding a powerful spiritual tyranny.

Even the United States Congress has put itself on record regarding this issue. In 2000 Congress passed a joint resolution condemning Bob Jones University for promoting this belief.²

The politicians who passed that resolution were probably unaware that they were undermining the historical foundations of Protestantism, but this is the logical inference one can make from this significant observation by Professor Phillip Cary of Eastern University: “The Reformation wouldn’t have happened without the conviction that the pope was Antichrist.”³ Since this conviction is one that most contemporary Protestants have discarded, Cary—who describes himself as an “ecumenical

minded Protestant”4—challenges his fellow Protestants: “If the pope isn’t the Antichrist, what right do you have to be split?”5

If Protestantism owes its very existence to Luther’s conviction that the papacy was the Antichrist, it might be instructive to inquire why Luther held this view and under what circumstances he came to this conclusion. We will see that he came to this view slowly and reluctantly, driven by historical circumstances and theological reflection. We will also briefly note the comparable views of other Protestant Reformers and their predecessors. Looking at the idea that the papacy is the Antichrist of prophecy in its historical context might give us a rational basis for evaluating it.

We will focus primarily on Luther because it was his views on the subject that triggered the Protestant Reformation. However, we should note that Luther was far from the first person to hold this view. Luther himself credited John Huss with being the first to call the pope an Antichrist.6 Huss did indeed consider the Pope to be the Antichrist,7 but he was not the first to do so, nor was his mentor, John Wycliffe, although Wycliffe8 and at least some of his Lollard followers, including Sir John Oldcastle,9 held this belief. This idea also circulated among the Waldensians, the Albigensians, and the Fraticelli, a group of Franciscans with more regard for the rule of St. Francis than for papal authority.10

But even earlier than that, back in 991, Bishop Arnulf of Orleans, describing papal murder, lust, and intrigue, asked, “Are there any bold

---

4 Ibid., 7.
5 Ibid., 155.
enough to maintain that the priests of the Lord over all the world are to take their law from monsters of guilt like these . . .?” When a person so deficient in virtue sits on the papal throne, Arnulf suggested that he must “be the ‘Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God.’”

Martin Luther was probably unaware of the previous attacks on the papacy when, in 1517, he drafted his 95 Theses. If he had been, he would have been unsympathetic. At the time he regarded John Huss as a heretic. His target was not the papacy; it was a greedy Dominican monk named Johann Tetzel who was distorting Catholic doctrine by exaggerating the benefits of indulgences. Luther had no intention of splitting the church: he was only trying to protect his parishioners.

Enraged, Tetzel made sure that Rome knew what was happening. This set in motion a chain of events that led to a summons for Luther to appear before a papal representative. It also led to a theological attack on Luther’s position by Sylvester Cardinal Prierias, the papal court’s chief theologian. Prierias wrote, “He who does not accept the doctrine of the Church of Rome and pontiff of Rome as an infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures, too, draw their strength, is a heretic.” Furthermore, “Whoever says that the Church of Rome may not do what it is actually doing in the matter of indulgences is a heretic.” Prierias had transformed the debate from a question of procedure to one of authority.

---


12 LW, 26:70, 28:242.


14 LW, 34:325; Marius, 137, 159; Cary, 134.

Responding to the papal summons, Luther traveled to Augsburg to appear before a papal legate, Cardinal Thomas Cajetan, who demanded that Luther recant. When Luther asked for scriptural reasons to do so, none were given him. Rome had ordered that Luther be arrested if he refused to recant, but Luther—mindful of the fate of John Huss—avoided arrest by stealing away from Augsburg on the night of October 16, 1518.¹⁶

First Hesitant Steps

Luther had read Prierias’ assertions of papal infallibility and had experienced Cajetan’s reliance on tradition, refusal to discuss Scriptures, and implicit threats of force. Now he began to consider the possibility that these men might be serving Antichrist. On December 18, 1518, he wrote to Wenzeslaus Link, soon to replace Stanpitz as the head of the Augustinian order in Germany, asking him to evaluate, on the basis of some of his writings, whether he was right in his suspicion “that the true Antichrist mentioned by St. Paul reigns in the court of Rome . . . .”¹⁷ A few months later Luther wrote to his friend and former student Georg Spalatin, chaplain and secretary to Elector Frederick of Saxony, telling him that he had been studying papal decretals in preparation for the upcoming disputation at Leipzig. He added, “Confidentially, I do not know whether the Pope is Antichrist himself or his apostle, so miserably is Christ (that is, the truth) corrupted and crucified by the Pope in the decretals.”¹⁸

In July, 1519, at the Leipzig debate with Johann Eck for which Luther had been preparing, Luther took the position that both popes and church councils could err. Now, for Luther, “[e]verything stood under the judgment of scripture.”¹⁹ He would soon be using Scripture to pass judgment on the Pope.

Two things that Luther read the following year weakened his hesitation about calling the Pope Antichrist. First, in February, 1520, he read Lorenzo Valla’s demonstration that the Donation of Constantine—the

¹⁶ Oberman, 195-197; Marius, 159-164, 209; Robert Henderson Fife, The Revolt of Martin Luther (New York: Columbia UP, 1957), 283, 308-309.
¹⁹ Collinson, 30; Marius, 179.
basis for Rome’s “claim to supremacy over the Western world”—was a forgery. This seems to have inspired another letter to Spalatin (February 24, 1520): “I am practically cornered, and can hardly doubt any more that the Pope really is the Antichrist . . . because everything so exactly corresponds to his life, action, words, and commandments.”

After reading Valla’s treatise, Luther, hesitantly at first, began to publicly say what he had previously written privately to friends. Augustine Altveld was a monk in Leipzig who asserted that the Bible supported total papal control of the church and that submission to the Pope was essential for the operation of an effective government. Luther responded early in 1520 with *On the Papacy in Rome against the Famous Romanist at Leipzig*. This publication mentioned several reasons for possibly considering Rome to be the Antichrist. “It is said that the Antichrist shall find the treasures of the earth,” Luther wrote, suggesting that the “insufferable Roman thieves” were finding their treasure by exploiting the Germans, and quoting what he said was a Roman proverb: “Squeeze the gold from the German fools, in any way you can.”

Luther then raised the issue of papal infallibility. Expressing a willingness to accept anything the Pope decreed after first testing it by the Bible, he contrasted this position with that of “Roman knaves” who placed the Pope “above Christ” and made him “a judge over the Scriptures” and said that he was infallible. If the Pope expected Christians to place their faith in something visible (himself) rather than that which was invisible, Luther concluded, “I would say right out that he is the real Antichrist.” Notice that in neither of these statements did Luther directly say that either the Pope or the papacy was the Antichrist, but he raised the possibility.

The second thing that Luther read in 1520 that weakened his hesitancy to openly declare that the Pope was Antichrist was Prierias’ second treatise against Luther’s teachings. Reprising his earlier arguments that the Pope had more authority than either Scriptures or church councils, Prierias quoted a passage of canon law that horrified Luther: the Pope could not be deposed from office even if he “were so scandalously bad

---

20 Oberman, 42.
21 Froom, 2:255.
22 Marius, 234.
23 WML, 1:343.
24 Ibid., 1:391-392.
25 But he did address Rome’s shepherds as “thou scarlet whore of Babylon.” Ibid., 1:392.
that he led multitudes of souls to the devil.” Shocked at this extreme statement from Rome’s chief theologian, Luther wrote to Spalatin, “I think everyone in Rome has gone crazy.”

**Address to the Christian Nobility**

Now Luther’s pen began to fly. First came *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, which went to press on June 13, 1520. Early in this treatise, a book that repeatedly linked the papacy and Antichrist, came Luther’s reaction to Prierias’ appalling statement:

> It must . . . have been the very prince of devils who said what was written in canon law: “If the pope were so scandalously bad as to lead souls in crowds to the devil, yet he could not be deposed.” On this accursed and devilish foundation they build at Rome, and think that we should let all the world go to the devil, rather than resist their knavery . . . . It is to be feared that this is a game of Antichrist or a sign that he is close at hand.

Luther then suggested calling a free church council and said if the Pope tried to block this, he would be hindering the church’s edification, thus violating 2 Corinthians 10:8, which Luther paraphrased as, “God has given us authority not for the destruction but for the edification of Christendom.” Then Luther said, “It is only the power of the devil and of Antichrist which resists the things that serve for the edification of Christendom.” If the Pope claimed the “power to interpret the Scriptures by mere authority,” that would—like trying to prevent or control a church council—be evidence that the papacy was “in truth the communion of Antichrist and of the devil,” Luther said.

Quoting Christ’s warning in Matthew 24 about false prophets performing “signs and wonders, so as to deceive the elect,” Luther said miracles were no proof of papal authority. He said 2 Thessalonians 2:9 had predicted “that Antichrist shall, through power of Satan, be mighty in lying wonders.”

---

26 Oberman, 42; Cary, 1:140; Marius, 237; WML, 2:72.
27 Oberman, 43.
28 Marius, 237.
29 WML, 2:72-73.
30 Ibid., 2:73, 78.
31 Ibid., 2:79.
32 Ibid.
Luther also attacked as “the very works of the very Antichrist” papal claims to power over earthly authorities and even over angels. Reminding his readers that Jesus said His kingdom was not “of this world,” Luther bluntly said, “No vicar’s rule can go beyond his lord’s.” These “over-presumptuous” claims were devil-devised devices to facilitate bringing in Antichrist and raising “the Pope above God, as many are already doing,” Luther said.

Commenting on the report that the Pope had prevented the Bishop of Strassburg from implementing moral reform in his diocese, Luther said,

Thus priests are to be encouraged against their own bishop, and their disobedience to divine law is to be protected! Antichrist himself, I hope, will not dare to put God to such open shame.

Luther then spoke of the corruption and immorality in Rome. “There is buying, selling, bartering, trading, trafficking, lying, deceiving, robbing, stealing, luxury, harlotry, knavery and every sort of contempt of God, and even the rule of Antichrist could not be more scandalous.” He also complained of papal legates accepting money to “legalize unjust gain” and “dissolve oaths, vows, and agreements” while saying “the pope has authority to do this.” This alone, Luther said, was enough “to prove the pope the true Antichrist.” By accepting money for annulling oaths, the Pope was suppressing “God’s commandment” and exalting “his own commandment over it,” according to Luther, who added, “If he is not Antichrist, then let some one else tell me who he can be!”

Nevertheless, after saying all this, Luther held out an olive branch to Pope Leo X. He implied that his quarrel was not with the Pope himself but the Roman curia, which was, he said, undeniably “more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom ever was . . . so that Antichrist himself, should he come” could not add anything “to its wickedness.”

**Babylonian Captivity**

In August, Luther learned that Leo was sending a bull threatening him with excommunication. With this, Richard Marius observes, “all
ambiguity about the Antichrist evaporated from his mind; to him the pope was the Beast, the man of evil foretold in the New Testament, and no compromise was possible.\footnote{39}

After this, Luther published \textit{On the Babylon Captivity of the Church}, which charged the papacy with leading “believers into a new captivity.”\footnote{40} Criticizing those who claimed that the Pope had “the power to make laws,” Luther wrote, “Unless they will abandon their laws, and restore to Christ’s churches their liberty, they are guilty of all the souls that perish under this . . . captivity, and the papacy is of a truth the kingdom of Babylon, yea, of the very Antichrist.”\footnote{41}

In addition, this booklet mentioned two specific reasons for calling the papacy Antichrist. First, “this Babylon of ours” had distorted the sacraments by withholding the Communion cup from the laity and, “with the wickedness of Antichrist,” calling it heresy for anyone to say it was necessary for laymen to have access to the cup as well as to the bread.\footnote{42} Second was the annulment of legitimate marriages, of which Luther said,

\begin{quote}
I am incensed at that barefaced wickedness which is so ready to put asunder what God hath joined together that one may well scent Antichrist in it, for it opposes all that Christ has done and taught. What earthly reason is there in holding that no relative of a deceased husband, even to the fourth degree, may marry the latter’s widow?\footnote{43}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Other 1520 Publications}

Luther wrote three other tracts that year which linked the papacy and Antichrist. In \textit{Treatise on Christian Liberty} he denounced the “soul-destroying traditions of our popes” as “snares” by which “numberless souls” had “been dragged down to hell,” clearly “the work of Antichrist.”\footnote{44}

In \textit{The Treatise on Usury} he again discussed Rome’s Antichrist-like financial exploitation of “German fools,” while in his \textit{Treatise on the New Testament} he said in the context of the papal denial of the cup to the laity, “The pope . . . does not have a hair’s breadth of power to change

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item 39 Marius, 248.
\item 40 Ibid., 249; Marty, 60.
\item 41 \textit{WML}, 2:234-236
\item 42 Ibid., 2:236, 247.
\item 43 Ibid., 2:268.
\item 44 Ibid., 2:346.
\end{itemize}
what Christ has made, and whatever of these things he changes, . . . he does as a tyrant and Antichrist.”

Luther’s Response to the Bull

The threatening bull, *Exsurge Domine*, primarily the work of Eck, Cajetan, and Prierias, denounced 44 of Luther’s published statements as “poisonous, offensive, misleading for godly and simple minds, uncharitable, counter to all reverence for the Holy Roman Church, the mother of the faithful and the mistress of the faith.” Condemning anyone holding or defending these positions, it warned Luther that he must return “to the bosom of the church” within 60 days. Meanwhile, it ordered that he keep silent and that his books be burned.

After its arrival, on December 10 Luther burned it as well as books of canon law. Leo X signed the actual bull of excommunication on January 3, 1521, but for various reasons it was not delivered until much later.

The Pope expected his condemnation of Luther to automatically trigger his temporal punishment, probably by execution. Before his death, Emperor Maximilian I had promised Leo that he would enforce any papal verdict against Luther. On January 18, 1521, Leo ordered Maximilian’s successor, Charles V, to do likewise. Papal nuncio Girolamo Aleandro then tired to convince first Charles and then the Diet of Worms to simply condemn Luther without granting him a hearing.

Meanwhile, replying to *Exsurge Domine*’s charges in his *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles*, Luther said, “Beware of the Antichrist, the Pope!” Arguing that Christ was the rock of Matthew 16:18, Luther said that interpreting this text to suggest “papal authority” was “a lying device,” perverting God’s word. This, Luther continued, confirmed Paul’s prediction that Antichrist’s entrance would be “by the power of the evil spirit, who enters only by means of lies and false interpretations of Scripture.” In this book he also called the Pope Antichrist for giving people false assurance through indulgences, for denying that belief was required for forgiveness of sins, for spreading “errors throughout the

---

46 *LW*, 32:ix, x.
47 Marty, 57; Froom 1:21.
48 Oberman, 22; Marius, 281.
49 Fife, 281, 498, Marty 66, Marius 228, 279, Durant 360.
50 *LW*, 32:42; *WML*, 3:51, 84-85.
51 *LW*, 32:42.
world” in exchange for “the wealth of the nations, and for imposing on people a system of ‘contrition, confession, and satisfaction.’”\(^{52}\)

Returning to the Communion issue, Luther said Jesus gave both bread and wine to everyone and told everyone to repeat the ordinance in His remembrance, but “the pope teaches us differently, and gives us only a half-sacrament.” Then, addressing Leo, Luther offered to recant if the Pope could prove that he wasn’t “banned and condemned before God” by Paul’s curse on anyone “who changes his Lord’s ordinance, and resists and perverts His gospel.” Unless he could prove this, Luther said, the Pope should not take offense when Luther called him the Antichrist.\(^{53}\)

Furthermore, Christ merely invites us to partake, whereas “the pope . . . compels us to go to the sacrament once a year.” Thus, in both “his commands and his prohibitions, he is the direct opposite of Christ, as befits a true Antichrist.”\(^{54}\) This reflected a general papal tendency to bind Christians with “man-made laws” while “this unspeakable Antichrist at Rome” treated God’s word “as though it were a carnival joke.”\(^{55}\)

One of the statements Leo had condemned in Exsurge Domine was, “The burning of heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit.” Luther responded that papists had burned the “good Christians” John Huss and Jerome of Prague and “the pope and other heresy-hunters have burned other good Christians,” including “the godly man of Florence, . . . Girolomo Savonarola,” thus “fulfilling the prophecy concerning the Antichrist that he will cast Christians into the oven.”\(^{56}\) In this booklet Luther also condemned “the error about the free will” as “a peculiar teaching of Antichrist”\(^{57}\) and denounced the creation of mendicant orders as “one of Antichrist’s tricks” for increasing his own power.\(^{58}\)

**To Worms and Wartburg (1521)**

Having been twice condemned by the papacy, Luther’s life was clearly in jeopardy. Nevertheless, he opposed Ulrich von Hutten’s proposal to defend the new faith militarily. “I would not have the gospel defended by violence and murder,” he said. “Antichrist . . . will be

\(^{52}\) *LW*, 32:36, 44–47; *WML*, 3:53, 57.

\(^{53}\) *WML*, 3:68, 71.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 3:73.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 3:94.

\(^{56}\) *LW*, 32:82, 87–88.

\(^{57}\) *WML*, 3:111.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 3:116.
crushed without violence by the Word.” However, he fully expected that he himself would lose his life before this happened because, as he wrote to Spalatin, “This cunning Antichrist holds the kingdoms and this world captive.” Nevertheless, when appearing before the imperial diet at Worms, he courageously refused to retract anything he had written unless “convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason.” Consequently, he was declared an outlaw. The fact that he survived despite the imperial ban was due to the intervention of Frederick of Saxony.

During his protective confinement at Wartburg Castle, he continued to describe the papacy as “the Antichrist, the sign of the end prophesied throughout the Scriptures.” He wrote,

St. Paul calls Antichrist the man of sin and the son of perdition, because through his precepts and laws he will turn all the world from God and prevent God and the world from coming together; he shall be a master of sin and all iniquity, and yet will retain the name and appearance of Christ and call himself Sanctimus and Vicarius Dei and Caput Ecclesiae [“most holy one; vicar of God; head of the Church”], and persecute all who will not obey him. It is easy to recognize that the pope more than fits this description.

Now Luther introduced a new reason for calling the Pope Antichrist, one to which he would repeatedly return in the future, the denial of the right of the clergy to marry. Speaking sympathetically of “the pitiable flock of fallen priests”, Luther said, “and if the pope had brought about no other calamity than this prohibition of marriage, it would be sufficient to stamp him as antichrist, who is rightly called the man of sin and son of perdition, and the abomination, so much sin and perdition have followed in the wake of this one law.”

---

60 LW, 32:xiv, xv.
61 LW, 32:112.
62 Bainton, Christianity, 250; Schaff, 7:332.
63 LW, 32: xvi, 141.
64 WML, 3:368 cf. 376.
65 Ibid., 3:388.
Luther did not soften his characterization of the Pope as Antichrist after the crisis had passed and he could feel reasonably secure under Frederick’s protection. Indeed, he expanded and strengthened this position. Of course, he could never feel completely secure. Indeed, Leo’s successor, Hadrian VI, warned Frederick that, unless he separated himself from Martin Luther “and put a muzzle on his blasphemous tongue,” church and state would jointly subject Frederick to both earthly punishment and eternal torment. “Repent therefore,” he said, “before you feel the two swords.” Later, in 1530, Pope Clement VII specifically ordered Emperor Charles V to “exterminate the evangelical heretics.”

The chief reason the mature Luther described the Pope as Antichrist was because, in Luther’s opinion, he had usurped God’s place as law-maker, adding his own rules to those in the Bible, burdening consciences with human traditions, and infringing on Christian freedom, declaring as sinful things which Christ has said are not sinful, including clerical marriage. Indeed, Luther said, “He has deposed all of Scripture and set up his own laws,” sitting in judgment on God’s word and making decrees that oppose what Scripture says, nullifying the texts assuring us of forgiveness of sins, distorting Christ’s words, falsely interpreting Scripture, diluting Biblical mandates, and giving people a distorted picture of God. Rather than feeding Christ’s sheep, the Pope taught and did the very opposite of what “Christ spoke and did,” according to Luther.

One way the Pope usurped God’s place was by teaching that the Scriptures derived their authority from the church rather than vice versa. Another way was by claiming authority not only over the church but over the whole world, judging everyone but permitting himself to “be judged or punished by no one” “even if the whole world were to see a pope lead innumerable multitudes of souls to the devil in the abyss of hell.” The Pope said that “whoever obeys him will be saved” and “whoever acts and speaks in opposition to” his teaching “must die,” when—according to Luther—“his devilish doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1)” actually “leads directly to hell.” The Pope’s claim to divine prerogatives had “denied

---

68 Ibid., 52:81; 8:312; 24:355; 52:21; 27:89; *WML*, 4:77; 5:116.
70 Ibid., 2:101; Pelikan, 175.
and utterly buried the office and divinity of Christ,” who never “intended the Pope to rule over the whole world.” He cited both Scripture and history to show that neither Peter nor the bishop of Rome at the time of the Council of Nicea ruled over the whole church.71

Excommunicating and persecuting people for following God’s word was another way the Pope was usurping God’s authority, according to Luther. “The false church is always the persecutor of the true church, not only spiritually . . . but also physically, by means of the sword and tyranny,” he said, declaring that the Bible had foretold that Antichrist would “kill those who cling to the Word.” This had been fulfilled by papal “arch murderers,” who had “slain many Christians.”73

Central to Luther’s understanding of the Pope as Antichrist usurping God’s place was 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4. Phrases he borrowed from this passage to describe the Pope included “man of sin,” “the lawless one,” and “son of perdition.”74 Noting that the villain in 2 Thessalonians 2 sits in God’s temple and exalts himself above God, Luther said, “The Antichrist took his seat in the church, yet not to govern it with divine laws, promises, and grace,” but with “his foolish and innumerable laws and altogether unnecessary traditions.”75 “He sits in the temple of God and rules with human commandments.”76 Luther connected this passage with Matthew 15:3:

Paul tells the Thessalonians (2 Thes. 2:4) that the Antichrist “exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship”—surely by means of his self-invented holiness. Christ bears witness, Matt. 15:3, that the Jews transgress the commandments of God so that they might keep the traditions of men. We can also see this in the hostile monastery life and holy orders. There we find fasting, holiday-making, lying in hard beds, watching, keeping silent, wearing coarse clothes,

---

72 LW, 41:299, 357.
74 The first two phrases are two different translations of the same words. WML, 2:102; LW, 28:357; 31:391-392.
75 LW, 8:283 cf. 31:393; 41:209; 46:408.
76 Ibid., 37:367.
93
Rather than being subject to God, he exalted himself “above God’s Word and worship,” thus “sitting in judgment over God.”

The prophecies of Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation were also significant for Luther’s understanding of the papacy as Antichrist usurping God’s prerogatives. Luther interpreted Daniel 2 and 7 as depicting four great empires, culminating with the Roman Empire, which would be divided, after which the Antichrist would arise. His own generation, he believed, was symbolized by “the last toes of the great image of which Daniel speaks.” The little horn arising out of the Roman Empire he identified as the papal Antichrist. Perhaps he was thinking of the prophecy that the little horn would “think to change times and laws” (Daniel 7:25) in his earlier statement that the Pope had no power to change what Christ has made, and whatever of these things he changes, that he does as a tyrant and Antichrist.

Luther believed that Daniel 8, 11, and 12 contained blended prophecies applying to both Antiochus and the Antichrist. He interpreted Daniel’s prophecy of a ruler who would “exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods” and who would not “regard the desire of women” (Dan 11:36,37) as referring to the papacy because of the Pope’s ban on clerical marriage and his demand for obedience to himself and his rules “in opposition to all the words of God.”

Quoting Daniel 9:27 and 12:11, Jesus in Matthew 24:15 refers to the “abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel.” Noting that the Pope had threatened burning to all who opposed him, Luther interpreted this text as follows:

The pope is a god on earth over everything heavenly, earthly, spiritual, and secular, and all on his own. No one is permitted

---

78 Ibid., 13:178, 190-191; 41:364.
81 Ibid., 35:306, 313, 351.
82 Ibid., 28:24; 38:190, 232; 39:193, 195. He also applied Daniel 11:38 and 12:8 to the Antichrist (ibid., 11:38, 551) and identified the little horn of Daniel 8 as Antichrist (ibid., 10:252, 353; 39:279), and suggested that the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 extended from the Persian emperors to the ministry of Christ. Ibid., 45:25 cf. 35:314.
PETTIBONE: MARTIN LUTHER’S VIEWS ON THE ANTICHRIST

to say to him: “What are you doing?” That is the abomination and stench of which Christ speaks in Matthew 24.83

In other passages applying this text to the papacy, Luther said, “The desolating sacrilege stands in the holy place . . . and rules over us in the place of Christ” and “he has set up his own law for God’s law and his own priesthood for Christ’s priesthood, and thus set abomination in the holy place.”84

Luther also found predictions of the Antichrist in the book of Revelation, especially chapters 13 and 17. In Revelation 13, it was the lamblike beast, appearing “to be Christian,” yet speaking “like the devil,” preaching the doctrines of “the dragon from hell.”85 Usurping Christ’s role as high priest, Luther said, the Pope had set up his own clergy, claiming that he was “imprinting on their souls an indelible character,” when in actuality he was imprinting them with “the mark of the beast in Revelation.”86

Using the symbolism from Revelation 14, 17, and 18, Luther frequently referred to Rome as Babylon and the “scarlet whore of Babylon,” sometimes using these terms when discussing the papacy’s persecution of religious dissent. Calling Rome a “scarlet murderess,” Luther remembered the attempt to have him brought “as a prisoner to that murderous Jerusalem, that Babylon clothed in purple.” Declaring, “This Babylon in Rome burns Christ’s children,” he “praised and thanked” the Lord for rescuing him from “the scarlet whore.”87

Negating Christ’s Sacrifice

Not only did the Roman Antichrist usurp God’s prerogatives and persecute His people, according to Luther, but he in effect negated Christ’s sacrifice and mediation. “Antichrist . . . abolishes grace and denies the blessings of Christ, our High Priest, who gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins,” he said.88 One way he did this was through the “doctrine of merit.”89 Said Luther,

---

84 Ibid., 36:138, 218.
86 Ibid., 36:201. In another passage, Luther identified the papacy as “that loathsome beast (Rev. 13:1) which has blasphemous names on his forehead.” Ibid., 4:31. He also identified the beast of Revelation 15 and 16 as the papacy. Ibid., 35:407.
88 Ibid., 26:180.
89 Watson, 96.
The noxious notion of our own righteousness . . . was why we could not at all see Christ as the Mediator and Savior but simply supposed that He was a severe judge, who had to be placated by our works. This was to blaspheme Christ to the utmost and . . . to nullify the grace of God, to make Christ die to no purpose . . . And this is . . . “the desolating sacrilege, standing in the holy place.” (Matt. 24:15)  

The doctrine that monks could justify themselves by “their hypocritical sanctity . . . , even though it is the proper function of Christ alone to justify the sinner” had, he said, “denied and completely suppressed the work of Christ and his divinity.” The blasphemy on the forehead of the scarlet whore he interpreted to be “the manifold, innumerable, self-chosen works or forms of worship” which were presented “as sacrifices in order to suppress Christ’s sacrifice.” Luther declared, “The chief article of the Christian doctrine is . . . that Christ is our righteousness. He who is now attacking this is taking the whole Christ away and is the true Antichrist.”  

Luther said the papacy also negated Christ’s sacrifice by proclaiming the Mass to be “a sacrifice for the living and the dead,” obtaining “forgiveness of sins . . . . It is as though Christ had not done this very thing on the cross, as though his sacrifice had no validity and were of no value.” Luther suggested that these “daily repeated sacrifices” were “counterfeiting Christ” and purporting to do “that which Christ alone by his sacrifice once for all effected.”  

Luther insisted that Christ was still our only mediator. “Christ and the Scriptures know nothing” of the priestly system set up by the papacy. Jesus had not abdicated His High Priestly office, nor had He transferred it to the Pope. “God preserve us from having any other priest but Christ,” he said. 

Another way we nullify Christ’s “coming in the flesh,” according to Luther, is by calling upon Mary or the other saints. “The invocation of the saints is . . . one of the abuses of the Antichrist,” he said.  

---

90 LW 26:200-201 cf. 35:393.
92 Ibid., 7:297; 13:313; 40:15.
93 Ibid., 13:330.
Eschatology

Luther believed that the Bible foretold the church’s future and suggested that the time of judgment predicted in Daniel 7:8,9 was taking place during his lifetime. Affirming that his own teachings were those of “the ancient and true church at the time of the apostles,” he thought the little horn was being judged as “the original and ancient church” shone “forth once more (like the sun emerging from the clouds behind which it [had been] shining but where it could not be seen).” He found comfort in the prophecies that the last days would “be shortened for the sake of the godly” and “that the church” would “be preserved and Antichrist [would] not encompass everything with error and falsehood.”

He noted that in the second angel’s message of Revelation 14, “the gospel” was followed by a voice predicting that Babylon, “the spiritual papacy,” would be destroyed. This would be done, according to other passages, “without human hands,” with the breath of Christ’s mouth, “slaying him with spiritual preaching” before destroying him “by his glorious”—and sudden—coming, which would free “Christendom from every evil.” At that time, “those who cling to the papacy against the gospel shall be cast outside the city of Christ, into the winepress of God’s wrath.”

Luther’s Final Year

The intensity of Luther’s attacks on the papacy increased during 1545, the final year of his life. As Will Durant puts it, “Luther’s temper became hot lava as he neared the grave.” That year, in his preface to a compilation of his complete works, he described the Pope not only as Antichrist but also as the devil’s vicar.

His “last and most bitter attack on the pope” was called Against the Roman Papacy. An Institution of the Devil. Written at the request of Elector John Frederick, it was a response to two letters from Pope Paul III forbidding the emperor from calling a “free German National Council” to settle the religious disputes within the empire. Three times in this publication Luther referred to the Pope as “the most hellish father.” He denounced him as a teacher of lies, blasphemies, and idolatries, “a murderer of kings, an inciter to all kinds of bloodshed, and “a brothel-keeper.
above all brothel-keepers and all vermin”—and even “a true werewolf.”

Were such attacks unchristian? Luther didn’t think so. Earlier, he had said it was “not sin” to refute Satan’s “reviling against godliness and God himself.” They must, he said, “be exposed and refuted” so the people could “be corrected and liberated from the tyranny of Satan.” Similarly, Luther said,

We . . . are attacking the pope as the Antichrist and seducer of the whole world. We are incited to anger against him not by personal ambition but by righteous jealousy and fervor of conscience to vindicate and protect the glory of God.

Paul’s attacks on “the false apostles” were not slander: he was “judging them by his apostolic authority.” Likewise, when Luther called the Pope Antichrist, he said, he was “judging . . . by divine authority” on the basis of Galatians 1:8. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

It can be argued, however, that although Luther was antipapal, he was not anti-Catholic. He opposed the dictatorial monarchial episcopate at the head of the church, not the church itself. As Jaroslav Pelikan puts it, “Although the pope was the Antichrist ‘seated in the temple of God,’ the church in which he was seated was still the temple of God.”

**Other Reformers**

By the time of Luther’s death, other voices had joined him in proclaiming that the pope was the Antichrist, including both his friend and disciple Philip Melanchthon and a man for whom he had little respect, Ulrich Zwingli. Other contemporaries of Luther who shared his belief about the papal Antichrist included John Calvin, John Knox, and Thomas Cranmer. Among the later reformers who held this view were the

---


100 LW, 6:63; 27: 129.

101 Pelikan, 173.


Anabaptist Menno Simons and various Huguenot theologians. Even King James I of England got into the act, writing an exposition of the book of Revelation that called Rome the seat of the Antichrist and “a second Babylon.” Many of the foundational creeds of Protestantism, including the Formula of Concord, the Second Scottish Confession, the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration of the Congregational Churches, and the Baptist Confession of 1688, echoed Luther’s belief on this subject.

Conclusion

Luther’s conflict with church authorities over the financial exploitation of his parishioners through indulgences led to papal attempts to silence the independent-minded monk. He first began to suspect that the papacy was the Antichrist when its representatives resorted to power plays rather than appealing to Scripture, supported the execution of dissidents, and—long before it became official dogma—claimed papal infallibility. He became sure of his position when the Pope himself threatened Luther with excommunication, pressured rulers to silence him, and ordered the extermination of his followers. But Luther’s Antichrist theology was the result of biblical analysis as well as personal experience. The key theological reason for Luther’s position was his belief that the Pope was in many ways usurping God’s place and negating Christ’s sacrifice.

Clearly, Luther’s position on the Antichrist is no longer politically correct. It is out of sync with the groupthink of the twenty-first century. As Heiko Oberman says, “Luther’s way of speaking about the Antichrist has become alien to us.”

However, “with so great a cloud of witnesses” stretching back so many centuries who courageously asserted that the papacy was the Antichrist, the question for us should not be, is this position embarrassing or is it politically correct or socially acceptable? Rather, it should be, is it...
biblically correct? This view was not politically correct in Luther’s day—it was very incorrect politically. And in Luther’s day, unlike ours, this opinion could have been literally fatal for the person holding it, as it was for John Huss and Thomas Cranmer.

**Dennis Pettibone** is Professor of History at Southern Adventist University.
dlpettib@southern.edu
Seeing God With or Without the Body: 
Job 19:25–27

Erik Galenieks

Analysis of Job 19:25-27, especially when dealing with its eschatological implications, has led scholars to various views. A general survey of them shows that one of the current prevailing thoughts is that Job expects a post-mortem encounter with God, but in an ethereal state. According to this view, Job will see his Redeemer not with his physical eyes but outside his body in his “indestructible spirit.” This view is also favored by the translation of the Revised Standard Version footnote, “without my flesh I shall see God.” Unfortunately, this interpretation ignores the nature, function, and purpose of the employed terminology and its various textual elements that suggest just the opposite, namely, the physical nature of Job’s experience.

Another popular opinion asserts that Job envisaged a restoration of his health and prosperity before his death. However, if Job is so confident of his recovery, why does he contemplate death with all its implications?

1 David J. A. Clines, Job 1-20, Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), vol. 17 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 464. He cites the following scholars to support his claim: G. H. A. Ewald, Bernhard Duhm, August Dillman, Helmut Lamparter, and Artur Weiser. See also Edward J. Kissane, The Book of Job (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1946), 120-121. According to him, current views may be grouped in four major categories, namely, (1) Job will die, but will be raised from the dead by God and vindicated; (2) Job will not die, but be restored to health and prosperity by God’s intervention; (3) Job will die, but even in death will be conscious of God’s activity in vindicating him; and (4) Job is expressing a wish as in a conditional clause: “if he were to see God, he would see him as friendly.”

2 Some scholars take the preposition יָ רוֹ נ in vs. 26 as privative.

3 Kissane, 120-121.

4 Clines, Job 1-20, 464.
Other scholars believe that Job will die and later be resurrected. Edward Young, for instance, speaks of an eschatological event, namely, bodily resurrection, and Gleason Archer translates Job 19:26 in the following way, “And from the vantage point of my flesh, I shall see GodSuch a variety of views and interpretations create in many minds only confusion. That is why it is necessary to take a closer look at the terminology of the passage and to analyze its eschatological nature. In the current case, it is indispensable to establish the language and the categories of the vocabulary employed in these three verses. Job’s attitude to death and belief regarding the future resurrection is fundamental to an understanding of what Job is or is not affirming. Does Job envisage an existential solution in the present course of life or an eschatological event of resurrection?

Language

Structure and Delimitation. Although many scholars begin their studies by exploring the language of a chosen passage, Meir Weiss emphasizes that the first question should be “What is its structure?” Language and structure are not to be regarded as isolated entities but rather as mutually enriching aspects of the whole. The structure provides control elements, determining to a very large extent the limits within which the study will be done. Consequently, we note that chapter 19 contains four basic units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Address to the friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Complaint against God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-20</td>
<td>Complaint against man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-29</td>
<td>Conviction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Meir Weiss, The Bible from Within (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 273. Weiss’ position is that “it is the structure of the literary unit that enables us to hear all that can be heard from the work of literary art.”
GALENIEKS: SEEING GOD WITH OR WITHOUT THE BODY

These divisions are signaled in a number of different ways which are not discussed in this paper.⁹

Chiastic Structure of Job 19:21-29. An analysis of the content of the last division of chapter 19 shows that it displays a chiastic arrangement. Despite varying thematic elements that are present in the given unit, they are bound together by a chiastic structure, which can be diagrammed in the following way:¹⁰

19:21  A¹ Admonition
   22  B¹ Accusation
   23-24  C¹ Aspiration
   25-27b  D CONVICTION
   27c  C² Aspiration
   28  B² Accusation
   29  A² Admonition

Conviction

\[ \text{Conviction} \]

vs. 25

For I, I know that my Redeemer lives,

\[ \text{For I know that my Redeemer lives,} \]

and that at the end He will stand upon the earth;

\[ \text{and that at the end He will stand upon the earth;} \]

vs. 26

And after my skin is destroyed, this [I know],

\[ \text{And after my skin is destroyed, this [I know],} \]

that from my flesh I shall see God,

\[ \text{that from my flesh I shall see God;} \]

vs. 27

Whom I will see for myself,

\[ \text{Whom I will see for myself;} \]

---


¹⁰ Kissane pointed out the connections between vss. 21-22 and 28-29 and believed they were originally all together (Kissane, The Book of Job, 118-123). G. J. Janzen saw chiasm in vss. 25-27 (Gerald J. Janzen, Job: Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 140. But N. C. Habel demonstrated that the chiasm is larger and includes vss. 21-29 (Norman C. Habel, The Book of Job: A Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 296. Clines accepted Habel’s structure that saw the mode not just as vs. 25, but also including vss. 26 and 27 (Clines, Job 1-20, 437).
The central part of the chiasm is Job’s conviction, represented by vss. 25-27, that functions as a part of a larger unit (vss. 21-29). Its diverse structural and thematic elements exhibit both a well-balanced chiasm and a structurally systematic arrangement. Moreover, vss. 25-27 not only function as the peak of the entire chiastic outline, but also demonstrate that they are bound together phonologically by their own double chiastic structure based on sound.

These three verses are interlocked by numerous cogent elements that directly expose and dramatize Job’s conviction of the bodily resurrection:

1. The additional emphatic presence of the pronoun יִהְיָי ("I") before the verbs יִתָּבָדֵי ("I know," vs. 25) and יִתָּבָדֵי ("I will see," vs. 27).

---

11 All translations from Hebrew to English are done by the author of this article. Literally, “My kidneys grow faint in my breast.”

12 For discussions on the structure, see Habel, The Book of Job, 294-298; Janzen, Job, 131-140; Kissane, The Book of Job, 118-123; Clines, Job 1-20, 435-438.

GALENIEKS: SEEING GOD WITH OR WITHOUT THE BODY

2. Intensification by repeating the verbs הַיְּמַּן (vss. 26, 27) and פרָט (“they will see,” vs. 27).

3. A positive clarification after the verb, הַיְּמַּן (“I shall see for myself,” vs. 27) and a negative clarification, פיָּרְט (“and not another,” vs. 27), which emphasizes and strengthens the positive one.

The fact that vss. 25-27 are linked together by various sense, terminological, and thematic interrelated and interdependent elements plays an extremely important role in the process of interpretation. For instance, correspondence in sound often extends to correspondence in sense. Thus, various sound, verbal, and thematic connections not only form but also help to clarify Job’s conviction.

Eschatological Terms

הַיְּמַּן and פיָּרְט. The force of Job’s conviction in the future resurrection is demonstrated by his deliberate choice of the vocabulary, which by its nature and purpose is eschatological, especially the verb הַיְּמַּן (“see,” “behold”). One of its functions is to express the vision of God that every righteous person will have on the resurrection morning. Usually the words for “seeing” are associated with the words for waking. Some scholars would include in this category even those texts that do not have the word “to see,” but which nevertheless imply it.

Generally the verb פיָּרְט (“to see”) denotes the act of “seeing,” “perceiving,” “watching,” or “looking” with one’s own eyes. Job expresses his conviction that he will live again by a short but assertive phrase,

14 For the reflexive and emphatic function of personal pronouns suffixed to propositions occurring after a verb, see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Vinona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 305.


19 Eve perceived that the fruit of the tree was good (Gen 3:6). In Isa 53:11 מְרָעָה occurs without an object, and one can understand this to indicate simply that after the suffering of death (the grave, vs. 9), the Suffering Servant will see again, that is, his eyes will be opened. The assurance that he will live again is expressed by his seeing again; see Dahood, *Psalms III*, xlix-lii.
namely, יָרָאַת עַיְנוֹתִי ("and my eyes will behold," vs. 27), or will see again. There is no such thing as seeing without awakening, for in sleep the eyes are closed, it is dark, and one neither sees nor knows anything. However, in awakening the eyes open, it is light, and one can see again. That is why in Scripture seeing is often paralleled to awakening. Note, for example, the references in Pss 17:15 and 11:7:

17:15
יָרָאַת עַיְנוֹתִי
I, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;

11:7
יָרָאַת עַיְנוֹתִי
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.

The context in both Psalms is the threat of death at the hands of the wicked. In both contexts, the "beholding" is a reward in contrast to the fate of the wicked. On the wicked, "God will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur" (Ps 11:6), and the men of this world have their reward already in this life (Ps 17:14). In this context, the reward of the righteous person is "seeing God" when he awakes at the resurrection (Ps 17:15).

Job is particularly emphatic about beholding God in his own resurrected body. The assurance of seeing is emphasized in several ways by employing various eschatological terms and descriptive elements:

1. Two synonyms— יָרָאָת and יָרָאַת —occur together.
2. The term יָרָאָת occurs twice.

Additional emphasis on personal involvement is created by:

1. Particularly emphasizing his personal, by its nature, physical involvement, namely, seeing with יָרָאַת ("my eyes").
2. Clarifying his assertion by adding יָרָאָת ("and not another," literally, "stranger").
3. The number of occurrences of personal pronouns and suffixes.

Thus, Job demonstrates a powerful conviction that he himself, in person, not a stranger, will see God in his new resurrected body.

The conviction of Job’s statement could not be made any stronger. The presence of two different verbs for "seeing" and the emphasis and clarification of the personal element not only creates an eschatological

context, but also firmly links this unit with other passages that deal with the same eschatological hope.

**םָעַפ** and **נָא.** The motif of resurrection is further reestablished by the employment of the verb **םָעַפ** ("He will stand"), especially as it functions in parallel to the term **נָא** ("alive," "living").21 This interconnection clearly alludes to Job 14:12, where Job employs **םָעַפ** in parallel to **שָׁנוּב** ("they will awake") in order to emphasize the future event that will take place in time and space. The purpose and function of both terms **םָעַפ** and **נָא**, the subject of which is the Redeemer, is to intensify and reinforce the concept of the Resurrection hope even more.22

Therefore, it is logical to associate Job 19:26 with the eschatological event, especially since the order of the word pairs follows the pattern that can be observed in other resurrection passages, namely, **םָעַפ** following **נָא**.23

I know that my redeemer lives [נָא],
And that in the end he will stand [םָעַפ] upon the earth (vs. 25).24

Despite the fact that the verb **םָעַפ** is usually accepted here in its legal sense, nevertheless, because of its association with **נָא**, it has a clear eschatological value and significance.

**נָא** and **נָא.** The noun **נָא** ("earth," "dust") points back to the **נָא** in Gen 2:7 as the place of life and in Gen 3:19 as the place of death. When a man was formed from the **נָא** of the ground, Yahweh caused him **נָא** ("to live"). In the book of Job "dust" occurs at least twenty-four times, alluding either to death and the grave or to mortal human beings.25

---

23 Isa 26:14, 19; Hos 6:2. In all these references **נָא** constantly follows **נָא**. See Ezek 37:10.
24 Sawyer, "Hebrew Words for Resurrection," 232. An outstanding illustration of this methodology is the example of Deut 31:16 when **נָא** occurs following the death of Moses. The second-century rabbis used the presence of the verb to prove the resurrection of Moses. Sanh 90. b.
Moreover, the occurrence of the term יְהֹוָה so close to the adjective יָיוֵשׁ (“alive,” “living”), which characterizes the Redeemer as a living being, alludes to the resurrection at the eschaton.

As Job uses יֹשֵׁב in parallel with death and the grave, the underlying relation of יֹשֵׁב to death is also emphasized by its close proximity to יָיוֵשׁ. This is well demonstrated in Job 19:25:

I know that my redeemer lives [יָיוֵשׁ],
And that in the end he will stand upon the earth [יֹשֵׁב].

Where these two terms occur in close proximity, they allude to the resurrection, especially when יֹשֵׁב is used to describe the dust of the earth. Thus, the basic meaning of Job 19:25 is that Job has a Redeemer who lives and will conquer death.

In contrast, the term יְהֹוָה and יָיוֵשׁ. Furthermore, the adjective יְהֹוָה (“and at the end”) is derived from the preposition יָיוֵשׁ, which means “behind,” or “afterwards.” Both in terms of space and time, יְהֹוָה can either mean “what

---

26 יָיוֵשׁ, “BDB, 312; Clines, Job 1-20; 460.
27 See also Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2.
28 Gen 3:19; Eccl 3:20; 12:7; Job 4:19; 8:19; 10:9; 34:15; Ps 104:29.
29 Clines, Job 1-20, 160.
31 The foundation for this connection is based on the creation story (Gen 2:7), when man was formed from the יָיוֵשׁ of the ground and God caused him to live, יָיוֵשׁ. See also Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:2.
immediately follows,” or describe the general “beyond” or “future,” and finally, even the limits of space or the very end of time.

According to Dahood, the word ננוזא functions as a technical term for the eschaton if it is qualified by an eschatological context. This is exactly the case in vss. 25-27, which contain various elements of death, life, and resurrection, thus demonstrating all the criteria for understanding it in an eschatological sense. Not only does it have the elements of death and resurrection, but in its context it is also interrelated with the word designating eternity (יִצְבוֹ). It is obvious that the author used ננוזא as a technical term for the eschaton.

Job’s faith is in the eschaton. Even if he has to die and go down to Sheol and become again the dust of the earth, Job is confident in the eschatological resurrection, as is seen from the discussed vocabulary. He states that vindication is expected ננוזא (“after”) the destruction of his body. It means that he is not referring to his vindication in the latter part of his own life, either.

Summary

The overview of the eschatological terminology within the same associated field, especially, in their clusters, builds a strong case for interpretation. Moreover, the diversity of this particular vocabulary not only merges together but also creates a specific theological eschatological environment. It was observed that Job 19:25-27 contains seven terms from the field of eschatology: ננוזא (“after”); ננוזא (“the eschaton”); ננוזא (“the dust of earth”); ננוזא (“live”); ננוזא and ננוזא (“to see upon awakening”); ננוזא

34 The term is used to describe what will follow that which has just proceeded. The “second” husband (Deut 24:3); the “following” generation (Ps 48:13); the “next” temple (Hag 2:9).

35 In a temporal sense, it refers to the general future. The generation to come in Ps 102:18 is not the immediately following one, because, unlike Ps 48:13, the message is to be conveyed not by “telling” the next generation, but by “writing” it for them to see.

36 The local extremity is exemplified by usage to refer to the far (western) sea ננוזא in Deut 11:24; 34:2; Joel 2:20, and Zech 14:8. It even refers to the eastern mountains (Gen 10:30). See William Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 313.

37 See ננוזא,” BDB, 31. A number of references signify a meaning like “end” or “last” part of a period. 2 Sam 23:1; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 25:26, and 28:26. Yahweh is “the first and the last” (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).

38 Dahood, Psalms III, xlvii.

Journal of the Adventist Theological Society

(“to arise”)—all of them complement each other in creating a solid eschatological scenario. To these we might add an eighth, רכָּמ ("to redeem"), and working from the associative field, there may even be a ninth in vs. 26, namely, צָר ("to awake").40

Intertextuality

The presence of eschatological terms in Job 19 can be better understood and appreciated by the examination of other related passages in which the same vocabulary occurs in identical clusters, especially where the basic meaning is already established.

Isaiah 26:19. The majority of scholars believe that Isa 26:19 refers to the resurrection of the dead,41 and this is an important fact because it is written earlier than Dan 12.42

Your dead will live

Their [My] corpses will rise

You who dwell in the dust, awake and shout for joy

For your dew is as the dew of the dawn

And the earth will cast out the dead

This passage is said to be the most explicit Old Testament reference to the bodily resurrection of believers, as it unambiguously refers to Yahweh’s purpose and power to deliver the dead from death.43 In fact, it cries out, in full assurance of the purpose of God, the clear command

40 Sawyer, “Hebrew Words for Resurrection,” 231.
42 Ibid., 269.
43 It is restricted to “your” dead. “Dwell” and “dust” are combined in Ps 7:6; see also Job 7:21; 20:11; 21:26; Dan 12:2. The phrase “the dust of death” occurs in Ps 22:16.
Galenieks: Seeing God with or Without the Body

over the cemetery of the dead, “Wake up and rejoice, you that sleep in the dust.”

Moreover, Isa 26:19 emphasizes the same message of resurrection as Ezekiel and other prophets do, but in a much more expressive way: Your dead יַעֲשֵׂה (“shall live”); their corpses יִשָּׁרֵא (“shall rise”); dwellers in the dust יֵשָׂרֵא (“awake”); . . . and the earth יִשְׁתָּרֵא (“will cast out”) the dead. The resurrection of the dead is that triumphant, final, and sudden eschatological event which will wake the dead from their sleep in their graves and towards which the whole universe is moving.

The strongest argument for reading in this passage the idea of the bodily resurrection comes from the employment, nature, function, and purpose of the eschatological terminology that harmoniously operates in the associated field for death and resurrection.

Three widely accepted terms for resurrection are: יִשָּׁרֵא (“to live”), יִשָּׁרֵא (“to rise”), and יַעֲשֵׂה (“to awake”). Two more images enhance the resurrection overtones of this passage, namely, the mention of יִשְׁתָּרֵא (“light,” “morning”) and the depiction of the freshness of יִשְׁתָּרֵא (“dew”).

47 For a discussion on the vocabulary and categories of terms, see Sawyer, “Hebrew Words for Resurrection,” 219-222.
48 Hasel, 272.
50 See Sawyer, “Hebrew Words for Resurrection,” 219-222. He puts these terms in the same category as “awakening” and “seeing,” as they all deal with awakening out of sleep.
51 Ibid., 225. The category contains words for “sprouting,” “blossoming,” “rain,” and “dew.” See also Hasel, 275. Though Job does not invoke in our passage the image of sprouting with rain or dew, he does employ the figure in Job 14:9-14 in a reference to the resurrection.
The categories of eschatological terms represented in Isa 26:19 include:

1. הָיָה (“to live” in the sense of “to live again”).
2. From the category of “rising” or “standing”— הָרַע (“to arise”).
3. From the category of “awakening,” “light,” and “seeing”— וִיתָר (“light”).
4. From the category of “rain,” or “blossoming”— בָּשָּׁם (“dew”).
5. Words for the “dead” (יָדָא and רְדַא).

Job 19 contains an almost perfectly matching cluster of eschatological terminology from the same fields as in Isa 26:

1. יָז (“live”)
2. From the category of “arising”— יָשָׁמ (“to arise”).
3. From the category of “awakening” and “seeing”— וִיתָר and וִיתָר (“to see”),
4. The term for dead— רְדַא (“dust”).

Thus, this comparison of recognized eschatological vocabulary for “resurrection” in Isa 26, occurring also in Job 19, serves to confirm not only intertextual links but also the death-resurrection context in Job 19:25-27.

Daniel 12:1-4. In Dan 12, the eschatological terminology is represented by both the resurrection and the juridical field. Verse 1 not only is permeated with eschatological overtones, but also is integrally related to the detailed resurrection description in vs. 2:

And many of those who sleep
in the dusty earth will awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Others to shame [and] everlasting contempt.

52 Gowan, Eschatology in the Old Testament, 93. Like some others who argue that the resurrection is limited to “some of those who sleep,” Gowan believes that the OT teaches that most people get justice in this life and that resurrection is only for those whose accounts still have to be settled. Yet, Dan 12 should be understood as a general resurrection.
Verses 2 depicts two resurrections, one for the righteous and the second for the wicked. The phrase יִנְהָג מְנַשֶּׁהוּ ("and many of those who sleep") literally means "of those sleeping" and refers to the dead. The term מְנַשֶּׁה functions as a euphemism for the state of death or sleep in the grave, which in the context of eschatological events emphasizes the bodily resurrection.

It is said that the dead sleep in קָרִינָהּ ("the dusty earth"). This is the construct chain קָרִינָהּ קֶדֶם קֶדֶם, literally meaning "the earth of dust," and is associated with the imagery of burial in the grave.

In the context of these physical images of death, the statement that שָׁכֵן ("they will awake") definitely refers to the bodily resurrection of those who are to be delivered, and "not simply a renewal of the soul." Thus, the death and resurrection of an individual is designated by the imagery of "sleep" and "awakening." It should be recalled from the discussion on Job 19:25-27 that the verb שָׁכֵן ("to awake") is associated with "seeing" and "light." Moreover, here it is located next to the term צֶל הָנָּה (lit., "lives") in the phrase צֶל הָנָּה צֶל הָנָּה ("these to everlasting life"), thus forming a strong eschatological resurrection image which at the same time highlights a clear life-and-death antithesis. The negative consequences of the resurrection event are described in the parallel phrase, which refers to those who lived without God, צֶל הָנָּה צֶל הָנָּה ("and those to shame [and] everlasting contempt"). People die individually, but the resurrection of the dead is represented as an eschatological event of a corporate nature.

Not only is the imagery of death very concrete, but it is also followed in vs. 13 by the figure of speech for the final resurrection, צֶל הָנָּה ("you will stand"), which is further clarified by the phrase, צֶל הָנָּה צֶל הָנָּה ("at the end of the days"). The technical term for resurrection, צֶל הָנָּה ("to
stand”), functions as a synonym of הָרְשָׁע (“to stand,” “arise”), and that is why its employment here emphasizes a particular purpose, which will be carried out מָשָׁא (“end”). The term מָשָׁא (“end”) signifies the eschaton60 or the end time of human history,61 which will culminate in the bodily resurrection of the dead from their graves.62

The eschatological terms for resurrection in this passage are from the previously mentioned categories:

1. Terminology for “the dead”— רָדַע (“the sleepers of the dusty earth”).
2. From the field of “seeing,” “awakening,” or “light”— מָשָׁא (“to awake”). In addition, the ones raised to life are said to shine like the brightness of the heavens.
3. And the word מָשָׁא (“to live”).

Common resurrection terms and images used in both Daniel and Job are:

1. רָדַע and מָשָׁא (“death” and “life”).
2. In Job מָשָׁא and מָשָׁא (“to see”), and מָשָׁא (“brightness”) in Daniel.
3. In Job מָשָׁא (“to stand”), and מָשָׁא (“to stand”) in Daniel.
4. Job’s event is at the מָשָׁא (“eschaton”), and Daniel’s event is at מָשָׁא (“the time of the end,” vs. 4).

In describing the resurrection event, both texts, Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:1-4, use the same cluster of identical terminology found in Job 19:25-27, thus confirming the eschatological setting and meaning of our passage.

59 Of eight occurrences of the noun מָשָׁא (“end”) with the definite article, only two have prefixed the preposition l, namely, Dan 12:13 and Hab 2:3. See Shemaryahu Talmon, מָשָׁא,” TDOT, 13:78-86. See also Gerhard Pfandl, “The Latter Days and the Time of the End in the Book of Daniel” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1990).
60 Dan 8:17,19; 11:40; 12:4,6.
Interpretation

Most scholars acknowledge that Job 19:25-27 is one of the most perplexing passages in the whole book. They preface their remarks by pointing out various problems and difficulties. According to Theophile Meek, the interpretations are so varied that practically no two of them are in agreement. This paper, however, presents an interpretation that is based on the discussed eschatological terminology and its interrelated linguistic elements.

Verse 25 starts with the phrase יִדְוָדָי יִנָּאָוָג ("for I, I know"), where יִדְוָדָי ("for," "but") introduces contrast with vss. 23-24, and the personal pronoun יִנָּאָוָג takes on an emphatic form "I myself." The verb יִדְוָדָי ("I know") occurs in the book of Job 12 times. Most of its occurrences are found in legal contexts, where it basically means "I have a strong conviction," "I am certain," or "I firmly believe." The significance of the phrase, which points out Job's unique relationship with God, is revealed by an examination of the verb יִדְוָדָי in interrelated textual parallels:

יֵחָשֵׁב יִתְנָאָוָג יַעֲנָרָי
You have granted me life and lovingkindness   Job 10:12

63 Among more recent commentators are: Marvin H. Pope, Job, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 147, "notoriously difficult"; Daniel J. Simundson, Faith under Fire: Biblical Interpretations of Suffering (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 86, "difficulties increase when we get to vv. 26 and 27"; Clines, Job 1-20, 457, "much debated verses"; Edwin Good, In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job, with a Translation (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990), uses ellipses wherever he finds the text impossible. Ellipses points starting in vs. 25 extend all the way to vs. 28.

64 This is the observation of Theophile J. Meek, "Job 19:25-27," Vetus Testamentum 6 (1956): 100.

65 Clines, Job 1-20, 17.458.
66 Habel, The Book of Job, 303.

69 Habel, The Book of Job, 304.

I have known that this is with You 10:13
For I, I know that my Redeemer lives 19:25
and that at the end He will stand upon the earth 19:25

By affirming that יְהֹוָה ("my Redeemer lives"), Job focuses on Yahweh, who functions as his personal Defender, Redeemer Advocate, and Judge. The pronominal suffix “my” refers to Job, and at the same time the phrase יְהֹוָה is structurally contrasted with לוֹ (literally,

---

71 LXX — ἀεινάος — “immortal.”
72 “Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high,” Job 16:19.
“on the dust”.

The primary emphasis lies on the expression of his conviction that his lives and he will encounter God face to face. Employing his straightforward descriptive expression ("and after my skin is destroyed," vs. 26), Job calls attention to his death

---

73 When interpreting Job’s conviction, one needs to identify whom Job speaks of. There are four different views:

1) One view is that the *Ko* is a human figure that will vindicate Job. See S. B. Freenhof, *Book of Job* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1958), 148. This view is not supported by modern commentators. Gordis argues that it is God to whom Job appeals and also provides the arguments above why the *Ko* is not man, because if the *Ko* is to be identified with Job’s witness of 16:19, then the redeemer is to be found in the heavens (Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 206). He rejects Ibn Ezra’s interpretation on the grounds of 16:19. Also see Habel, *Job*, CBC, 100; Pope, 146; and Hartley, 293. Most commentators tie Job 19 with Job 16. Moreover, he will arise at the eschaton.

2) According to Clines, there is no person envisaged, divine or human, who will represent Job. Job’s *Ko*, he proposes, is Job’s cry. This cry is to be identified with the witness, the advocate, and also the intercessor of 16:18-21, all of which is considered personification (Clines, *Job 1-20*, 456-460).

3) The third view is that the *Ko* is God. Proponents of this view emphasize that Yahweh was a protector of the nation, and describes his actions related to deliverance in two critical periods of Israel’s history—the exodus from Egypt (A. R. Johnson, "The Primary Meaning of "Ko"," *Supplement to Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1953): 67-77. He points out such texts as Exod 15:13; 6:6; Ps 74:2 and 106:10 and the return from Babylon; Isa 43:1; 44:6.

4) The fourth view is that Job might have reference to a third person, one who is divine, but who is not the one he sees as persecuting him. One may refer to him as a heavenly mediator. This view was suggested by S. Mowinckel, "Hiobs Goel und Zeuge im Himmel," *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 41 (1925): 207-212. See also W. A. Irvin, "An Examination of the Progress of Thought in the Dialogue of Job," *Journal of Religion* 13 (1933): 150-164.

74 See Hubbard, ""Ko,"* NIDOTTE, 1:789-794. For various functions of the term, see Christo, "The Eschatological Judgment in Job,” 137-143.

75 Gordis sees a progression in Job’s faith from a mediator (9:33) to the witness advocate-intercessor (16:18-21), and finally a redeemer (19:25). Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 526. Habel emphasizes in Job’s statement a confidence that there is someone out there, a liberator greater than a witness, an arbiter who will vindicate him (Norman C Habel, *The Book of Job*, Cambridge Bible Commentaries, ed. A. R. C. Leaney and J. W. Packer [London: Cambridge UP], 1975), 104. However, a main function of the Ko was to redeem. But redemption implied payment. Therefore, this concept of payment implies that the Ko is a third party between God and man. Harris, “"Ko,"* TWOT, 1:351-353. See also Hos 13:14; Isa 35:10; Jer 31:11; Ps 69:19; 74:2.
and decay in the grave, which is contrasted by the resurrection imagery, "that in [from] my flesh I will see God".76

Scholars are divided on how to understand vs. 26,77 especially concerning the phrase ירפנ ("and in my flesh"), which is interpreted by many as meaning that "from the grave, Job, a bodiless spirit, will witness the occasion when God appears before the local assembly to verify Job’s innocence."78 Such conclusions contradict the immediate context and the nature and function of the employed terminology. For example, the preposition ר can mean both “from” or “from the standpoint of," and many examples of the latter can be found in the Hebrew Scripture.79 Literally, the expression ירפנ “from my flesh” and not “without my flesh.”80 According to vs. 27, which confirms that Job expects to see his Redeemer with his own eyes, the preposition ר must be taken to denote the position from which he looks.81 The expression “from/through my flesh,” shows that it is Job in person who will be present at the eschatological scenario.82

It should also be noted that the phrase יִתְנָא ("my eyes," vs. 27), by its nature and function, not only forms an inseparably organic part of a physical body, but also serves as a parallel to ירפנ ("and in my flesh," vs. 26). Moreover, both phrases—"and my eyes" and "in my flesh"—have the first-person suffix "my," plus from both sides they are enclosed by the emphatic pronoun יָנָא ("I"), which taken altogether imparts a tremendous structural and thematic force to Job’s dynamic hope of a new life in his new resurrected body:

Furthermore, the reality of fully functioning physical components is confirmed by the numerous repetitions of first person pronouns (both

---

76 For a detailed discussion on vs. 26 and its parallels in Job 10, see Doukhan, “Radioscopy of a Resurrection,” 190-192.
77 Interpretation of vs. 26 is especially complex because of the number of variant translations possible and uncertainties present: (1) ר can be either adverbial for time or space, a conjunction, or a preposition; (2) ימ means either “skin” or “awake;” (3) the י can either mean “within,” or “away from.” See Jacques Doukhan, “Radioscopy of a Resurrection,” 187-193; and Edouard-Paul Dhorme, A Commentary on the Book of Job, trans. Harold Knight (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), 284, 285.
78 For four major views concerning vs. 26, see Hartley, The Book of Job, 295-297.
79 See יר, BDB, 577-583.
80 Pope, Job, 139.
81 Dhorme, 285. See also Ps 33:14 and Cant 2:9.
82 Ibid., 282. In Hebrew anthropology, “the flesh” stands for the living person (Gen 6:13,17,19; 7:16,21; Job 34:15); thus the word “my flesh” is often used as equivalent to the word “myself” (Gen 2:23; 29:14; 2 Sam 19:13,14; Ps 102:6; Job 19:20; 30:30, etc.).
independent and in the prefixes and suffixes), which are tied together in the double chiasm. The יָד (particle preposition + suffix 1st person common singular) in vs. 27 functions as an ethical dative, thus heightening the immediacy of Job’s experience. The significance of such phrases as יָד (“my skin”), יָדְנָה (“my flesh”), יָד (“I myself”), יָד (“my eyes”) is obvious, as these body parts refer to the physical nature of his total restoration.

It should also be pointed out that the context of chapter 19 mentions Job’s skin twice (vss. 20, 26), which by extension means his physical body. Thus, the phrase יָד (“and after my skin”) forms a thought unit implying the death of the body where the skin is the thing of the past. Job has already depicted death with יָד, yet there is skin to which Job can refer.

Moreover, the descriptive elements of a human body like יָד ("skin"), יָדְנָה ("flesh"), יָדְנָה ("bones"), and יָדְנָה ("sinews," Job 10:11; 19:20) find their counterpart in the resurrection context in Ezek 37:3-10, where Ezekiel is an eyewitness of a new creation. Consequently, the enhanced emphasis on various body parts authenticates the restoration of the physical nature during the event of the resurrection, which, on the one hand, means that Job envisioned death and the grave, but on the other hand, this concrete description illustrates the fact that after the resurrection the identity of Job remains the same as before his death.

**Summary**

The double chiasm indicates that the preposition יָד (“after,” vs. 26) is to be taken as a temporal entity, corresponding to the adjective יָד ("the eschaton," “latter,” vs. 25), thus making the eschaton the central point of convergence. Moreover, the term יָד has eschatological and the future-life intention, as it occurs along with a synonym for eternity יָד ("forever") that functions in the same context. All five terms from the field of death and resurrection—יָד ("the dust of earth"); יָד ("to live"); יָד ("to see upon awakening"); and יָד ("to arise")—
compliment יָסָם and יָסָמָה in forming an eschatological setting. It is noteworthy to emphasize that all these word pictures combined together present the unique image of “standing upon the dust” (בְּלֵבָדִים, רָצִּיעָה), which, de facto, is the picture of victory over death. 87

By employing two synonymous verbs, יָסָמ (occurs twice) and יָסָמ, and in particular emphasizing his personal, by its nature physical, involvement, namely, seeing with יָשָׁמ (“my eyes”) and then clarifying his assertion by addingGESG (“and not another,” literally, “stranger”), Job demonstrates a powerful conviction that he himself, in person, not a stranger, will see God in his new resurrected body. Thus, Job’s hope for the bodily resurrection is not focused on the immortality of the soul or its continued existence in the grave; instead it is rooted in God’s wholistic creative power and is characterized by assurance and confidence that look forward to its fulfillment.

Conclusion

The central focus of Job is on his Redeemer. Thus, vss. 25-27 function as a declaration and an expression of total confidence in Him, that He will stand up, as one does who undertakes the cause of another. The fact, that Job is explicit and certain, filled with assurance that his heavenly Defender will take up his case at the eschaton, is conveyed by an incredibly strong emphasis on “seeing God.” The references to his “skin,” “flesh,” and “eyes” underline his conviction that this will happen exclusively in his own physical body.

Finally, neither the eschatology nor the theology delineated in this passage support the idea of Job’s post-mortem encounter with God in a disembodied state, since our text implies the presence of the body. Nor does it support the idea of an existential experience, since our text implies death through the reference to dust. What we find here is a clear expression of the doctrine of resurrection. Job 19:25-27 is about faith and hope in the eschaton; it is about vindication and the restoration of the order of the universe. Above all, it is Job’s visualization of his Redeemer that strengthens his conviction and sustains him in his eschatological hope.

Erik Galenieks is currently a pastor at the Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He earned his M.Div and Ph.D. in OT Exegesis from Andrews University, Ber-

GALENIEKS: SEEING GOD WITH OR WITHOUT THE BODY

rrien Springs, Michigan. His dissertation, “The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term Sheol in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings: An Exegetical-Intertextual Study,” was published in 2005. Galenieks has lectured at various International Bible Conferences and published several of his articles. egalen@hotmail.com
Clay in Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream and the Genesis Creation Accounts

Ray McAllister
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar receives a dream from God wherein he sees an image mostly composed of metals: gold, silver, bronze, and iron, but whose feet are partly of iron and partly of clay (Dan 2:31-33). In Daniel’s interpretation the metals are said to represent four different kingdoms with the feet representing a divided kingdom (Dan 2:36-43). In this study the concept of clay in Dan 2:41-43 is analyzed in the context of creation.

A number of exegetical techniques are employed in this article. First, a translation of Dan 2:41-43 into English is presented. Following this is an examination of the parallels, both linguistic and thematic, between this passage and Gen 1 and 2. Next, the concepts of clay and the potter are studied as they appear in the Aramaic of Dan 2:41-43, in the Hebrew of the rest of the Old Testament, and finally, in the mythologies of cultures surrounding ancient Israel. Finally, there is an analysis of the idea of the seed of humanity (Dan 2:43), as it relates to creation. It should, then, be noted here that this study is concerned solely with exegesis and textual analysis. As a result, no attempt is made to determine exactly which powers or institutions might be described in Dan 2:41-43. The author of this study assumes, though, that the literature of Dan 2 is genuinely prophetic, having its ultimate origin with a God who knows the future and makes it known to His servants.
Textual Parallels

Translation. In order to understand the meaning of the clay in Dan 2:41-43, it is necessary to consider a translation of the passage. Below is a fairly literal translation of Dan 2:41-43. It should be noted that the term translated “miry clay” literally reads, in the Aramaic, “clay of miry clay.”

41. And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay, and partly of iron, a divided kingdom it shall be, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the miry clay.  
42. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so part of the kingdom shall be strong, and part of it shall be brittle.  
43. And as you saw the iron mixed with the miry clay, they shall be mixed with the seed of humanity, but they shall not cleave, this and that, just as iron does not mix with clay.

Parallels with Genesis 1 and 2. A number of parallels between Dan 2:41-43 and Gen 1 and 2 may now be examined. First, the strong linguistic parallels are presented, and after that, the thematic connections. It should be understood, though, that since these passages are written in two different, though similar, languages, not as many direct verbal parallels may appear as when two passages in the same language are compared.

The first linguistic parallel is the word for “image,” șelem in both Aramaic and Hebrew. This word actually appears in Dan 2:32, slightly outside the passage of consideration here, but the clay was part of the feet of this statue described as a whole as a șelem. In Gen 1:26, 27, it is said that humankind would be formed after God’s image. The second linguistic connection between these passages is the word for “cleave,” dbaq, (d’baq in Aramaic, and dâbaq as the Hebrew cognate form) (Dan 2:43, Gen 2:24). In Dan 2:43 the two types of people are said to not cleave one with each other, and in Gen 2:24, a man would cleave to his wife. It is significant that even two linguistic parallels still exist between passages written in different languages.

A number of thematic parallels also exist between Dan 2:41-43 and Gen 1 and 2. First, both passages refer to the work of a potter. Daniel 2:41 says that the feet of the image were partly of potter’s clay, and Gen 2:7 says that God formed Adam from the dust of the ground. The word for “form” in Gen 2:7, yāṣar, is often used in Hebrew for the work of a potter. The noun form of this word, yōṣēr, for example, refers to a potter
in Ps 2:9 and Jer 18:1-6, a concept explored more deeply later in this study. One may next consider the relationship between dust, āpār, (Gen 2:7) and clay in Hebrew thinking. In Job 10:9 Job says that he was made from clay and did not wish to return to āpār. Clay, ḫomer, is, here, paralleled with āpār, used to discuss hardened clay. Finally, both passages refer to humankind. Gen 2:7 discusses the formation of one human, and Dan 2:43 mentions the “seed of humanity.”

Clay in the Ancient Near East

After noting the parallels between Dan 2:41-43 and Gen 1 and 2, especially with reference to the ideas of a potter and clay, we may now study how clay was understood and used in the ancient Near East. This section considers the words used for “clay” and “potter” in Dan 2:41-43, the equivalent words for those terms in Hebrew, and myths involving clay in the ancient Near East. First, though, a few general remarks on clay in that time and place must be considered. In the ancient Near East, clay was mainly composed of hydrated silicate of alumina, with the chemical formula, Al$_2$O$_3$ 2SiO$_2$ 2H$_2$O. This compound would be mixed with impurities. At times the impurities would compose up to half the volume of the clay.

Clay could be referred to in the native, wet form or in a worked form, as in pottery. Some clay was used in sun-dried and kiln-fired brick. Clay could also be used to cover roofs or floor surfaces. A potter made dishes, toys, idols, or cult objects. Clay could also be a writing material. Ownership seals would often be stamped on wet clay. The clay of Dan 2 was most likely terra cotta, which was found in pottery.

Pottery and Clay in Aramaic. One can gain additional insight from a study of the meanings of the words for “clay” and “potter,” as they appear in the Aramaic of this passage. The following paragraphs analyze first, ṭēḥār, the word for “potter,” in Dan 2:41, and next, ḫāṣap, and ūṭān, the words for clay in this passage.

Pehār. Pehār is understood to refer to a potter in Dan 2:41. The Syriac cognate, pahḥārayā, and the Neosyriac cognate, pahhrā, refer also to a potter. The Arabic form, faḥḥār, can refer either to pottery or a

---

potter. The Ugaritic form, ṣḥr, means “potter.” This Aramaic term is a loan word from Akkadian, whose form, paḫaru, means “potter.” ⁴

Ḥāsap. Ḥāsap refers to clay, earthenware, pottery, or a pot. This word has Syriac cognate forms ḥespā, ḥezbā, and ḥeṣbā. In Yemenite the cognate form ḥaṣaf refers to thick clay. In Ethiopian ṣḥb refers to earthenware or a vessel. This is a loan word from Akkadian, whose cognate form, ḥaṣbu, refers to potter’s clay or sherd. The term refers to molded clay in Aramaic. ⁵

One may, then, consider the repetition of concepts in the phrase, ḥāsap di-ḥēr, literally rendered, “potter’s clay of the potter,” with reference to one of the materials of which the feet and toes of the image were composed, according to Dan 2:41. Ḥāsap, which refers to potter’s clay, is used in conjunction with ḥēr, which refers to a potter. One may also note the alliteration in the two words, as both contain a ḥēt and a ḥēr. Clearly the author wished to emphasize that this was not simply any clay, but, specifically and importantly, potter’s clay.

Ṭīn. The word ṭīn is understood to refer to a type of miry clay in Dan 2:41-43. This word in its verbal form means “to besmear with” in Syriac and Neo-Aramaic. The cognate equivalent of the noun form of ṭīn is ṭīn in those same languages. The Arabic cognate, ṭīn, means “to daub or coat with clay.” ⁶ In addition, the Assyrian cognate, ṭīṭu, is known to have referred to the mire that exists after a flood. ⁷

The Hebrew cognate, ṭīt, may be studied in depth at this point. This word refers to mud, mire, or clay. One may examine Mic 7:10, 2 Sam 22:43, and Zech 9:3; 10:5 for examples. The dungeon into which Jeremiah was cast contained ṭīt (Jer 38:6), the mire in which the prophet sank. This soft mire was also the lair of Leviathan, as recorded in Job 41:22 (41:30 in English). Isa 57:20 describes this material as being cast off by the sea. This word may also refer to potter’s clay, as in Isa 41:25, or brick clay, as in Nah 3:14. ⁸ However the clay would be used, the term ṭīt refers to natural, wet clay that has not yet been worked by a potter or

---

⁵ Koehler and Baumgartner, s.v. “Hasap.”
⁶ Koehler and Baumgartner, s.v. “Ṭīn.”
⁸ Ibid.
brick maker. The Aramaic determined form, as seen in Dan 2:41-43, then, refers to wet clay which has not yet been worked by a potter.

It may be noted here that the only instances where tîn is used to refer to clay in Dan 2:41-43 are also where it is said that the clay is mixed with the iron. When tîn is not used, in Dan 2:43c, it is said that iron cannot mix with clay. This would suggest that the clay was molded onto the iron when the clay was still soft. When the clay hardened to appear more like pottery, it ceased to bond as effectively.

**Pottery and Clay in Hebrew.** The Hebrew language had a number of words, other than tît, to describe clay. While tît referred to wet clay, dry clay was referred to as āpār, or dust, as noted above. In Gen 2:19, ādamā, “ground,” is the term for clay used to describe the material from which the animals were crafted.

The general term for any worked clay was homer. This, in fact, is the word translated “clay” in Job 10:9 from which Job said the man was made. Other texts that use this word are Job 33:6, Isa 29:16; 41:25, etc.

This theme of God as the potter and humanity as the clay is continued in symbolic language elsewhere in the Old Testament. In Isa 29:16 people are compared to a clay pot that says its potter did not make it and he had no understanding. These people can be associated with Israel, as David is said to have dwelt in their location (Isa 29:1, 2). In Isa 45:9, clay disputing with the potter is the metaphor for a rebellious people. According to vs. 11, the people, again, are Israel, whose Maker is the Holy One of Israel. In Isa 64:8 it is said that God is the potter and His people are the clay.

Then one can consider Jer 18:1-6. In this passage the prophet visits a potter who is forming a pot that appears misshapen. The potter re-forms the clay into a properly designed pot. God then says that He can do the same thing for Israel. One can see here how the concept of God as potter in creation of the humanity in the beginning was applied to God’s forming of His people. That which is physically molded like clay may also be spiritually molded like clay.

**Pottery and Clay in Ancient Near-Eastern Mythologies.** It is clear that there was seen a strong connection between clay and creation in Is-

---

9 Kelso, “Pottery.”
10 Harrison, 717.
11 Ibid., 718.
12 Jacques B. Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 34.
MCALLISTER: CLAY IN DANIEL 2 AND GENESIS 1 AND 2

rael. A similar connection existed in Babylon. In one Babylonian myth, referred to as “When Anu Had Created the Heavens,” the goddess Mami, at the behest of Enki and other gods, made humankind out of clay mixed with the blood of a slain god. This myth dates back to the first Babylonian dynasty.\(^\text{13}\) In this myth, humanity was created to fear the gods and carry the yoke. Humanity, being a mixture of clay and a god’s blood, would be joined with the divine.\(^\text{14}\)

Another myth, dating back to 800 B.C.E., is described on a tablet at Ashur. The names of the first two human beings formed are written with the deity superscript.\(^\text{15}\) The gods were to make mankind spring up like grain from the ground.\(^\text{16}\) In “The Creation of the World by Marduk,” Marduk is said to have taken dirt and created humanity.\(^\text{17}\) While clay is not directly mentioned in these myths, the ideas of springing up a human being from the ground and shaping humanity from dirt draws one to consider the clay common to this type of myth. Instead of having humankind formed from nothing or a material such as water or molten metal, both Israelite and Babylonian accounts say the human species was made from earth.

The Seed of Humanity

Daniel 2:43 makes a cryptic reference to the “seed of humanity.” As noted above, humankind, and all its seed, was originally formed from clay in the creation story. One must, then, study the idea of the seed of humanity to more deeply understand the parallels between Dan 2:41-43 and Gen 1 and 2.

Word Study of \(\text{'enāš}\). First, one must conduct a brief word study of \(\text{'enāš}\), the word for man/humanity in Dan 2:43. This word refers to humankind, the human race, people, a man, or a certain person. In Dan 4:13 the term refers to humankind, whose unique type of mind would be replaced in the king by the heart of a beast. Ezra 4:11 uses the term to refer to people of a certain country, people across the river. The term “seed of humanity,” which occurs in Dan 2:43, finds a cognate equivalent, “\(\text{zēr amēlūṭi}\),” in Akkadian.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 67.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 68.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 70.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 62, 63.
\(^{18}\) See Koehler and Baumgartner, s.v. “Enash.”
Additional information about this word can be gained by analyzing the Hebrew cognate, ḍēnōš. Its verbal root, ḍēn, refers to being weak or sick. One can consider the related form ḍēnōsh, which occurs in Job 34:6 and Isa 17:11, and ḍēnōshā, which is found in Mic 1:9, for example. In each case, the word refers to a wound or weakness. The Akkadian word, enēšū, refers also to being weak or sick.\textsuperscript{19}

One can note also that ḍēnāš, in Aramaic, can be used as an equivalent for ḍēdām, humankind/Adam, in the Hebrew of Gen 1:26, 27; 2:7; etc. In the Aramaic of Dan 7:13, the term bar ḍēnāš, is used for “son of man/humanity.” The plural form, b’nēy ḍēnāšā, “sons of humanity,” appears in Dan 2:38. Then, in Dan 8:17, “son of man/humanity,” is stated with the Hebrew equivalent, ben ḍēdām. In Dan 10:16, the plural term, b’nēy ḍēdām, is used to refer to the “sons of humanity.”

**Clay and the Seed of Humanity.** One may next study the significance of the connection between ḍēnāš and weakness and how such a connection associates the clay with the seed of humanity. Verse 41 says that the strength of the iron would be in the feet and toes. Verse 42 says that the toes would be partly strong and partly brittle. Assuming, based on vs. 40, 41, that the iron is the strength, the clay would be the weakness. If ḍēnāš also carries the connotation of weakness, the weak clay would be easily associated with the seed of men. Then, one may consider the contrasting expression, zeraḥ hammēlākā, “seed of royalty,” as appears in Dan 1:3. These individuals, according to vs. 3, 4, were associated with nobility and those with exceptional physical and intellectual attributes. The z’raḥ ḍēnāšā, “seed of humanity” would, then, be seen as the opposite, simple non-royals who are mysteriously joined with the malkū, “kingdom,” of iron.

Finally, one may consider the literary parallelism used with reference to iron, clay, and the seed of humanity in Dan 2:43. It is noted first that iron is mixed with clay, and, next, that “they” shall be mixed with the seed of humanity. Iron would parallel “they,” and clay would parallel “the seed of humanity.” This would mean that “they” is the iron, and “the seed of humanity” is the clay. One may observe the following diagram.

\begin{itemize}
  \item A. Iron mixed with
  \item B. Clay.
  \item A. They, mixed with.
  \item B. The seed of humanity.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{19} Brown, Driver, and Briggs, s.v. “Anash.”
Clay and humanity are associated in Dan 2:41-43, just as they are in Gen 1 and 2. This strengthens the parallel between the two passages.

Zera‘ in Creation. The cognate of zera‘, “seed,” also appears in the immediate context of the creation story. The first occurrence is in Gen 1:11, 12 regarding the creation of plants. Then, after the fall of humanity, in Gen 3:15, it is said that there would be hatred between the serpent’s zera‘ and the woman’s zera‘.

Summary and Conclusion

As is shown above, a number of parallels exist between Dan 2:41-43 and the creation account of Gen 1 and 2. Most significant is the concept of the potter and the clay. Not only did the Hebrews associate creation with a potter forming clay, but a number of ancient Near Eastern mythologies also made such a connection. A relationship between the clay and the seed of humanity in Dan 2:41-43 further strengthens this parallel as clay, humanity, and seed are all associated in the creation story.

There is much need, then, for further research into this topic, especially concerning the issue of how this parallel fits in the application of Daniel 2 with history. Might a power that finds its origin with the creating work of God become involved with the fourth, iron kingdom? How would such a power behave? Would such a power be thought of as part of a counterfeit creation? What does it mean that the clay does not cleave to the iron? Is such a creation ultimately unsuccessful? One might also ponder the personal applications of this parallel? Should anyone who considers himself/herself to be a creation of God be found involved with the strong and idolatrous practices of the world? Thus, a considerable amount of research must still be conducted regarding this topic.

Ray McAllister is a doctoral candidate in Old Testament theology and exegesis at Andrews University Theological Seminary. He has memorized the entire book of Daniel in the original Hebrew and Aramaic. Ray McAllister is also totally blind. He sees his blindness as a way for him to see God more clearly and to help others see Him more clearly. raymondm@andrews.edu
The Passible Potter and the Contingent Clay: A Theological Study of Jeremiah 18:1–10

John Peckham
S. D. A. Theological Seminary, Andrews University

Jeremiah 18:1-10 presents a compelling illustration of God as potter and Judah as clay. This image is a topic of various interpretations according to differing viewpoints on the nature of God. The potter metaphor is sometimes utilized as evidence for a transcendent, simple, immutable, and impassible God. On the other hand, some, especially recently, have

1 In this title I use the word passible to connote the ability to be affected by someone external to oneself, whereas contingent is used to express that human actions and outcomes are not determined by God but are contingent upon human free will within limits (amongst other factors and circumstances).

Pleckham: The Passible Potter and the Contingent Clay

seen God as completely immanent, even to the extent of being the same as or one with the world. How does Jeremiah 18 relate to such a conception of God? Is God transcendent, immanent, or something in between? God’s plan and condition for His people also has important implications. For instance, is God as the potter the sole determiner of history? Does the covenant relationship affect God? What about the mar in the clay (18:4)? Of great significance is the presentation of God as “relenting” (18:8,10). Does this threaten the immutability of God? Moreover, does it mean that God does not know the future? This passage illumines the biblical perspective on these and related issues.

This paper endeavors to look at Jeremiah 18:1-10 and ascertain the implications for the biblical view of God and His relationship to His creation. The viewpoints of classical Greek philosophy, pantheism, process theology, and open theism will be briefly mentioned and compared with the perspective of Jeremiah. The way one views God and human history is of paramount importance to Christian theology. Therefore, it is vital to ascertain what this passage expresses about the relationship between God and the world in the metaphor of the potter and the clay and subsequent paraenesis from God.

The Potter and the Clay

The Immutable Potter. In the metaphor of the potter and the clay the sovereignty and transcendence of God are clearly emphasized. This paradigm is introduced when God instructs Jeremiah to observe the work of a potter shaping clay as a sign-act (18:2-3). As Jeremiah observes the potter at his wheel, the clay becomes marred, and the potter then reacts and forms a different creation (18:4). There is no indication of the cause


3 See the discussion below in the section entitled, God’s Transcendence Questioned.

4 Verses from Jeremiah 18:1-10 are my translation. All other verses are taken from the NKJV.


6 As one commentator puts it, “the potter’s decision to alter his design illustrated the Lord’s relationship to nations.” R. B. Zuck, E. H. Merrill, D. L. Bock, *A Biblical Theol-
of the mar, a puzzle to which we shall return. As a potter is superior and powerful over the inferior clay, so God is sovereign over Judah. God is also free to shape what He wills. This nation, as God’s chosen people, might not always remain the chosen. Just as the potter can cast away the clay, so God can reject the formerly elect nation. Further, just as the potter forms the clay, so God molded all creation. This imagery of the potter, in accordance with the rest of the Bible, points clearly to God’s interaction with and omnipotence over the whole universe.

The Bible also states that God does not change (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29 Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17). However, what does this changelessness of God entail? Theologians sometimes present God as utterly transcendent, timeless, simple, and impassible. In other words, he is conceived as


7 The issue regarding the mar in the clay will be revisited in the context of the further information garnered from Jer 18:7-10 below.


9 This metaphor is also prominent in Isa 29:16; 41:25; 64:8; Lam 4:2; Rom 9:21.


11 See also Gen 17:1; Gen 18:14; Job 42:2; Isa 26:4; Matt 19:26; Luke 1:37; Acts 26:8; Rev 19:6; Rev 21:22.

12 On these texts that say God does not repent, John T. Willis correctly states, “The Bible nowhere indicates that the idea that God does not repent is a universal principle, but always with relation to a specific event or situation . . .” John T. Willis, “The “Repentance” Of God in the Books of Samuel, Jeremiah, and Jonah,” Horizons in Biblical Theology 16 D (1994): 168.

PECKHAM: THE PASSIBLE POTTER AND THE CONTINGENT CLAY

having no reciprocal relationship to the world, as absolutely immutable, and as incapable of being affected by the actions of human beings in history. Millard J. Erickson acknowledges problems with the historical views of immutability because they “have actually drawn heavily on the Greek idea of immobility and sterility. This makes God inactive.”


While the above theologians affirm the timelessness, simplicity, and at least some form of the impassibility of God, the nuances and details regarding this issue by the above authors take various shapes and formulations.

It is important to recognize that the problem of God’s passibility/impassibility is increasingly recognized by classical theists in light of the critique of process theology. Moreover, a diversity of responses abound and diversity exists regarding the attempts to counter the critiques of process theology and, more recently, open theism. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the contemporary modifications and nuances of classical theism. It must be stated, however, that the contemporary articulations regarding God’s impassibility have made some attempts to concurrently maintain God’s activity and God’s timelessness, simplicity, and impassibility, the effectiveness of which is disputed. For instance, consider Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002). It must be understood that it is specifically disputed by some classical theists that God’s impassibility means that God is uncaring or “utterly devoid of any feelings” (Erickson, God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes, 161). Geisler contends that God may have emotional states but “His feelings are not the result of actions imposed upon Him by others” (Geisler, House, and Herrera, The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism, 170). He goes on to state unequivocally that “Scripture does teach that God cannot be acted upon by anything outside of Himself” (Geisler, House, and Herrera, The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism, 171). Thus it is clear that the central idea is that God cannot be affected, thus if He has emotions they are willed, unaffected emotions. See the footnotes below for a few specific examples.

Erickson, Christian Theology, 305. The implications for God’s ability to relate to the world in light of the ontological assumptions of classical theism are disputed. For instance, Erickson denies immobility and sterility yet seems to maintain the undergirding ontological notions of classical theism. It is difficult to understand how one could reconcile the classical notions of God’s timelessness, simplicity, and impassibility with an active and personal God. Erickson makes a scholarly and well-written attempt to reconcile these aspects in Erickson, God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes. The reader is encouraged to consider whether ontological assumptions such as timelessness and impassibility allow for the affected (i.e., passible) God

133
Bruce Ware, has also seen difficulty with some classical definitions of immutability, saying that if by “divine immutability it is meant that God is distant, unfeeling, uncaring, static, and in every way unchanged and unaffected by the human condition, then it is highly doubtful that this conception of God is useful for one’s religious experience.” Nevertheless, throughout the history of theology there have been many who have held such a view. As we shall see, God as presented in Jeremiah 18 does not seem to fit such a conception.

**The Immanent Potter.** God is not only the transcendent potter but also the immanent shaper of the clay. It is important to recognize that verse 5 and onward present the very words of YHWH Himself. God is personally communicating through Jeremiah to His people, Judah. Thus, God is not presented as disconnected or static. Rather, God is continually active in relationship to the world. Throughout the OT, God presented in Jeremiah 18 and elsewhere. If not, it seems that such assumptions might require replacement in careful accord with ontological assumptions that are implicit in the Bible. See Fernando Canale, “The Quest for the Biblical Ontological Ground of Christian Theology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16/1-2 (2005): 1-20.

15 Bruce A. Ware, *An Evangelical Reexamination of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God*, Dissertation Presented to Fuller Theological Seminary (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Information Service, 1984), 11. This is a very interesting discussion of the immutability of God. Here is traced the historical views on God’s immutability, where the view of a static God is seen as far back as patristic literature, though it was not dominant at this time. Augustine is seen as a great proponent of absolute changelessness, among others. The epochal synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy in Aquinas’ work is also viewed as a bulwark for the view of God’s immutability. Ware further demonstrates that the notions of an absolutely simple and static God have been widely accepted in the history of theology and wrestles with Evangelicalism’s relationship to these conceptions.

16 This is announced by the statement “the word of YHWH came” to Jeremiah, which is prominent in Jeremiah (Jer 1:2,4,11,13; 2:1; 13:3,8; 18:5; 24:4; 28:12; 29:30; 32:6,26; 33:1,19,23; 34:12; 36:27; 37:6; 42:7; 43:8) as well as the rest of the OT.

17 This denotes God as a personal being who is intimately involved with His creatures. We know that these are the direct words of the Most High, a God who cares for His people.

18 “A biblical theist not only believes that the one living God is separate from the world, as against pantheism and panentheism, but also that God is continually active throughout the world providentially.” P. D. Feinberg, “Pantheism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 499.

19 God’s “sovereignty is tempered by mercy and patience. As the potter carefully reworks the clay to achieve the desired result, so God does not give up when we fail him” (Huey, Jr., 180). In contrast, Mackay claims that this is a picture of absolute sovereignty where “what he produces matches exactly what he intends” (Mackay, 536) Yet, if Mackay is correct, what about the mar in the clay?
PECKHAM: THE PASSIBLE POTTER AND THE CONTINGENT CLAY

is depicted as gracious, loving, longsuffering, merciful, and compassionate (Exod 34:6-7; Isa 63:7-14; Jer 31:3 Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2). The metaphor of potter also denotes immanence analogous to an earthly potter who shapes the clay intimately with his hands, carefully crafting a work of art. “If the clay did not achieve the desired shape, he did not throw it away. Instead, he patiently reworked it until it became the vessel he wanted it to be.” ²⁰ One can picture the image of the potter leaning forward over the wheel of two stones, turning the wheel by foot and shaping “the rotating clay” into the desired work.²¹ In this way God is portrayed as a patient and longsuffering potter, working with His people in the context of an intimate relationship. The God of Jeremiah is thus intimately connected with the history of His creation, here specifically, the history of Judah.²²

God’s Transcendence Questioned. Despite the biblical claim about God, His sovereignty and transcendence have been questioned and denied by some theological and philosophical systems. Pantheism, for one, holds that “everything is God.”²³ A view that arose more recently that impacts contemporary theology is that of process theology, a kind of panentheism, which means literally “all in God.”²⁴ Process theology holds that reality is constantly in flux, as the name would suggest. For

²⁰ Huey, Jr., 181. Huey goes on, “If it became misshapen as he worked it, it was not because of his lack of skill. The clay may have been of an inferior quality, may have contained defects, or perhaps was not sufficiently moist and pliable” (181). This issue will be addressed further below.
²² That God is intimately involved in history beyond Judah is implied in the explanation regarding “a nation” or “a kingdom” in Jer 18:7-10, which is seemingly an explanation of the way God deals with a given nation. This framework is specifically applied to Judah in Jer 18:11.
²³ See Feinberg, “Pantheism,” 887.
process theology, “to be real is to be in process.”\textsuperscript{25} While it is a helpful critique of the static God of the Greeks, process theology strays far from the Bible to the other extreme of an absolutely immanent God.\textsuperscript{26} In this model, not only is the world in process, but God is also in process. This is opposed to the biblical view of creation ex nihilo.\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, as the world progresses, so does God. He and the world experience growth throughout eternity.\textsuperscript{28} This is problematic, as it denies the sovereignty and transcendence of the Creator God, among other things. Erickson clarifies the problem: “Dependence on the processes of the world compromises quite seriously the absolute or unqualified dimensions of God.”\textsuperscript{29} In this panentheistic view, the whole world is in God, though God is more than the world. Norman Gulley points out that process theology’s focus on “God’s consequent (immanent, or dependent on the world for bodily existence) nature” really denotes “one who is less than God.”\textsuperscript{30} From a biblical standpoint, clearly in Jeremiah 18, God cannot rightly be viewed as dependent upon the world. Rather, as the Creator, God is different from the world and transcends His own creation while being intimately active.

**God as Sovereign, Transcendent, and Immanent.** God is depicted in Jeremiah 18 as sovereign, transcendent, and immanent. Specifically important is the fact that there is a clear difference between God and the

\textsuperscript{25} Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 305.

\textsuperscript{26} Erickson states, “there is an element of validity in process theology’s criticism of some classical orthodoxy” (ibid., 306). Process theology also criticizes and rejects the Aristotelian view of Thomas Aquinas, held in line with many before him, that God is the “unmoved mover.” Moreover, the predestinarian views of historical theology, exemplified in the theology of John Calvin, are also rejected.

\textsuperscript{27} Charles Hartshorne states, “God formed the present universe out of an earlier universe and its potentialities for transformation.” Before that was another and other world “ad infinitum.” Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1984), 75.

\textsuperscript{28} In this system God is the self-surpassing surpasser of all and thus supremely surrelative. See Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity, a Social Conception of God*, 90. Furthermore, Ware writes, “the very ontological structure of the being who is God guarantees that God is always and forever all-inclusive Receiver of all experiences. That he is this way is unchangeable and not in the slightest dependent on any entities external to him” (Ware, 263).

\textsuperscript{29} Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 306.

world in this passage. The potter is God and the clay is His creation.\textsuperscript{31} God is not the clay, and the clay is not God. Neither is the clay in the potter. Moreover, the potter does not mold himself as he molds the clay but creates something outside of Himself. Although one cannot build a whole theology on this one passage, it clearly does not lend itself to the view of pantheism or panentheism. Rather, it points to the theistic God who is different from the world He created.\textsuperscript{32}

The message of God is that He is the potter and clearly has the power to form His will in the world. God is rightly considered sovereign and omnipotent with the full right to exercise His will. Isaiah 45:9 makes God’s sovereignty clear, saying, “Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd \textit{strive} with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ Or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands’?” For Jeremiah, it is an absurd notion to suppose that the clay is greater or equal to the potter. Despite the lucid account of God’s power, however, God’s omnipotence should not be considered exclusive to His relationship with humanity. Rather, God enters into relationship with His people and, simultaneously, remains the sovereign God. This dynamic between God and His people and the inter-relationship of their actions is presented especially in verses 7-10.

\textbf{The Divine and Human Will}

Thus far, the metaphor is clear that Judah is like clay in the forming hand of God. The power of God is compared to the inconsequential power of the nation of Judah. God is sovereign and has the complete right to deal with the world as He sees fit. Nevertheless, God goes out of His way to save this people and to forgive them, even though they clearly are a stiff-necked people. In the midst of the overpowering sovereignty of God, grace shines throughout in the patience and forbearance of God and a call to repentance, as we shall see in Jer 18:7-10.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Specifically, the clay refers to Judah in the analogy, yet the metaphor of God as potter refers on a broader level to God as Creator (Isa 29:16; Isa 64:8). Judah is a part of the world God has created and governs and seems to function as a microcosm of the God-world relationship. The implications regarding the God-Judah relationship, specifically as it relates to ontology, are thus applicable regarding the wider God-world relationship.

\textsuperscript{32} This difference is implied throughout the Bible, not least in the creation narrative. That God created the world out of nothing (\textit{ex nihilo}) defines explicitly the difference between the eternal God and His creation.

\textsuperscript{33} The Bible Reader’s Companion says, “The message God intended to communicate through this illustration from ancient life was not, as some have thought, one of divine
**God’s Plan and Condition.** This call to repentance illuminates the interaction of God’s will with that of His people in verses 7-10. Based on the sinfulness of Judah God declares His plan to “pluck up, pull down, and destroy” (Jer 18:7). The verb נָתַשׁ (nāṭaš), meaning to root out or pluck, is judgment language, used frequently with reference to the Lord’s work of destroying evil nations: of Israel (Deut 29:28; 2 Chr 7:20) and of her neighbors (Jer 12:14–15, 17). Specifically of interest is the relationship to the covenant blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 29. This passage places the warning of God’s sovereign judgment in the context of the covenant relationship.

Some theologians have held that this sovereignty of God negates human freedom. For instance, John Calvin held that God as potter represents the hidden purpose of God which determines all events in history. Referring to the possibility that this passage promotes free will, Calvin claims that these verses are merely accommodating language, whereas in

sovereignty. It was a message of grace. Judah had resisted the divine potter. Yet even now God was willing to begin anew and reshape His people into that good vessel He had had in mind from the beginning.” L. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion* (Wheaton: Victor, 1991), 459.

Although in the history of interpretation there have been diverging claims regarding the authorship and dating, Jer 18:1-10 was quite possibly written in the late 7th century to early 6th century B.C. Thompson suggests this date based on the theme of the passage, since there is nothing explicit in the text to determine the date. J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 432. If this is the correct dating of the passage, then Jehoiakim was on the throne of Judah and under the control of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. These are the early years of the Babylonian captivity. The Exile was a result of the apostasy of Judah in their worship of false gods and their rejection of YHWH. Many of Jeremiah’s prophecies directly related to the fall of Jerusalem, and the warning in this passage could very well be attributed directly to that end, especially the foreground of this passage.

Milton C. Fisher, “נָתַשׁ,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. L. Harris, Gleason Archer, B. K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 611. Notably, Fisher mentions that most often the subject of this verb is God, since this emphasizes His power.

The covenant structure is prominent throughout the OT relationship of God to Israel. Thompson states, “The picture of the covenant is well to the fore, with its overtones of covenant stipulations, covenant sanctions, blessing and cursing. Israel would enjoy God’s blessing only on the basis of obedience to his covenant” (Thompson, 435). The Word Biblical Commentary states, “Treaties and covenants regularly included conditions of the covenant. For the keeping of the covenant the lord promises blessings on the vassal; but for breaking covenant, the lord promises punishment for the vassal” (Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 26 (Dallas: Word, 1991), 245.

---

34 Although in the history of interpretation there have been diverging claims regarding the authorship and dating, Jer 18:1-10 was quite possibly written in the late 7th century to early 6th century B.C. Thompson suggests this date based on the theme of the passage, since there is nothing explicit in the text to determine the date. J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 432. If this is the correct dating of the passage, then Jehoiakim was on the throne of Judah and under the control of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. These are the early years of the Babylonian captivity. The Exile was a result of the apostasy of Judah in their worship of false gods and their rejection of YHWH. Many of Jeremiah’s prophecies directly related to the fall of Jerusalem, and the warning in this passage could very well be attributed directly to that end, especially the foreground of this passage.

35 Milton C. Fisher, “נָתַשׁ,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. L. Harris, Gleason Archer, B. K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 611. Notably, Fisher mentions that most often the subject of this verb is God, since this emphasizes His power.

36 The covenant structure is prominent throughout the OT relationship of God to Israel. Thompson states, “The picture of the covenant is well to the fore, with its overtones of covenant stipulations, covenant sanctions, blessing and cursing. Israel would enjoy God’s blessing only on the basis of obedience to his covenant” (Thompson, 435). The Word Biblical Commentary states, “Treaties and covenants regularly included conditions of the covenant. For the keeping of the covenant the lord promises blessings on the vassal; but for breaking covenant, the lord promises punishment for the vassal” (Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 26 (Dallas: Word, 1991), 245.
reality God has already unalterably decreed both human actions and His own. However, does the text itself imply a determinism that negates free will, or does it allow for the conditionality in the nature of history? Notice the sequence of condition and response in God’s own words to Judah.

Verses 7-10 form block parallelism consisting of a correlation between verses 7 and 9 and verses 8 and 10 respectively. Notice the parallels between verses 7 and 9:

7 The moment I speak regarding a nation and kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it,

9 And the moment I speak regarding a nation and kingdom, to build and to plant it,

Verse 9 contrasts with verse 7 in that God speaks in an instant for “construction” and proposes to “build and plant.” This language emphasizes the power and authority of God as the agent of both judgment and salvation. Notice that to “pluck up” is the opposite of to “plant” and to “pull down” and to “destroy” is the opposite of to “build.” Both verse 7 and 9 refer to God’s intentions regarding two opposite situations; those of a disobedient and obedient nation, respectively. However, God announces along with this plan a condition and the possibility of change. Verses 8 and 10 are also parallel:

8 If that nation I spoke against turns (repents) from its evil, I will relent of the evil disaster that I planned to do to it.

---

37 Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations, 398.
38 These words are used together to describe a constructive act of God Himself (Cf. Jer 1:10; Jer 31:28. “In the metaphorical usages of this word pair it is always YHWH who is subject; and in Jeremiah, the object, when it is given, is always a group of people, primarily Israel.” Bruce K. Waltke, “םָדָה,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 116. God is depicted as the divine planter, which is in harmony with God’s depiction as potter (Cf. Jer 11:17). These actions clearly emphasize God’s unique authority. This is clearly an act of God’s grace (Cf. Jer 24:6; 31:4; 33:7).
39 Further, this language is a clear allusion to the call of Jeremiah. Notice the extent of the parallel language: “See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant” (Jer 1:10). In that call narrative God assures Jeremiah of his commission by communicating that He “formed” Jeremiah in the womb, from the same cognate (שָׁמוּר) as the word for potter (cf. Jer 42:10).
Notice that in verse 8 the protasis of the conditional clause is the nation’s turn from its evil; whereas in verse 10 the nation continues in evil. In both cases God will “revert” accordingly. In the apodosis of verse 8 God will “revert” from the evil; in verse 10 from the good. Both correspond directly to the decision of the nation.

The Contingent Clay. In this parallelism God describes His covenant relationship to His people. The condition is explicit. If the people will turn and repent, God will respect their choice and change His plan. Likewise, if they pursue evil He will respond accordingly. Thus, the passage makes clear that “a full and effective human response to the divine will can open up a wholly changed prospect for the future.”

God’s sovereignty is here asserted in a “dynamic way, identifying an aspect of that sovereignty that is sometimes missed or ignored: the possibility of not simply destroying the people but remolding them.” The call of God

40 Interestingly the repentant sinner is mentioned first in the parallel. Is it possible that God mentions this because this is the paradigm he wants to stress?


42 However, it should be noted that there is a great deal of complexity involved in God’s relationship to Judah. For instance, Mark E. Biddle points out that “The conditions established in vv. 7-11 do not indicate how God deals with a nation divided between a significant population of those who have failed to repent and a significant population of those who have responded properly to the warning.” Mark E. Biddle, “Contingency, God, and the Babylonians: Jeremiah and the Complexity of Repentance,” Review & Expositor 101/2 (Spring 2004): 250-251.

43 John Sanders comments, “Jeremiah repeatedly speaks of the conditional (‘if’) in connection to both the clay (Israel) and the potter (God). If Israel repents, then God will relent. If Israel is recalcitrant, then God may change His mind regarding the promised blessing” (The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998], 86).


45 Patrick D. Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, ed. Harriett Jane Olson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 714. We can then affirm that, “God is not a man that he should repent . . . he does not blow hot and cold. Yet he does revert when his peo-
serves as a divine warning and a real opportunity for the people to turn and be spared the consequences of rebellion. Thus, the potter-clay metaphor includes a degree of freedom in human action.

Accordingly, Jeremiah 18 asserts that “God’s mind can change in regard to dealing out catastrophe or good, depending on the way a nation acts.” A concrete biblical example of this conditional nature of God’s actions is the narrative of Jonah. In Jonah 3:4, Jonah declares that Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Yet, the people of Nineveh repent and they are spared (Jon 3:9-10). Thus, we can see that in the Bible there is no problem with God’s actions relating directly to the actions of human agents. God’s relationship with humans transcends any metaphysical straightjacket of utter immutability.

ple turn to him; and this action of relenting is called repentance.” “Jeremiah,” in The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament, ed. C. F. Pfeiffer (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 671.


Brueggemann states “that Israel can take an initiative, violates the metaphor, for Israel has freedom that the clay does not have. The clay cannot challenge the potter, but Israel can act so that Yahweh will change” (Brueggemann, 161). In other words, Judah as the clay is clearly not a determined, inanimate object since Judah has freedom that regular clay does not have. On the contrary, Holladay finds the lack of passivity in the metaphor as well, stating that “clay is not altogether passive. Any potter will affirm that because of the centrifugal force developed on the wheel the clay presses against the hands of the potter” (William Lee Holladay, Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 515).

Miller, 715. Carroll takes a negative view of verses 7-10, seeing it as a later addition that changes the meaning of verses 1-6 from a positive to a negative. Furthermore, he states, “The theoretical nature of vv. 7-10 with their image of a predictable deity contracting with nations and kingdoms a reciprocal agreement of corresponding and alternating for the future is idyllic and unreal” (Robert P. Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, The Old Testament Library [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 372). He contends that the concept of God’s turning is “a very mechanical idea of turning and lacks any depth of content” (Carroll, 374). However, if one reads the passage in its received, canonical form, the wordplay and contrast between the balancing imagery is quite profound and nuanced, which would counter Carroll’s claim of a lack of depth.

Biddle contends that “God becomes involved in genuine relationships. The other actors are free to act as they will. Judah could have repented. God responds within the limitations established by the choices of God’s partners” (Biddle: 263).
The consistency in the parallel between the nation that turns from evil and the nation that turns toward it is relating to the character of humankind. However, the character of God is unchanging in the parallel texts. The key is, if a nation does evil, then God will “relent” of His purpose for good. If that nation does good, God will “relent” of a purpose for evil. The focal point in the parallelism is the difference in the respective choices of the nation. This is illustrating God’s righteous government and the importance of the choice of the free agent, in this case, the nation. God proclaims in this call that He allows His creatures to choose the outcome rather than using His omnipotence to dictate all the events of history. His sovereignty is no less as His gracious and longsuffering call is exemplified.

The Mar in the Clay. The complexity of the potter-clay relationship, as seen in Jer 18:7-10, provides the context to address the riddle of the mar in the clay in verse 4. At first glance there is no indication of what caused the mar. As in the metaphor, there is also a mar in the post-fall world. Evil is pervasive alongside of the goodness in God’s creation. For some, any mar in the clay questions either God’s goodness or His omnipotence. How can one reconcile God’s goodness in a world full of evil? Is God, as potter, the proponent of all the evil in the history of the world? The explicit call to human action in the passage helps answer these questions.

The nation has done evil “in God’s sight” which is defined by the passage as “not obeying God’s voice” (Jer 18:10). Evil is here defined as

---

50 “Yahweh as creator is guided in part by the response of nations and kingdoms. As they respond to him, so he responds to them” (Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard, 245).
51 Stoebe comments, “Yahweh is, on the one hand, the ‘jealous God’ . . . so he neither needs to regret a decision nor is he bound by it . . . and he is, on the other hand, ‘gracious and merciful’ . . . so plans for disaster need not be his last word.” H. J. Stoebe, “יהוה,” in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 738.
52 On the mar, “The text doesn’t give any specifics; it merely states that for whatever reason the potter remade the vessel into one pleasing in his eyes” (Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard, 244).
53 A classic example of this position is David Hume’s quotation of Epicurus, “Is he impotent? Is he able, but not willing [to prevent evil]? Then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil? David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and of Suicide (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 63. This is the same question that was originally raised by the serpent against God when he claimed to Eve that she “would not surely die,” thus claiming God as a liar (Gen 3:4).
**PECKHAM: THE PASSIBLE POTTER AND THE CONTINGENT CLAY**

what is opposed to God. There is no evil in God; He is pure goodness (Ps 25:8; Nah 1:7; Jer 33:9; Rom 2:4). God is not the proponent of evil (Jas 3:19), but a merciful and longsuffering God calling His people so that He can save them (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). It is interesting to recognize that “In 18:4 the passive verb ‘was spoiled’ and the words ‘another vessel’ point to the responsiveness of the potter.” In other words, the potter responds to a mar in the clay and re-makes the vessel. This is not represented as the mistake of the potter. The people are marred because they do not follow after God in the covenant relationship. This is briefly presented in Jer 19:4-5, which expresses the infidelity and idolatry of Judah that extended even to child sacrifice (see also Rom 1:18-32). Nevertheless, there is hope for Judah. Even with the marring of the clay, “the potter is powerful enough to devise a circumstantial plan ‘as it seemed good to him’ (18:4).”

The Relenting of God

According to the decision of the nation, verses 8 and 10 present God with the ability to “relent” from His purpose of disaster. The idea of

---

54 In this way the passage implies that God is good and what is against Him is evil. This is a direct answer to the question of God’s goodness and the problem of evil.

55 “God is never said to have committed any sin of which God needs to repent” (Terence E. Fretheim, “The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 10 (June 1988): 50.


57 Thompson suggests that “the quality of the clay determined what the potter could do with it. He could make something else from the same clay, but not the particular vessel he had hoped for . . . Yahweh the potter was dealing with a clay that was resistant to his purpose” (Thompson, 433).

58 The setting for this text is the Potsherd Gate overlooking the valley of Ben-Hinnom. This was a common place of child sacrifice to the pagan god Baal (Jer 19:1) (Duane F. Watson, “Hinnom Valley,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1996]). This geographical location is illustrative of the great sins that were taking place in Judah. YHWH clearly had reason to call His people to repentance, yet Judah refused to change and continued in rebellion and idolatry. The consequence was the eventual destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. It is clear, however, that Judah was not doomed to this fate, but through their rejection of God, they chose their own path of destruction.

59 Mize: 88.

60 Interestingly, the word for disaster here is from the same root as the word for evil in the same verse. In effect, God relents from doing the evil to them because they turn, or repent, from their evil.
God “relenting” troubles many a theologian and is important to analyze. The word translated relent (נַחַם) has a range of meaning including comfort, sorrow and grief, and regret or repentance.61 Here, in the niphal, it signifies a conditional “relenting” by God.62 This raises two important and quite different issues. The first relates to God’s immutability. Does God really “relent?” Does He change His mind? Is the “relenting” of God a proof that He changes, that He is not immutable? Secondly, based on this passage, questions have been raised about the foreknowledge of God. Does He receive new information? Does He not know the future? These questions must be considered.

The Changelessness of God. Is the “relenting” of God merely an anthropopathism, as has often been asserted throughout the history of theology?63 The primary biblical passages that assert that God does not change include Num 23:19, 1 Sam 15:29, and Mal 3:6, respectively. These passages depict an unchanging God. The question is; what does this changelessness of God entail? As we have seen, Jeremiah 18 presents a God who is active in relationship with His people, engaging them with His own words to repent. However, we have also seen that some hold that God is utterly immutable in such a manner as to be incapable of

61 H. Simian-Yofré, “נַחַם,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, 346. Note that the root may connote emotions and/or a relenting/repenting. This is, by definition, an affective word.
62 נחַם in the niphal occurs most often with God as subject, often of God relenting (Gen 6:6-7; Exod 32:14; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:15; Ps 106:45; Jer 15:6; 18:8,10; 26:3,13,19; 42:10; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3,6; Jon 3:9-10; 4:2), at other times with the connotation of God being “moved” (Judg 2:1; cf. Isa 57:6) and with a nuance of regret (1 Sam 15:11,35) See also the instances where it refers to God not relenting, which seem to be particular and not universal statements based on the context (1 Sam 15:29; Ps 110:4; Jer 4:28; 20:16; Ezek 24:14; Zech 8:14) and intertextuality (i.e., 1 Sam 15:11,35). In fact, many appear to imply that God could relent but would not (i.e., Jer 20:16; Ezek 24:14; Zech 8:14), and such meaning likely applies to all instances in accordance with the overall usage of the term in niphal in Scripture. Isa 1:24 connotes a rare meaning of God riding Himself of adversaries. Though it most often refers to God, it also is used with humans as subject and may refer to humans being comforted (Gen 24:67; 38:12; 2 Sam 13:39; Ps 77:2; Jer 31:15; Ezek 14:22), being grieved (Judg 21:6,15), or humans repenting (Exod 13:17; Job 42:6; Jer 8:6; 31:19; Ezek 31:16; 32:31) In Exod 32:12 it is a niphal imperative directed toward God by Moses (cf. Ps 90:13).
63 Wilson, for instance, claims that “When naham is used of God, however, the expression is anthropopathic and there is not ultimate tension. From man’s limited, earthly, finite perspective it only appears that God’s purposes have changed” (Marvin R. Wilson, “נַחַם,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 570-571). See also Feinberg, “Jeremiah,” 491.
relationship. It is claimed by some that “the classic understanding is that God speaks about himself anthropomorphically or analogically all the way through Scripture—not just in a few places. In every noun, verb, and adjective God has used to present Himself, certain notions of limitation and moral inadequacy apply to the human world that must be deleted when we apply it to God.”

Just how are we to relate, then, to God’s self-revelation in Jeremiah 18 and throughout Scripture? It is affirmed that God descends to speak at a human level and that He cannot be fully understood by the human mind. Nevertheless, it also seems apparent that God depicts Himself as accurately as is possible. Thus, I believe, the universal anthropomorphic nature of Scripture should not and cannot dismiss the direct statements of God about Himself.

In Jeremiah 18 it is clear that God responds to the actions of the nation of Judah. Thus, the passage contends that the actions of humans affect the actions of God. Fretheim speaks of the “repentance” of God as

---

64 By the phrase “utterly immutable,” God is seen as inactive and static. For traditional classical theism, this is seen as a necessary viewpoint that guards against any conception of a lack of perfection or need for growth in God. This paper finds this to be unwarranted in the biblical text. See the above footnote regarding classical theism for further information. It is the position of this paper that God may be spoken of as immutable in the sense that His being and character are constant, but He is not immutable in the sense that connotes the absence of vitality and the possibility of interrelationship with His created beings.


66 Terence Fretheim lays out an excellent examination of this issue in relation to God’s repentance. He states that “Metaphors do reveal an essential continuity with the reality which is God; they do in fact contain information about God. At the same time, they disclose that which is discontinuous with the divine reality.” The danger is “either interpreting metaphors literally in every respect or (more commonly today) denying any essential relationship between the metaphor and God” ((Fretheim: 51).

67 As D. M Beegle states, “It is precisely in the area of the personal that theism, as expressed in Christianity, must ever think in anthropomorphic terms. To regard God solely as Absolute Being of the Great Unknown is to refer to him or it, but to think of God as literally personal, one with whom we can fellowship, is to say Thou.” (“Anthropomorphism,” in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 67.

68 Simian Yofre points out that here, “Yahweh’s nḥm is offered as a possibility, conditional upon the people’s return.” Furthermore, “In Jer. 18:8,10, the relationship between nḥm and change of conduct has become an almost juridical formula (cf. Ezk. 14:12-20)” (Simian Yofre, 347). It is part of God’s changeless character that He always responds
a “controlling metaphor” based on the attributes of love and mercy that were foundational to Hebrew thought (Exod 34:6-7; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2). He states, “God is revealed not as someone who is unbending or unyielding, as a focus on immutability suggests.”

Rather, God is presented as the sovereign and transcendent potter and as immanent and affected God, active within His creation. Thus God is the sovereign potter and the passible potter.

Does this mean God is not immutable, that He is not constant? Certainly not! The changelessness of God need not entail the Greek conception of simplicity and immutability. Rather, the God of the Bible is living, dynamic, and changeless. He is dynamic as an active agent in the history of the world. His changelessness does not refer to stasis. Rather, it refers to the unchanging constancy of God’s character, as dialectically expressed in this passage. Thus, God can “relent” in this way with no negative implications regarding His constancy.

The Foreknowledge of God. The second problem of God’s “relenting” relates to the foreknowledge of God. Some say that God actually based on His “juridical formula” or more personally, His covenant relationship with His people. Fretheim: 63.

Note that “affected” here means that God interacts and relates to human choice and the world, not that God changes in His being or becomes. Based on this passage, as well as others, God has real relationship to the world. It is thus permissible to speak of a pathos of God which also includes the love of God which is fundamental to the Christian understanding of salvation history. Thus, it seems that rejection of any pathos of God negates the relationship of God to humanity, the very relationship that Jesus Christ died in order to reconcile. For biblical examples of God’s dynamic and passible interaction with humans, see Gen 18:23-32; Exod 32:7-14; Ezek 18:26-31; Jon 4:2; Luke 13:34.

God is passible in that He is capable of being affected, external actions may impact God’s actions. It is this capability of being affected that is necessarily rejected by classical theists. Further, God is a God of emotion, and these emotions not only stem from His will but also operate in direct relationship to humans in relationship. See Isa 62:5; Ps 78:40; Eph 4:30; Exod 32:10; Ps 103:13; Isa 54:8; Ps 103:17. It is also important to note that God as potter does not entail omnicausality, even in the NT usage by Paul. 2 Tim 2:21-22 must be taken into account in balancing God’s providence in shaping history with the freedom within limits He grants to His creatures.

Moreover, “The biblical materials sense no incompatibility between God’s honor and dignity and God’s vulnerability and openness to change” (Fretheim: 64).

Most importantly, God never changes in His goodness, and His promises are sure. For the Christian, this brings great confidence in salvation through Jesus Christ. Erickson views immutability as “constancy.” This, in accordance with the Bible, means that God is “active and dynamic, but in a way that is stable and consistent with his nature.” God is, then, “dependable” (Erickson, Christian Theology, 305).
changes His mind, meaning He receives totally new information because of the choice of a free agent.\textsuperscript{74} In other words, it is asserted that because God is said to “repent,” He must not have known the outcome of the people’s choice. The question is asked, would God state His action as conditional even though He has foreknowledge? In answer to this question, it seems there is an important distinction between God deciding to do something and planning to do something. A plan may be conditional and responsive to the free choices of individuals. Therefore, God could know what nation will or will not repent, but still give them the opportunity to do so in actual history. “The point is that a prophecy of doom is not absolute. Prophetic warnings of judgment are actually designed to elicit repentance.”\textsuperscript{75} Abraham Heschel says on this, “Events are not like rocks on the shore shaped by wind and water. Choice, design, is what determines the shape of events.”\textsuperscript{76} God offers the call to repentance because He is gracious and He really wants to spare His creation from condemnation.

Why does God give a call for repentance when He already knows the outcome? It seems that God acts this way throughout the Bible for congruity and fairness. How else would humans have a real opportunity to repent? It is unlikely that a kingdom would turn from its evil ways without a warning from God. Therefore, God is surpassingly good to reach out to nations and kingdoms. An unmerciful God would not even bother.


The aforementioned case of Nineveh, where God also “relents” (Jon 3:4, 9-10; 4:2), is highly enlightening for this problem.

Another verse that involves the “repentance” or “relenting” of God is Gen 6:6. This verse sheds light on Jeremiah 18. “And the Lord was sorry [סָכִים] that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” Here, the word סכים is better understood in the context of God’s sorrow, or grief. This need not imply that God is caught by surprise. Rather, though He foreknew the evil on the earth before the flood, He nevertheless grieved over the horrible and atrocious condition of His creation. There are also many examples of God “relenting” of a good purpose, for instance, taking Israel back into the wilderness when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Here and in Jeremiah 18, God’s changeless character is not called into question, nor does this posit an ontological change or growth in God, but rather action in relation to human free choices.

An implicit testimony in Jeremiah 18:8 that God is not receiving new information and not changing in His character might be found in the difference of the words used for the nation’s turning aside (בַּשָּׁבָה) and God’s “relenting” (סכים).班组 means to physically turn or change course and here connotes the meaning of repentance. It thus signifies a change in direction, a change of heart. We would expect the word for God’s “relenting,” if meant to be the same as human repentance, to be the same word. The difference of words may imply the difference of meaning.


78 In his seminal work Holladay emphasizes that בַּשָּׁבָה is a “turn back (from evil),” and here the preposition “from” emphasizes the particular nuance of the turn, which recalls the imagery of a physical change in direction (William Lee Holladay, The Root Subh in the Old Testament [Leiden: Brill, 1958], 79). See especially the breakdown of this usage according to Holladay (80). “The qal is dominated by the physical movement of turning, turning around, returning, etc.” (Heinz-Josef, “בַּשָּׁבָה,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, 478). It thus refers to a change of direction, here either a turn towards God and His will or away from Him (cf. Jer 4:1; 8:4,6; 15:7).

79 The use of班组 seems of even further importance when it is recognized that this word is used 111 times in 91 verses in the book of Jeremiah. Clearly, the word is a favorite of Jeremiah. Nevertheless, it was not chosen to refer to the repentance of God in the parallel verses of 7-10, thus implying a difference between human and divine “repentance.” It should be noted that the semantic range of班组 also includes divine action (Josh 24:20; Isa 1:3; Jer 32:40). Cf. Jer 18:4, where the potter in the metaphor “turns.” The point being made regarding word usage is not regarding the semantic range of the word, but the selection of two different words in parallel, implying a nuance of meaning.
Seemingly, the words are chosen to illumine the vast difference between the repenting and change of a human and the “relenting” and grace of God. Interestingly, Young’s Literal Translation translates this word to relent as “have relented” in the past tense (Jer 18:8,10). Is this translation warranted? It is in the Qal perfect in the Hebrew, which is normally translated as past. It seems, however, that the form here should be interpreted as prophetic perfect. In this way it is used to “express completeness and factuality” of a future event. God’s promise is as good as completed. Accordingly, God is not receiving new information; His foreknowledge is affirmed.

Therefore, this passage should not be understood as a new thought on God’s part to preserve Judah; rather, this is part of His plan to give Judah a chance to repent as He did for Jonah. Naturally, the consequences of not heeding God’s command would come. However, here God is telling the people that He will forgive them if only they will repent. God’s “relenting” is not a weakness, but part of His merciful character. God’s “relenting” is a promise that, “If you repent, I will reciprocate.” This is not a change in the essence of God, but in accordance with God’s essence as just, merciful, and loving. Henry C. Thiessen comments, “God’s immutability is not like that of the stone that does not respond to changes about it, but like that of the column of mercury which rises and falls according as the temperature changes. His immutability consists in His always doing the right and in adapting the treatment of His creatures to the variations in their character and conduct.” Therefore, Jer 18:7-10 is all about the constancy of God, not His change. The fact is, if a nation will repent, God will “relent” from punishing them. Nevertheless, He is not necessarily receiving new information about the nation, but He is willing to act in accordance with their historical decisions.

---

81 This is akin to the plan of salvation put into effect after the fall of humanity. That plan was “from the foundation of the world,” yet clearly in response to a future problem of sinful humanity (Rev 13:8).
Conclusion

Clearly, a sound theology of the doctrine of God can never be based on the implications of any one passage without proper consideration of the total biblical picture. Thus, it is recognized that this passage alone does not substitute for a fully developed doctrine of God, nor is it assumed that the deep and complicated debates over the nature of God are to be settled in this example. Nevertheless, Jeremiah 18 expresses important information about the nature and character of God and God’s relationship with the world. God is omnipotent, sovereign, and almighty over all creation. There is no other like Him. God as the potter is the unchangeable One, yet this need not preclude His relationship with the world. Rather, the metaphor presents God as not only sovereign and transcendent, but also immanent and interactive with the world at a personal level. The tension between the transcendence and immanence of the Almighty is not problematic for Jeremiah. Rather, both are upheld in order to describe YHWH. This God does not change and enters into relationship with His creation.

Thus, Jeremiah 18 affirms that God is both sovereign and passible. He is not the god of pantheism or panentheism, nor is He the absolutely simple and impassible god of classical Greek philosophy. He is the unchanging “I AM” (Exod 3:14) and the passible potter, capable of dynamic interaction with the world. Yet, the sign-act of God as potter precludes the implication that God lacks power. Rather, He freely chooses to allow a measure of freedom. This metaphor thus points towards a view of God as the biblical God of sovereignty and passibility, love and justice, held in union, not in exclusivity, one God of intimate relationship and transcendent omnipotence.

John Peckham is a PhD Student in Systematic Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. A version of this paper was originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Washington, DC on November 17, 2006. jcpeckham@gmail.com

---

83 It must be understood that God as passible potter does not mean that God changes in His being or that He is in any way progressing or becoming towards a different state. He was, is, and always will be the same God, perfect and almighty and unchanging. Nevertheless, God’s real relationship with the world allows humanity power to choose their course. His action may change accordingly.