Sabbath and Sanctification

Roy E. Gane
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Society
Andrews University

Introduction

Exodus 31 places a brief divine speech regarding the weekly Sabbath (vv. 12-17) immediately after the Lord’s detailed instructions for building him a sanctuary (25:1-31:11). The Sabbath pericope begins: “The LORD said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: “You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you” (31:12-13; NRSV).

The basic appropriateness of the Sabbath as a sign that the Lord sanctifies his covenant people seems fairly transparent. “Israelites imitate God and partake of his Holiness” by participating in cessation from work on the seventh day (cf. Lev 19:2-3), which he sanctified when he ceased from his work at the end of the creation week (Gen 2:2-3; cf. Exod 31:17). In this way they acknowledge to God and to other peoples that he is the intrinsically holy Creator and Source of holiness, and that he shares his holiness with time, people, and things, such as the sanctuary, that he bonds
to himself. Just as consecrated priests have access to the holy sanctuary in space (e.g., Lev 8; Num 18), all Israelites enjoy access to the holy temple in time—the Sabbath—because God makes them holy.

It is not the Israelites’ own Sabbath rest that sanctifies them. Rather, the Lord himself does this. Their Sabbath observance signifies that they accept his gift of holiness. The free nature of the gift is emphasized by the fact that its sign—the Sabbath—involves no work. To the contrary, it is refreshing, liberating rest from work.

The covenant signs of the rainbow and circumcision testify to miracles: deliverance from the Flood and a line of descendants for Abraham and post-menopausal Sarah. Sabbath is a covenant sign of two miracles: Creation (Exod 31:17), and later the sanctification of Israel (v. 13). That Israel’s sanctification is a miracle should be obvious to anyone who casually peruses the narratives of Exodus and Numbers.

What kind of change does Israel’s sanctification effect? Since Sabbath rest signifies both Creation and sanctification, we could expect a thematic connection between them. Does the fact that the sanctified Creation memorial also celebrates the sanctification of God’s people imply that the latter is a kind of re-creation, accomplished by divine creative power?

To plot a course for grappling with these questions, it is helpful to observe the following characteristics of יָשַׁבְּבָּךְ, “sanctify you,” in Exodus 31:13.

1. As a piel of the root שָׁבַב, with a human direct object, it refers to transfer or transformation of someone to a state of holiness.

2. The form is a participle, indicating that this sanctification is an ongoing process.

---

4 On Exod 31:13, Rashi interprets יָשָׁבְּבָּךְ, lit. “to know,” not for “you” (Israel) to know, as this is usually rendered (following LXX), but for the nations of the world to know through the covenant sign of Sabbath observance that the Lord sanctifies Israel. But in this context, Propp sees the Sabbath as reminding “both Israel and God of their covenant” (492).


3. The pronominal suffix נְאָה, “you,” is plural, referring to all Israelites. Holiness is for everyone, rather than restricted to an elite group.

The present study will explore these three aspects in order under the rubrics: transfer/transformation to holiness, ongoing sanctification, and holiness for everyone.

I. Transfer/Transformation to Holiness

“Sanctify” in Exodus 31:13 translates a piel form of שֵׁרֵך, which in piel means to make, treat, or declare something or someone holy, whether this transfer or transformation is expressed in terms of dedication, consecration, or sanctification. 7 So the semantic range is broader than sanctification as growth in character that is the work of a lifetime. 8

When the Lord transfers/transforms the Israelites to holiness, he does not instantly make them morally perfect. This is jarringly demonstrated by the fact that the golden calf apostasy begins in Exodus 32:1, just two verses after the Sabbath pericope ends in 31:17. This covenant-shattering fiasco was hardly in God’s plan for Israel’s sanctification, but rather, interrupted it. Israel’s sanctification operated between the extremes of instant perfection and apostasy.

When the Israelites first arrived at Mt. Sinai, the Lord articulated his vision for their holiness:
You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod 19:4-6).

Here several aspects shape the profile of Israel’s holy relationship to God. First, he has already demonstrated his love by liberating the Israelites and miraculously bringing them to himself. 9 “Exodus makes it clear that

7 Ibid.; cf. NIV—“who makes you holy”; NJPS—“have consecrated you”; NKJV and NASB95—“who sanctifies you”; NRSV—“sanctify you.”
8 On sanctification as “the work. . . of a lifetime,” “the result of lifelong obedience” to God, see Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 560-61.
9 Compare the song of deliverance at the Red Sea: “In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode” (Exod 15:13).
God, not a place, was the destination of the liberated people” because “what they were meant to be could only be found in what God is.” The holy God makes his people holy by restoring them to union with himself as their Lord.

Second, the Israelites can enjoy the privilege of being God’s chosen, treasured possession, which means that they serve him as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. By living in harmony with him as his special people and receiving the blessings that he lavishes upon them (cf. Lev 26:3-13; Deut 28:1-14), they are to be his representatives (“priests”) in order to show his holy character to other nations and share the blessings with them (cf. Gen 12:2-3; 22:17-18).

Third, being the Lord’s treasured possession is conditional upon obedience to him and keeping his covenant (cf. Ps 105:43-45). As the Creator and supreme Sovereign, he has no need or desire to exploit their human energy or material resources for his own well-being or profit (Ps 50:10-13). So his yoke is easy and his burden is light (cf. Matt 11:30). If his people, whom he has redeemed to enjoy his benevolent rule, disloyally violate his principles (e.g., Num 15:32-36), they express ungrateful rebellion and thwart his missiological purpose by misrepresenting him.11

Through the process of delivering Israel, God made the nation holy to himself.12 Pentateuchal Sabbath legislation links these concepts: In Exodus 12, Sabbath signifies that the Lord sanctifies his people (v. 13), and in the Deuteronomy Decalogue, the reason for observing this day is the fact that he brought them out of slavery in Egypt “with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” (Deut 5:15).

As the motivation for Sabbath observance, deliverance in Deuteronomy is the functional equivalent of the Lord’s rest, blessing, and consecration of the seventh day at the end of the creation week in Exodus 20:11.

---


11 So damage control requires that God distance himself from them, as evidenced by suspension of the blessings that only come with his rule (see the curses in Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68).

12 The fact that the Lord directed the Israelites to keep Sabbath, the sign of sanctification, in the wilderness before reaching Mt. Sinai (Exod 16) suggests that he was then already engaged in the process of sanctifying them, in spite of their lapses in faith (14:10-12; 15:23-24; 16:2-3).
Creation and deliverance are linked. At the time of the Exodus, God deployed his power over creation to cause the ten plagues (chaps. 7-12) and the Red Sea crossing (chap. 14), through which he enabled the Israelites to rest from slavery and be holy to him. By resting on Sabbath, they acknowledged enjoyment of their re-created or reborn freedom, identity, and life with the Creator and Re-Creator, which gave them hope. “Biblical hope is a vision of the future which is paradoxically channeled through memory. As the event of creation is remembered, one can think of the event of recreation; therefore, one can hope.”

Keeping in mind the difference between Israelite national deliverance and Christian individual salvation, we can find instructive analogies between the two. Just as Israel enjoyed rebirth and the beginning of sanctification, Christian conversion involves “new birth” (Jn 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-7) and initial sanctification or consecration (1 Cor 1:2, 30; 6:11). Paul even parallels Israel and Christians by referring to the “baptism,” implying a kind of conversion, of the former (10:1-2). The apostle sees value in learning from the Israelites’ experience. For him, soteriology is not an abstract theoretical exercise; it is a story.

There is another aspect to Israel’s story: The role of sacrifices in the process of the nation’s “conversion,” by which it became holy. First, the Israelites accepted the Lord’s provision for saving their firstborn by applying the apotropaic blood of their Passover sacrifices to the doors of their dwellings (Exod 12). Later their bond to YHWH was cemented when Moses tossed the blood of the covenant sacrifices both on the Lord’s altar and on the people (24:5-8).

Because the Lord spared the firstborn, they were holy to him, which meant that they belonged to him (Exod 13:2). They were representatives of all Israel, which God regarded as his firstborn son (4:22-23). So on the basis of the Passover sacrifice, which ransomed the lives of the firstborn (chap. 12; cf. 30:12), and redeemed the nation from the pharaoh (6:6; 15:13), all the people were holy to God (19:6; 31:13). Divine ransom and redemption produce holy ownership, i.e., consecration.

---

As our Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7), Christ has ransomed and redeemed us (e.g., Matt 20:28; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:15). If we accept this provision, we are justified rather than culpable and condemned (Rom 3:21-26; 8:1; Titus 3:7), and we are holy in the sense that we belong to God (Rom 12:1; Col 1:22). As the Lord freed the Israelites from domination by the pharaoh, “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14).

Entering a new kind of life, we become “participants of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4), enjoying the transforming benefits of Christ’s indwelling Presence (Gal 2:20) and power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13), who pours into our hearts divine love (5:5), thereby progressively bringing us into harmony with God’s character (1 Jn 4:8) and law (Matt 22:37-40). These gifts are ongoing and produce progressive effects in the character, but they first come with conversion, and without them, conversion has not taken place (e.g., Rom 8:9). Without this divine assistance to pull us out of our deep ruts and set us on the road, reorienting us in the right direction, our journey with God cannot even begin.

Here is an illustration. My father-in-law, Richard Clark, was born in China to missionary parents. In 1940 he was eleven years old, living in the city of Hankow, and recovering from a second bout of polio. His father acquired a bicycle for him to exercise and regain strength. He rode it on a smooth, newly paved road in the French Concession part of the city. Alongside the road on either side were ditches, about five feet deep, that drained city sewer. There had been iron grates over them, but poor people had stolen them and sold them to the Japanese, who were occupying the country, for recycling into war materials.

One day as Richard made a U-turn, he swung a bit wide and fell into the open drainage ditch, with his bicycle wedged above him. A crowd of amused people gathered around to see the plight of the helpless “foreign devil.” But a Japanese sentry elbowed his way to Richard, reached down with a smile, and pulled him out of the sewer. Then he was able to go on his way.

---

14 This ransom also justifies God in the sense of showing him to be just when he justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26).
The power that pulled Richard out of his predicament was not his own. It was from outside himself, but it made a difference in his life situation by giving him a new start. The fact that it made such a difference didn’t mean that he could claim to have saved himself in any way. So why should anyone entertain the notion that if we experience an initial transformation at conversion—not only for us, but also in us—we thereby attribute part of the ground of our salvation to our own works or merit? It is all pure grace, just as when God delivered the undeserving Israelites from Egypt.

We have been in such a deep rut or, to change metaphors, afflicted by such a tenaciously chronic disease, that we need a whole package of assistance. Paul speaks of the dynamic, interlinked set of remedies that change believers at conversion: “but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11; verbs in aorist tense).

King David also included moral “washing” when he cried out for divine mercy and forgiveness at the time of his re-conversion: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps 51:2; cf. v. 7). Additionally, he asked for something new to replace the old evil within him: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (v. 10). The word for “create” here is the verb שָׁרָת, the same word used in Genesis 1 for God’s initial creation of the world. This term always has God as its subject because only he can create ex nihilo. So David called on the power that created the world to re-create his moral nature as part of the process of forgiveness/justification. The idea that spiritual conversion involves a divine act of creation should occasion no surprise because we already knew from Exodus 31 that the Sabbath links these concepts: The sign of creation is also the sign of sanctification (vv. 13, 17), which includes the transformation of initial consecration at conversion.

II. Ongoing Sanctification

In Exodus 31:13, קֶשֶׁת is a participle functioning as a predicate, with a direct object suffix that refers to the Israelites. So it emphasizes the
The durative circumstance that the Lord is the people's ongoing sanctifier. The fact that the Source of sanctification is outside humanity means that even if people lose holiness, as they did at the Fall into sin and the golden calf apostasy, it can be restored by the always holy God.

Because sanctification is an ongoing process, the initial event of transfer/transformation to holiness provides opportunity for the journey; it doesn’t immediately rocket one to the final destination. After my father-in-law Richard was back on the road in Hankow, he could have jumped back in the sewer if he had chosen to repeat the vicious cycle. But now he had a choice, whereas he didn’t have one before. He still had some cleaning up to do and had a way to go, but he could get there by increments rather than wallowing in excrements.

Similarly, the Israelite’s “conversion” to holiness was the beginning of a journey with the holy God, who was sanctifying them by progressively drawing them closer to himself. They made a commitment to do all that the Lord said (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7), but they needed to learn how to obey him and keep his covenant, to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. It was a steep learning curve, a bumpy road. Tragically, the first generation of liberated Israelites ultimately failed to enter the rest prepared for them in the Promised Land because they faithlessly rejected the lordship of their Savior and Creator (Ps 95).

The Israelites strode forth to freedom with gifts (Exod 11:2-3), and so do Christians (see above). But God has taken the risk of leaving our freedom of choice intact so that we can choose to love him. So we can also choose to turn against him and abuse his gifts, just as the Israelites used theirs to fabricate the golden calf (32:2-4).

Hebrews 4 picks up the appeal of Psalm 95 to hear the Lord’s voice and enter his rest (Heb 4:9-11). Here the weekly Sabbath (cf. v. 4) symbolizes a total life experience that God’s people can enjoy with him through faith. The Sabbath, commemorating the Creator’s rest, is a microcosm of the life experience.

---


17 The fact that Paul addressed the church in Corinth as consisting of “called saints” (NASB95—“saints by calling”; 1 Cor 1:2) who had been sanctified (same verse; cf. 6:11) by no means indicated that they had attained perfection (cf. 1:11). Rather, they had chosen to be joined to God through Christ, and Paul was appealing to them to live in harmony with their commitment to that union.
of faith that points beyond itself to rest in the re-created Promised Land to be enjoyed by those who maintain loyalty to him. The fact that the literal Sabbath can represent a simultaneous experience, rather than being superseded by it, is confirmed by Exodus 31:13, where Sabbath is the sign that the Lord sanctifies his people.  

The Israelites’ deliverance gave them the opportunity for intimacy with God, through which they could learn to be like the Creator in character by living in harmony with his principles, which are all based on unselfish love. Thus, at the beginning of Leviticus 19, he commanded the Israelites through Moses: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God (vv. 2-3).” This remarkable chapter teaches God’s people how to emulate divine holiness by following a variety of instructions for safeguarding relationships with him and their fellow creatures. At the center of the chapter is the command: “you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (v. 18). Jesus cited this verse and Deuteronomy 6:5 when he stated that all the law and the prophets hang on love for God and other human beings (Matt 22:37-40). 

So the dimension in which humans are to emulate God’s holiness is that of their relational interactions, by loving him and others in harmony with his essential moral character of love (1 Jn 4:8). Therefore, sanctification as growth in holiness is growth in God’s kind of love: “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (1 Thess 3:12-13). Here sanctification carries special force in view of Christ’s Second Coming, just

---

18 Those who claim that literal Sabbath rest is superseded by the Christian “rest” experience that involves all days of the week (e.g., A. T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation [ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 209-17) miss the point. Sabbath has never been a temporary type because it was instituted before the Fall, i.e., before the need for temporary types arose as part of God’s salvific plan (cf. Roy Gane, “The Role of God’s Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the ‘New Covenant,’” [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2004], 14, published online at http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/ documents/Gane%20Gods%20moral%20law.pdf).

19 Cf. White, Acts of the Apostles, 560–“True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love.”
as Sabbath rest, which signifies sanctification in Exod 31:13, points to ultimate rest in Hebrews 4.

As the appropriately ongoing sign of the ongoing sanctification process, Sabbath celebrates growth in love, by which we are being restored into the moral image of God, who lovingly created, liberates, and re-creates (cf. Ps 92—Sabbath Psalm). This helps to explain the connection in Isaiah 58 between Sabbath (here especially the Day of Atonement Sabbath) and social concern: Sabbath as a celebration of love and liberation calls for service to the needy, in diametric opposition to selfish oppression.

III. Holiness for Everyone

In "sanctify you" (Exod 31:13), "you" is plural, referring to all Israelites. Just as the Sabbath was equally for everyone (20:10; 23:12; Deut 5:14), holiness signified by rest on this day was for the entire “holy nation,” rather than restricted to an elite group. The people as a whole were consecrated as a “priestly kingdom” when Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant on them (Exod 24:8), just as blood of the ordination sacrifice was later applied to the bodies of the Aaronic priests (Lev 8:23-24, 30), who functioned as the Lord’s special house-servants.

The holiness of all Israelites was emphasized by the fact that any man or woman could take a temporary vow of Nazirite dedication to God. Naziriteship involved aspects of lifestyle similar to those of the Aaronic priests, especially the high priest (Num 6; cf. Lev 10:9; 21:11).

Even Israelite criminal law reflected the concept that all Israelites were holy. In Leviticus 24:19-20, one who inflicted a permanent injury, on another person was to be punished by the lex talionis. Elsewhere refers to blemishes that disqualified priests from officiating (21:17-23) and animals from serving as sacrifices (22:20-25). Sacrifices and priests were, as far as possible in a fallen world, to model the pristine, holy sphere of the Creator of perfect life. By implication, assault resulting in diminished

20 Cf. Doukhan, 157—“Just as the Sabbath is the divine expression of love toward humanity, it is also, on the human level as a response, the expression of human love toward God.”

the wholeness, and therefore holiness, of a person made in the image of God.\textsuperscript{22} This kind of holiness actually applies to the entire human race, not just to Israel. God created everyone holy in the beginning, but all have fallen short of his glory (Rom 3:23), so all need his sanctifying re-creation, which the Sabbath represents.

The Israelite ritual system emphasized that holiness is characterized by life, as opposed to physical ritual impurity, which represented “the birth-death cycle that comprises mortality”\textsuperscript{23} resulting from sin (cf. Rom 6:23). Persons and objects that were ritually impure, and therefore associated with mortality, were to be separated from the holy sphere of God (e.g., Lev 7:20-21; 15:31; Num 5:1-4), the Giver and Sustainer of all life. In this light, the fact that God sanctifies his people implies that he restores their life, which he created in the beginning (cf. Exod 31:13, 17).

Just as Israel’s holiness was for everyone, Peter echoes Exodus 19:6 to tell Christians: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). So our priestly role, like that of ancient Israel, is to convey God’s revelation of himself to the world.

When Peter says “you,” he does not single out an elite episcopate or sector of sacerdotalists. Rather, he continues addressing “the exiles of the Dispersion. . . who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood” (1 Pet 1:1-2). All of these believers and all others are to serve a royal priesthood and holy nation function.

An elite cadre of earthly priests, in addition to Christ’s heavenly ministry (Heb 4:14-16; 6:19-20; chaps. 7-10), is conspicuously absent in the New Testament. The universal New Covenant community does not have an earthly priesthood; we are a priesthood.\textsuperscript{24} In this sense, the church does not have a ministry; it is a ministry. Since we have no elite earthly

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{22} Roy Gane, \textit{Leviticus, Numbers} (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 426.
\bibitem{24} Russell Burrill, \textit{Revolution in the Church} (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1979), 24.
\end{thebibliography}
priesthood, the pedigree and gender restrictions applying to the earthly Aaronic male priesthood under the elective covenant with the nation of Israel are irrelevant to Christian ministry. Of course, the “body of Christ” needs differentiated functions, but these are determined by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12).

What would happen if we were to take the priesthood of all believers more seriously? What would happen if we were to optimize our collective human resources by more closely tuning in to the Spirit’s leading in assignment of roles, rather than quenching the Spirit under the influence of elitist attitudes to ministry held by churches that do not follow the New Testament model of religious leadership? If we empower all of our members by recognizing that they are various kinds of ministers, rather than restricting “ministry” to paid professional clergy, could we more effectively “proclaim the mighty acts of him who called” us “out of darkness into his marvelous light”? (1 Pet 2:9).

Conclusion

For the Israelites, the Sabbath signified initial and ongoing sanctification through divine intervention (Exod 31:13). This transfer/transformation to holiness involved liberation to God and a new life of progressive growth in holy love. So Sabbath celebrated liberation, life, and love from the Creator.

Since we too are a holy people (1 Pet 2:9), who are liberated to new life by the Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7), receive the gift of sanctification as growth in love (1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 3:12-13), and honor the Creator (Rev 14:7), we too can claim Sabbath rest as the sign of our sanctification. Today, as in biblical times, the egalitarian, inclusive Sabbath expresses the fact that God consecrates all people belonging to his egalitarian, inclusive, holy, priestly community that is designed to take this “gospel of the kingdom” to “the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14; NASB95).

25 See Gane, Leviticus, Numbers, 375-7 on reasons for Israelite priests to be male, which do not apply to Christian ministry today.
Roy E. Gane is Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He finished his Ph.D. in Biblical Hebrew Language and Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1992 and taught in the Religion Department at Pacific Union College from 1992 until he joined the Seminary in 1994. He has authored numerous articles, Adult Bible Study Guides on Judges (spring, 1996) and Isaiah (spring, 2004), and seven books: God’s Faulty Heroes (Review and Herald, 1996); Altar Call (Diadem, 1999); Ritual Dynamic Structure (Gorgias, 2004); Leviticus, Numbers (NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan, 2004); Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy (Eisenbrauns, 2005); Who’s Afraid of the Judgment? (Pacific Press, 2006); In the Shadow of the Shekinah: God’s Journey With Us (Review and Herald, 2009); plus the “Leviticus” portion of the Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (2009), and he was the primary translator of Leviticus in the Common English Bible (2011). gane@andrews.edu
Practical Spirituality in Isaiah 1:10-20

Paul Z. Gregor
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Most studies of Isaiah tend to focus on the rich theological and historical elements that pervade the book. However, Isaiah also provides important insights into practical spirituality—especially that needed by the leaders of God’s people. In this paper, I would like to focus and reflect on this often neglected, but important theme that runs through the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah began his ministry around 740 BC when the Assyrian empire was in decline. The time of the great Assyrian kings such as Ashurnarsipal II and his son Shalmanaser III, who erected the famous Black Obelisk, was long gone. With the disappearance of Shalmanaser’s son, Samsu-Addu V, the Assyrian empire was on the verge of total extinction. The reign of Samsu-Addu V was followed by several weak kings who spent all their energy and time intriguing to remain in power. Due to the lack of financial resources, the army became powerless which brought political instability to the provinces controlled by the crown. In return, the weakness of the Assyrian empire triggered socioeconomic instability and brought prosperity to small countries such as Judah.

The message recorded in chapter 1:10-20 probably came to the prophet Isaiah at the beginning (ca. 740 BC) of his prophetic ministry when Assyria was beginning its decline. Thus, there was no foreign power to restrict and control the market and international trade in Judah. This in turn opened tremendous opportunities for certain classes of citizens of Jerusalem and Judah in general to exploit the situation for their own benefit. The appetite for riches, prosperity and greed increased greatly. Thus, lack of compassion for those who were in poverty and destitution was evident in both kingdoms...
(Judah and Israel). The prophet Amos, who ministered in Israel just a few years before Isaiah accepted his call to minister to Judah, sent strong messages of God’s disapproval to the Israelites against such practices (Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:11, 12, 15). In the kingdom of Judah, the situation was not much different. Therefore, Isaiah addressed, right at the beginning of his ministry, the same concern. The heart of his message in Chapter One indicates that there will be no escape for those who continue to oppress the unprotected while at the same time parading their faux spiritual performances in the temple’s court.

The prophet Isaiah starts his book with a clear warning issued to his contemporaries. Right after the introductory statement he opens with an invitation (v. 2) using two verbs הearer (hear) and הוזן (give ear), and both are in the imperative form indicating an order or command. The two nouns (heaven and earth) that follow these verbs serve as the subject and are called to be witnesses to the unfaithfulness of God’s people. Isaiah skillfully uses imagery both, from the creation story where these two nouns were used for the first time, and Deuteronomy (4:26; 30:19; 31:28). The phrase “heavens and earth” in the creation story encompasses everything God created in the beginning. Thus, God invites everything he created to stand witness to the apostasy of His people. According to some, the calling of witnesses into action indicates that this whole section (vs. 2-20) is presented as a typical court hearing or covenant lawsuit, while Gunkel believed that the lawsuit motif is found only in 18-20.

Whatever the case, Isaiah successfully employs the same pair (hear and give ear) in exactly the same form (imperative) a second time, in verse 10. Here, as earlier, the couplets are used in the opening statement for the following section, which may stand as an independent literary unit (vv 10-20). This section can clearly be divided into four segments where verse 10 serves as an introduction and verse 11 represents the first part. The second

---


part encompasses verses 12-15, the third part verses 16 and 17, while verses 18-20 represent the last part with the conclusion.

The first and second segments start with a question. Both questions are set in such fashion that there is no need for an answer because the questions are rhetorical and the answer is obvious. It seems that God’s people during the time of Isaiah misunderstood God, leading them to undertake only their perceived obligations. In spite of the fact that they obviously fulfilled their obligations in an adequate manner, the tone of these two parts is negative, and God is clearly not satisfied with their performance.

The third part starts in a different way—there is now no more time for questions. God calls the people to action through command. This part, in a way, explains in detail why their performance, described in the previous sections, was insufficient. It reminds the people of Judah what they were not doing and what they were supposed to do. The last part also opens with a command but an invitation is implemented with a tone which is not so gloomy as in the earlier parts. It ends with the hope and promise of endless blessings. However, there is serious warning of possible total downfall. Refusal to obey God’s instructions would directly lead them to an open rebellion against God, which would ultimately result in their total destruction.

Textual Analysis

The introductory statement is made of two parallel lines where every word in the first line has its pair in the second line.

פֶּני יָהוּדָה קָפִּי נַכָּה יָהוּדָה קָפִּי נִלְעָה
זֶרַחֲנָה חֵרְצָנָה יִמְלָה יִמְלָה

Four couplets which exist between these two parallel lines are easily recognizable. Earlier it was understood that the “poet goes back to the beginning again, and says the same thing once more, though he may partly or completely change the actual words to avoid monotony.” But a more recent understanding of parallelism indicates that paralleled couplets serve to supplement each other in their intensity and meaning. Thus, יָהוּדָה is paralleled with יָהוּדָה, in the same way the phrase יִמְלָה (word of Yahweh) is paralleled with יִמְלָה (teaching of God). Furthermore,

---

the word אָנַּיָּה (leaders of) is paired with בְּנֵי (people of) in the second line, while the word בְּנֵי הָשָׁם (Sodom) serves as a twin to the word אָרֲמִי (Gomorrah) in the second line.

Both words בָּנָיָה and בָּנֵי are in the imperative and as such dominate the statement. It seems that the word בָּנָיָה was more popular since it was used extensively in the Old Testament. In spite of the fact that it was usually translated as “hear,” or “listen,” it also implies obedience as well. Whenever it is used its subject is compelled to react. Since it is a progressively active verb, action is demanded upon its implementation. One must act by accepting or rejecting the motion but cannot ignore it.

Its parallel word in the second line, בָּנֵי, is used only 42 times in the Hebrew Bible, and always in the hifil except for one case (Eccl 12:9) where it appears in piel form and as such has a different meaning (weigh, test, prove). It is most probably a cognate to an Akkadian verb ʾadina which means “to listen.” Most of its occurrences appear in Hebrew poetry (Psalms 15 times, Job 6 times, Proverbs 1 time, and Ecclesiastes 1 time). Among other books where the same word is found, it occurs most frequently in the book of Isaiah (8 times).

Out of all its occurrences throughout the Old Testament it stands alone only 14 times, while another 28 times it appears in relationship with its parallel counterpart, where its most common pair is בְּנֵי אָרֲמִי (24 times). Only on four occasions is the verb בָּנֵי found with other cognates. It is parallel with וָאָבֵד (incline, attend)(3 times) and וָאִישֵׁה (incline)(1 time). When it is paired with וָאָבֵד, it is used in second place in the majority of times except for three times when it stands in the first position with וָאָבֵד second. When it functions as a pair it usually “summons to receive instruction.” Other suggestions indicate that this parallelism may allude to the idea of summoning two witnesses.

8 L. Kohler, Deuterojesaja stilkritisch untersucht (Giesen: A. Topelmann, 1923), 112.
Gregor: Practical Spirituality in Isaiah 1:10-20

It is not clear whether יָשַׁר explains or strengthens its parallel verb יָשַׁר in the first line. Since the noun יָשַׁר (ear) derives from the verb יָשַׁר, its proper meaning would be “give ear,” or “to act with the ears.” If this is the case then instead of clarifying and strengthening the verb in the first line, by using the verb יָשַׁר, the author intended to implement a tone of seriousness.

The next parallel pair appears in a construct chain where יָשַׁר from the first line matches יָשַׁר נְאַב מַעְבָּרָה in the second. Usually the word יָשַׁר simply means “word” or “thing.” but whenever it is in a construct with יָשַׁר it stands for the word of God in general and always refers to His Law in a narrower sense. This meaning is supported by the fact that its parallel word in the second line, יָשַׁר is to be associated “with character and attitudes and relationship.” The last two words in each line also appear in a construct chain where יָשַׁר in the first line, and יָשַׁר in the second line, are in their construct state. They are followed by two absolute state nouns which, in fact, are proper names of two ancient cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. The word יָשַׁר is a carefully selected word, which refers to rulers, who are a special class of individuals at the top of the social scale. However, this is not the only possible word the author could employ to describe leadership. Indeed the repertoire is wide, but the author chooses this one for a special reason. Other terms such as יָשַׁר (Gen 45:8), יָשַׁר (1 Sam 25:30), or יָשַׁר (Ex 16:22) were popular and widely used, usually indicating good leadership (Joseph, David, leaders of the congregation). On the other hand, the word יָשַׁר is used only 12 times in the Old Testament and in most cases refers to a person who is responsible for

---

recruiting solders, military commanders, leaders in general or dictators. Its cognate is probably an Arabic verb *qadn* or *qadi* meaning judge. Furthermore, the prophet Micah portrays the leaders (נִצְיָף) of Judah as those who perform the act of cannibalism toward their own people (Mic 3:2-3).

Its parallel word in the second line is נִצְיָף and it normally indicates people in respect to their relationship. Here the author reminds Judeans about the covenant relationship with their God and their obligation to it. Besides the word נִצְיָף, another Hebrew word מַעְלָה which usually refers to a political entity and mainly is related to non-Jewish peoples. By using נִצְיָף, the author clarifies the word נִצְיָף in the first line indicating that the audience is not some ancient population in Sodom and Gomorrah but rather the leaders/dictators and the entire nation of Judah. By placing them on the same level with the cursed people of Sodom and Gomorrah the author’s intention is to indicate God’s disgust with their relationship, spiritual growth, and performance towards Him. Thus, right in the beginning He warns them that their end might be the same as those who perished in the two ancient cities.

After the first two lines of introduction (v. 10), Isaiah introduces his audience, which includes the entire nation of Judah with the first section (v. 11). The section opens with a question in respect to their obligation and responsibility toward the temple sacrifices. Many years ago God had provided them with strict instructions regarding different types of sacrifices they had to bring to the temple. The book of Leviticus provides a detailed account as to how to prepare different animals for various transgressions.

---

There are three parallel lines in this section, the first line serving as an introduction. By using the word הבה (sacrifice) the author brings into focus the entire sacrificial system. The second and third lines specify in more detail everything encompassed by the term הבה. While the second line deals with parts of animals being offered and burned on the sacrificial altar in the courtyard (עולה - burnt offerings of rams; יקרין - fat of fatlings), the third line cuts even deeper by indicating that the blood of animals would not even be acceptable. Here, the author lists three animals; בר (young bull), כבש (lamb), and תבל (he-goat). Young bulls played an important role for the redemption of the priests who were the spiritual leaders for the entire congregation (Lev 4:2-12). In addition, the same animal was offered when the entire community sinned against God (Lev 13-21). The lamb was offered every day during the morning and evening services for the sins of the congregation of Israel (Ex 29:38-39). The he-goat was sacrificed when a ruler needed cleansing from his sins (Lev 4:22-26). Furthermore, on a designated day of the year (day of Atonement) the most sacred place (Holy of Holies) was cleansed by the blood of a he-goat (Lev 16). This was the most important day of the sacrificial calendar when all the sins of the people of God were taken away and they were redeemed in God’s presence.

Obviously, the people of Judah who lived during the time of Isaiah were aware of the importance of the sacrificial system. Burnt offerings coupled with burnt fat which brought a sweet aroma before God were not bringing delight to God and as such did not produce the desired results. Additionally, the blood of animals that was poured daily and yearly as a symbol of redemption and reconciliation was insufficient. It seems that everything the Judeans did was in vain and it was not accepted by God. Even blood, which served as a cleansing agent to bring the people closer to His presence, was not productive. Evidently, the entire sacrificial system which was established by God Himself was insufficient and no longer effective.

Similar to the first section (v. 11), the second section (vv. 12-15) also starts with a question. In addition to the ineffective sacrifices they bring, it seems that other elements which demonstrate their performance are not satisfactory either. This time incense is mentioned (v. 13) which correlates well with the last part of the same section where prayer (v. 15) is
referenced, too. These two elements seem to be part of their private and corporate spirituality but performed publicly in God’s temple.

Between incense and prayer the author sandwiches holidays which were separated and consecrated as special for bringing closeness to God. He mentions four of them which were observed as holy days. The first indicated in the text is נלו (New Moon). This was a monthly holiday set apart for the people of Israel to observe since the time of Moses. It was celebrated on a monthly bases at the beginning of each month. It was announced by the sound of silver trumpets, when peace and burnt offerings were involved (Num 10:10). It was listed with Sabbath and the three pilgrim festivals; the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles (2 Chron 8:13). It was one of the appointed feasts and its observance was important for the entire community.

The second sacred day was שבת (Shabbat) which refers to the seventh day of every week. This weekly observance was established and known much earlier than the beginning of Israel as a nation. It was established during creation when God Himself rested, consecrated, and proclaimed it holy for all generations to come. It was set apart from all other days and it became the sign which “the Creator has stamped on world history... as His seal of ownership and authority.” Later, it was indicated that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people (Exod 31:16, 17). The word ספ is used here for “sign” and it derived from the verb ספ (to mark). This verb was used in Numbers 34:10 where the people of Israel were supposed to “mark” their boundaries. Marking boundaries indicates ownership. With this in mind the Sabbath is a sign or mark of God’s ownership. By celebrating the Sabbath, humanity in general, and the people of Israel in particular, indicated that they belong to God and are his possession.

The third holy day listed is קינון. This term is used mostly in Leviticus (8 times) and in Numbers (6 times). It is usually translated as “assembly,” “convocation,” but also it may refer to “reading” (Neh 8:8). The word is used only 18 times in the Old Testament and most of the time

is paired with the word \( \text{סְדֹר} \) (holy). Whenever this pair \( \text{סְדֹר} \text{פָּרָס} \) appears it indicates a special holy time, one day long, when the people had to abstain from any work. This happened every seventh day of the week (Lev 23:3), during Passover (Lev 23:7, 8), during the feast of unleavened bread (Num 28:18, 25), Pentecost (Num 28:26), the feast of trumpets (Lev 23:21, 24; Num 29:1), the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:27; Num 29:7), and the feast of tabernacles (Lev 23:35, 36; Num 29:12). Evidently, whether it was weekly, monthly, or yearly observance \( \text{סְדֹר} \text{פָּרָס} \) represented a holy and separate day devoted to God.

The fourth term on the list was \( \text{נִדָּה} \) (assembly). It is a rare word used only 3 other times apart from the book of Isaiah (twice in Joel 1:14; 2:15, and once in 2 Kgs 10:20). Due to its limited usage it is not clear what kind of holy day this term designated. The context in Joel indicates that these are special, unpredicted and irregular occasions when the entire nation is in distress. Second Kings indicates a similar understanding of the term. Here king Jehu is assembling all the priests of Baal proclaiming an \( \text{נִדָּה} \) in order to gather them in one place and kill them (2 Kgs 10:18-27). By listing \( \text{נִדָּה} \) with other holy days Isaiah indicates the seriousness of the situation in Judah and Jerusalem.

In addition to the sacrifices mentioned in the first section (v. 11) God is not satisfied with the observance of the holy days, whether weekly, monthly, yearly, or even when they occurred occasionally. He is also dissatisfied with their prayers which are not making any difference because they fall on deaf ears. The last line in this section reveals the reason why their overall performance which is made of sacrifices, prayers, and the observation of holy days is useless and ineffective. “I will not listen,” God says, because “your hands are full of blood” (v. 15). That the author probably uses this gruesome image metaphorically is evident in the last line of the second section, which serves as a connecting link to the next section where the text explains what “bloody hands” represent, though literal murder must not be ruled out.

Unlike the first two sections which start with a question, the third section opens up with an imperative. In fact out of nineteen words in this section eleven are verbs where all but two are used in the imperative. The other two (\( \text{עָפָר} \) – do evil and \( \text{בָּשִׂים} \) – do good) are infinitive absolute in
form.\textsuperscript{18} Infinitive absolutes sometimes serve “as a substitute for a finite verb form”\textsuperscript{19} and as such could be employed as a devise in expressing divine commands (Exod 20:8; Deut 5:12; 2 Sam 24:12). Therefore, all the verbs used here are commands.

This section starts with two verbs הָעַשׁ (wash) and הָכַּפְּלָנָה (clean) which serve as an introductory statement. Right at the beginning God commands them, “wash” and “clean yourselves.” After this powerful request, God specifies in detail what “washing and cleaning” designates. The rest of this section could be subdivided into two parts. In the first part (v. 16) they are told what they must stop doing. Two imperative verbs supported by another verb in the infinitive absolute at the very end of this verse suggest immediate action. They must cease to do evil and remove it from their everyday practices.

The second part (v. 17) of this section starts by indicating what they must do. Even though this command “learn to do good” and “seek justice” is applicable to every individual in the community of God, the last part of this verse suggests that this command is imposed mainly on leaders who are called to be נַעֲשֵׂה in verse 10. One of the main roles of those who were called to lead was to implement justice in the courts and protect those levels of the society which needed protection, such as orphans and widows, against merciless lenders. Even outside of Judah and Israel, leaders and especially kings, were responsible for the protection of the weak.\textsuperscript{20}

Obviously, the people of God in general and their leaders in particular failed to administer justice in their dealings with each other and to those with whom they came in contact.

This section requires two actions from the people of God. First, God indicates that they must stop doing wicked deeds. But this is not enough, he goes a step further, indicating that they can not ignore injustice and remain passive, they must start doing good. This message is in harmony with the New Testament understanding of practical spirituality, “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, it is sin” (James 4:17).

\textsuperscript{18} Brown, 405, 996.
The last section of this literary unit also starts with a command. However, to this the imperative particle נַפֵּל is added which makes the imperative emphatic or more urgent, or at times may be an appeal (e.g., in Gen 22:2). Further, its urgency or petition is supported by the verb נָפַל (to reason) which appears in the niphal with a cohortative ending. This combination, the niphal plus cohortative ending is used only by Isaiah. Elsewhere, other authors use this verb in the niphal form but always in a situation where there is a dispute between two parties (Gen 20:16; Job 23:7), and as such it is the language of courts.

Interestingly, the court scene comes into focus only after the third section where the people are told what they must do. When this requirement is fulfilled God invites them to “reason.” By using this mode (particle נַפֵּל and cohortative ending) Isaiah moderates the strength of the preceding imperative. It is an invitation where God pleads with his people to come and to reason together (v. 18). The author uses the imperative and the cohortative with נַפֵּל particle between them as a vehicle to bring hope and restoration motifs into perspective, thus indicating that there is still a chance of redemption, covenant renewal, and a future for God’s people. However, not before certain conditions are met (v. 19).

In the last section or conclusion (vv. 19-20), the people are offered two choices (לַעֲשֹׁת) obedience or (לְרָעָה) rebellion. The author skillfully employs the same word (לַעֲשֹׁת) from the introduction again. The people are not only invited to listen or hear, but to obey. This motive of obedience and rebellion was borrowed from Deuteronomy 11:26-32 and it belongs to a covenant between God and His people. The prosperity expressed by the phrase אָכַת הָרָעָה (the good of the land you shall eat) indicates God’s willingness to forgive previous transgressions provided His people straightened out their ways in respect to their interpersonal relationships.

Verse 20 serves as a clear warning in case they remain disobedient. Here for the second time the verb לִכְבִּד (eat) is used, but not in a positive tone as in the previous verse. The verb is reinforced by the pual form, indicating a terrible consequence of destruction by the sword. The choice is theirs, they shall eat the good of the land, or they shall be eaten by the sword. The last line of this section אַף וּלְמִקַּמְיָהוֹ (for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken) serves as a perpetual warning indicating how serious God is about this matter.
Conclusion

It seems that the people of Judah and Israel, along with their spiritual and political leaders, performed all their public and private spiritual duties according to the letter. However, all this was in vain unless they first removed evil from their midst and sought to do good. In spite of the fact that their overall performance was insufficient, the text never suggests that the bringing of sacrifices and the observance of the holy days was abolished and no longer required. Both, sacrifices and observance of the holy days, were still mandatory, though no longer producing the desired results. It all would have a deeper meaning and purpose if their interpersonal relationships were on an acceptable level. Their relationship on the vertical level (between them and God) would be possible only if the horizontal one was also functioning. The fact that this understanding is in agreement with the statement of Jesus: “So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God. . . leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God” (Matt 5:23-24) makes this message applicable for the New Testament times and for our day as well. As noted elsewhere: “character and attitudes and relationship, all of which may be symbolized in the ceremonies but which are not to be replaced by the ceremonies”21 cannot be separated from interpersonal relationships or our relationship to God Himself.

Paul Z. Gregor was born in Croatia. He received his MA in Religion at Newbold College and his PhD at Andrews University. He served as a missionary in Jamaica working for the Northern Caribbean University from 2003 to 2007. Currently, he serves as a professor of Old Testament and Biblical Archaeology at Andrews University. He has published numerous books and articles in Croatian as well as in English. pgregor@andrews.edu

21 Oswald, 96.
When I introduce the topic of God’s judgment, I regularly ask my audience: “What is your first reaction, thought, or feeling when you hear that God will judge you?” I have addressed this question on all continents (except Antarctica) to people of various political, social, religious, ethnic, educational, and age backgrounds, and the answer is always unanimous: “Fear!” In the past, I thought that it was mainly my problem, because I grew up in a totalitarian communist regime; and when I heard the word judgment, I immediately imagined a judge in dark clothing, with a severe expression on his face, pointing at someone with his finger, and condemning that person to death. However, I have found that everywhere people’s impressions about the divine judgment are remarkably dark and extremely cold. They think that God is like a heavenly policeman waiting for their mistakes in order to punish them and perceive Him as a cosmic Nebuchadnezzar before whose sovereign authority nobody can escape. They feel that they are under the magnifying glass of the heavenly Judge, and thus are full of anxiety. The thought of coming under the judgment of God brings goose-bumps.

My distorted understanding was grossly influenced by some preachers who used divine judgment as a “pedagogical tool” to motivate believers to obedience, “encourage” them to be good, and behave nicely. They thought that scaring and threatening people with judgment would help them to
Moskala: Gospel According to God’s Judgment

follow God faithfully (contrary to Rom 2:4!). They built their concept on a mistranslation of Jude 23: “Through fear lead others to salvation” (as some old translations have it), and presented the divine judgment in full negativity. These interpretations were like beating me with an iron rod. This troubled me deeply; and from my childhood on, I had a bleak and unfriendly picture of judgment which played a dreadful role in my mind. As a result, I was afraid of God, frightened by Him, and naked before His expecting eyes. I felt lost, alone, and abandoned with an acute sense of guilt. I perceived nothing favorable in God’s judgment.

Fear as a universal human reaction toward divine judgment is understandable, because we know that God is holy (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 1 Pet 1:15-16), a consuming fire (Isa 30:27), and we are sinners (Ps 51:5; Eccl 7:20; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:23; 1 John 1:8). Consequently, we cannot possibly stand before the awesome Judge of the whole Universe (Gen 18:25; Judg 11:27; 2 Tim 4:8). Our typical response is aptly described by Asaph: “Who can stand before you . . . ? From heaven you pronounced judgment, and the land feared and was quiet” (Ps 76:7b-8a; see also Judg 13:22; Isa 6:3-5). At the bottom of our negative thoughts lies the conviction of our insufficiency and sinfulness.

According to popular understanding, to judge means to “condemn, punish, and destroy.” This is why people are scared, full of anxiety, and try to avoid even talking about it. When people equate God’s judgment with condemnation, punishment, and destruction (and such meaning can clearly

1 “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance” (Rom 2:4)? Biblical quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.
2 For example, the Kralicka Bible (Czech translation from the year 1613) and the Russian translation of 1876 translate it thus. Similarly, another mistranslation reads: “. . . others save with fear” (KJV and NKJV). The proper translation of this verse should read: “Save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh” (NASB).
3 God’s authority to judge is rooted in the fact that He is the Creator. Steven J. Keillor well argues: “Several Old Testament passages present God’s assertion that his act of creation gives him the right of judgment after the Fall” (God’s Judgments: Interpreting History and the Christian Faith [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2007], 65). James M. Hamilton aptly states: “Creation provides the cosmic matrix within which God will display his glory in salvation through judgement” (“The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment: The Center of Biblical Theology?” Tyndale Bulletin 57, no. 1 [2006]: 81).
be attested to in the Bible), no wonder they do not experience joy and assurance of salvation in Christ Jesus. This threat of divine judgment robs them of thankfulness, and their world is divided between the redemption secured on the cross and the fear of God’s judgment. Thus, they live in a spiritual schizophrenia which is a serious problem. On the one hand, they know that they are saved in Jesus Christ, but on the other hand, they understand that there will be a judgment (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1; Heb 9:27; 10:30). They do not know how to put these two realities together, and they lose peace and certitude. Are fear and hopelessness something which undividedly belong to the concept of judgment? Are uncertainty and soberness its necessary companions?

While carefully studying the Holy Scriptures, I had to unlearn this wrong imagery of God’s judgment. These one-sided definitions and interpretations of divine judgment are the real problem. This process of new thinking about divine justice is not easy, because negativity tries to sneak back in. In this article I underscore a positive dimension of the divine judgment and its main role (without denying that there is also a negative, very sober, and tragic side of God’s judgment, i.e., condemnation, punishment, and destruction, but only as a secondary meaning) by providing a rich sample of bright biblical examples. I want to underline

---

4 Examples of negative judgment include Gen 3:23-24; 4:11-12; 6:13; 19:24-25; Exod 12:29-30; Ps 143:2; Ezek 7:1-4; 8:6; Dan 5:25-30; Mal 3:5; John 5:29; 2 Thess 1:6-7; 2:8; Heb 13:4; Rev 14:9-10; 19:19-21, etc. It is true that God’s wrath is directed against sin, but stubborn sinners who associate with it experience it too (Prov 28:13; Ezek 18:23, 31-32; Mal 4:1; Matt 25:41-46; John 3:36; Rom 2:4-5; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Thess 1:8-10). Staying in sin before the Holy God results in hopelessness and death (Rom 6:23; Gal 5:21).

5 There is a consistent pattern to God’s judgment with both positive and negative aspects even in the midst of transgression and the setting of condemnation. Consider, for example, the following divine judgments: (1) The fall of Adam and Eve: positive—God’s grace intervened and Adam and Eve did not die immediately and God promised the coming of the Seed to overcome Satan; negative—condemnation of transgression, expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and actual death; (2) Cain after killing his brother Abel: positive—a sign of protection is given to him; negative—he became a fugitive; (3) The flood: positive—the salvation of Noah and his family; negative: the destruction of the antediluvian evil population/world; (4) The building of the tower of Babel: positive—Abraham is called to be God’s messenger to the world; negative—the dispersion of people and confusion of languages; (5) Sodom and Gomorrah: positive—the salvation of Lot and his close family; negative—the destruction of the wicked cities, etc. As the examples show, positive judgments are intermingled with negative dimensions. It seems that only a few exceptional
that for the biblical authors the divine judgment is something that is desired and to which they looked forward with great anticipation: “Raise up, O God, judge the earth” (Ps 82:6). Judgment plays a vital role in God’s plan of salvation, and it is a central part of the eternal Gospel (Rom 14:6-7). Hamilton powerfully reasons that “the center of biblical theology . . . is the glory of God in salvation through judgement.” If that is so, the basic question is, therefore, what is the primary meaning of God’s judgment? Four answers are provided.

1. To Judge Means to Justify

According to biblical understanding, “to judge” means “to justify” which is a legal action with an awesome impact on our lives. Every time we confess our sins and are forgiven, we pass through God’s eschatological

---


---

31
judgment which breaks through to our situation, and we are justified by His grace, i.e., declared just. Judgment is justification: God as a true Judge justifies repentant sinners (Rom 3:22-26; 5:6-11), and we are cleansed and acquitted from all guilt (Ps 51:1-2; Isa 6:7; Zech 3:4). He does that and can do it, because He is our heavenly Judge! In this way, for example, Abraham was judged by God and pronounced righteous because he believed in Him (Gen 15:6); and Joshua, the high priest, was proclaimed right (Zech 3:3-5). Isaiah boldly declares: “But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult” (45:25). In this way, to judge means “to cleanse” (Ps 51:7-10; Job 4:17; Isa 1:18; Dan 8:14), and the justified sinners stand in a restored and right relationship with their Lord. This positive proclamation of God on our behalf gives full assurance of salvation, new courage to live, brings true peace, and jubilant joy into our lives.

David joyfully states: “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit there is no deceit” (Ps 32:1-2). This is why Paul unambiguously clarifies: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)! Jesus plainly assures: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). The forgiven transgressor does not come into the judgment of condemnation and will not experience God’s disapproval. Consequently, Paul announces that those who truly accept

---


10 The key phrase in this verse, “will not be condemned,” can be translated in a different way: “shall not come into judgment” (NKJV). The ambiguous Greek term krisis is intentionally used here with a double meaning in order to allude to two complementary terms (i.e., condemnation and judgment) which are both correct. Those who believe in Christ will not be condemned at any judgment (Rom 8:1; 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10), and they will not come to the last judgment of condemnation of the wicked because at that time the righteous will already be inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (see Rev 20:7-21:4).

Consider also the sequence of events in Jesus’ speech: (1) preaching of the Gospel: “hearing”; (2) positive response: “believing”; (3) results for the believer: (a) He/she has eternal life (note the present tense)! (b) He/she does not come to judgment (is not condemned)! (c) He/she passes from death to eternal life!

32
MOSKALA: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD’S JUDGMENT

Jesus as their personal Savior are raised to new life and are already sitting on the heavenly throne in Christ at the right side of the heavenly Father (Eph 2:6; 1:20)! Thus, if we are already there, why are we so worried if we will make it into heaven one day?! Not one of our performances (however noble), great achievements, or good deeds can help us get into the kingdom of glory. We receive salvation as a pure gift only through and in Christ! No wonder authority was given to Him to pronounce judgment (John 3:17-18; 5:22-23, 27, 30; 6:37-40, 44; 8:16; 9:39; compare with Dan 7:13-14), and all glory belongs to Him (Ps 34:2; Jer 9:23-24; 1 Cor 1:29-31; 10:31; Col 1:27; Jude 24-25; Rev 5:12-13).

Additional examples are plentiful and portray this reality in various episodes in the Bible. The first judgment recorded in the Bible is over Adam and Eve after they broke their love and trust relationship with their Creator and ate the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6). Instead of being destroyed as God initially said—“In the day you will eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which is in the middle of the garden, you will surely die” (Gen 2:17)—by God’s grace their lives were spared, and He even looked for them (Gen 3:9). God’s call “Where are you?” was an expression of His deep love in search of humanity and revealed God’s judgment and grace at the same time. On account of the grace coming from the Lamb, who was slain before the creation of the world (Rev 13:8; 1 Pet 1:20; Eph 1:4), they were given life. The protogospel announced God’s love for sinners because only He could provide a solution for our lost sinful.

This reality is accepted and lived only by faith. This “already” is balanced with “not yet.” We need to wait till the Second Coming of Jesus in order to see Jesus face to face, receive our reward, and be physically with Him in His kingdom (Matt 16:27; John 11:25; Rom 8:24; 1 Cor 13:12; 15:51-55; 2 Cor 5:7; Phil 3:20-21).

Good work has a threefold crucial function: (1) it is not important not for our salvation but for the salvation of others (Matt 5:16; Rom 10:14; Gal 5:6; Eph 2:10; 1 Pet 2:9); (2) it demonstrates that our faith is alive because without works our faith is dead (James 2:26); (3) it reveals our salvation which is a 100% gift from God (John 14:15; 1 John 4:19).

Ellen G. White put it eloquently: “If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God as if you had not sinned” (Steps to Christ [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892, 1893], 62).

situation and defeat Satan (Gen 3:15). When we are in Christ, we are sons and daughters of God and heirs of His kingdom. In Christ we have everything (Gal 3:29; 4:7; Rom 4:13-16; 8:32; 1 John 3:1), and we can entirely wrap ourselves in His divine forgiveness.

George Ladd correctly explains: “The doctrine of justification means that God has pronounced the eschatological verdict of acquittal over the man of faith in the present, in advance of the final judgment. . . . Thus the man in Christ is actually righteous, not ethically but forensically, in terms of his relationship to God.”

God is just (Deut 32:4; Ps 31:5; 2 Chr 15:3; 2 Thess 1:6; 1 John 1:9); He never perverts His judgment or can be accused of favoritism (Prov 17:15; Acts 10:34-35; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25). He is just while justifying sinners (Rom 3:26; Rev 16:7), because He changes them. God sees in the present what we will become by the power of the Holy Spirit, His mighty word, and His blazing grace. He declares us righteous, because by His amazing grace we will be righteous, our lives will be transformed.

We are new creatures in Christ and His grace will grow in us (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; 1 Cor 3:7; 2 Cor 10:15; Eph 4:13-15; Col 2:19; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18). Grace is amazing because it changes people and does what we cannot accomplish for ourselves (Rom 7:14-18; Jer 13:23; Isa 64:6; Matt 11:28-30; John 1:12; 3:7; Acts 4:12; Eph 2:4-5; Rom 8:10-11; 1 John 3:1-6). When we pass through God’s acquittal, He justifies us as our Judge and in His eyes we are what we will be.


God’s grace is amazing not only because a sinner like me can be saved, but because His grace is transforming. If His grace were not transforming, then it would not be amazing.

We are changed by beholding Jesus (2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:1-4, 10; Heb 12:2; Phil 2:13), and by the power of His Word and Spirit (Ps 33:6; Ezek 36:26-28; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:23; Jas 1:18).

34
2. To Judge Means to Save

God saves believers from the second death, sin, guilt, the power of evil, and gives eternal life (John 1:12; 3:16; 10:28; Rom 6:5-9, 23; 8:1-4). King David first describes a negative aspect of divine judgment in terms of destruction and cutting off but then emphasizes judgment as salvation: “All sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off. The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble” (Ps 37:38-39). Asaph stresses that when God rises up to judge it means that He is coming “to save all the afflicted of the land” (Ps 76:9). Thus, these biblical texts explicitly state that for God to judge means to save His people! God’s judgment is salvation and comes uniquely from the Lord (Pss 62:1; 118:14; Isa 12:2; Jonah 2:9). God is the Savior and Redeemer (Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 22:3; Job 19:25; Pss 18:46; 19:14; 43:5; Isa 44:6; 48:17; 59:20; 63:8-9; Jer 14:8; Hos 13:4). The Hebrew word yasha’ “denotes God’s saving work in spite of a condemnation which is legally free from reproach.”

The biblical Flood account (Gen 6-9) is another good example of salvation in the midst of God’s judging activity. The whole story is written in a chiastic structure with its culmination statement: “But God remembered Noah” (Gen 8:1). This climax does not mean that God had a lack of memory and suddenly He remembers, but that He intervened in

19 The first death is a natural death as a result of our sinful nature, but the second death is an eternal death as a consequence of our sinful life, and God’s condemnation at His judgment (Rom 6:23; Rev 14:13; 20:6).
favor of Noah in the midst of judgment to save him and his family. Furthermore, Noah received grace from God (Gen 6:8). It is important to note that the term “grace” (chen) appears for the first time in the Bible in the Flood narrative. Surprisingly God’s intervening grace is the apex of the story, because from it all salvific actions flow for humanity.

God’s grace was not only for Noah, it was offered to the antediluvian people as well. Genesis 6:3 reveals that God’s Spirit was striving with people by calling them to repentance. However, God had to sadly proclaim: “My Spirit will not contend with man forever” (Gen 6:3). In this verse, the Hebrew word din “judge” appears, and translators are puzzled because they are not sure what to do with this concept. They do not try to hide the difficulty of this verse and propose various solutions. In what sense was the Spirit of the Lord no longer able to “judge” them? God wanted to justify and save the antediluvian people, but because of their stubbornness, refusal to listen to His word, follow His instructions, and that their thinking was evil, He was unable to judge them favorably. Nevertheless, even in such an estranged situation, God gave them 120 years of additional grace so they could repent and turn back to Him (6:3b). Unfortunately, God’s amazing grace was not received graciously, and the result is described in language indicative of a total state of human depravity: “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Gen 6:5; see also 8:21). Noah was a preacher of righteousness to them (2 Pet 2:5), but his words and example of godliness were not taken seriously.

God had to stop the avalanche of evil, but He was waiting till the last second. When God intervened with His negative judgment, He actually intervened in His grace, because He could no longer envision the destruction, perversion, violence, torture, and exploitation of the pre-flood world. He destroyed what had already been destroyed by humans (Gen 6:11-13). God, as the Surgeon, cut the cancer of sin out!

---


24 In the Flood, God did not destroy something that was good, beautiful, meaningful, and had potential to grow. He put an end to human corruption and destruction. The author of the Flood narrative plays with the Hebrew word shachat which has a double meaning: (1) “destroy” and (2) “corrupt.” The wordplay in Gen 6:11–13 is striking (four times the word-
MOSKALA: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD’S JUDGMENT

Sadly, at the end, God was able to save only one family whose members were willing to cooperate with Him. If God had not intervened, the blight of sin would most probably in time have overrun even this faithful remnant. God’s promised Seed would not have had a place to be born, His word would not have been fulfilled (Gen 3:15), and the Messiah’s coming would have been hindered. Thus, the cancer of sin would have completely engulfed the world, evil would have won, Satan would have triumphed, God’s cause would have been defeated and humanity lost! However, God’s grace prevailed even in this tragic event (Rom 6:20b-21).

3. To Judge Means to Deliver

God as our Judge delivers us from condemnation and the tyranny of sin because He is the true Liberator (John 8:32, 36; Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 5:1, 13). He is the Victor over Satan (John 12:31-32; 14:30; 16:11), therefore He is able to deliver from different addictions to sin. He is the Giver of freedom. We are in danger of slavery to sin (Rom 6:11–18), and our Judge delivers us from the power of the evil one (Mat 6:13). “Throughout the Bible those who experience God’s deliverance experience it through his judgment,” accurately claims Hamilton. God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt and set them free in the midst of His judgment upon the Egyptian gods and upon those who associated with them (Exod 3:8; 5:2; 6:6; 7:5; 12:12). This deliverance goes even deeper, to be free from sin means to be healed (Ps 41:4). Salvation is ultimately deliverance

---

shachat is used): God has destroyed what humans had already destroyed! Thus, the pun reveals God’s actual reaction to the performance of evil. In other words, in the Flood God destroyed one big “concentration camp” of evil. To destroy is not His nature, because He is the Creator, Giver and Sustainer of life. His negative judgments are His “strange work” and “alien task” (Isa 28:21), and He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (2 Sam 14:14; Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11). When the Lord had to wipe out the wicked, He “was grieved” and “his heart was filled with pain” (Gen 6:6)! This is in great contrast to the extrabiblical flood stories where angry gods destroy humans (like, for example, in the Epic of Atrahasis)! John in the book of Revelation wisely connects God’s judgment at the second coming of Jesus with Genesis 6 by pointing out that God will destroy “those who destroy the earth” (Rev 11:18).

from the power of sin and a complete well-being or healing. The Greek word *soteria* conveys this rich meaning.  

God helps us to understand the nature of God’s judgment through the Old Testament book of Judges. What was the primary function of these judges? To condemn, punish, or destroy God’s people? On the contrary, judges were sent by God to deliver them from the oppression and devastation of their enemies. They were called to protect, care, save, deliver, and liberate God’s people from their foes. They were there to give and secure freedom! This book should be named the “Book of Liberators” or “Deliverers.” Köhler maintains that these judges were “helpers.”  

Judgment for God is His passionate way of demonstrating His positive attitude toward the oppressed, His coming to rescue them! 

God wants our freedom and the original intention of His law was to protect our freedom. It is important to observe that God’s first command was actually commanding freedom: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden (Gen 2:16). True freedom lies in accepting our limits and God’s instructions and discipline (Prov 1:1-7).

### 4. To Judge Means to Vindicate

Our Judge vindicates His people against the accusations of our archenemy Satan who is against us, but God is always for us. The Psalmist reassures: “For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants” (Ps 135:14). The story of Job reveals this truth. In the heavenly tribunal, Satan accused Job of impure selfish motives: “Does Job fear God for nothing” (Job 1:6, 9)? The key term in this devilish question is the word *chinnam* (“for nothing”).  

In this court setting, God is on the side of Job even though He cannot answer directly and immediately Satan’s accusation, because the Accuser can be defeated only by someone who is...

---


27 Köhler, 157.  

28 This is a crucial term in the book of Job occurring four times and stated by different persons: Job 1:9 (Satan), 2:3 (God), 9:17 (Job), and 22:6 (Eliphaz). This word has plentiful meanings: “without reason,” “gratis,” “in vain,” “for no purpose,” “undeservedly,” “unselfishly.” See BDB, 336.
weaker than he is and not by God’s argumentation or power. At the end, God accomplishes moral victory when Job’s unselfish love, trust, and service are revealed. Ultimately God’s love, truth, and justice prevails (Pss 100:5; 101:1; 103:8-11; 117), and God is just while justifying sinners (Ps 51:4; Rom 3:4, 26). This theodicy is the heart of the spiritual warfare.

John declares that Jesus silenced Satan’s accusations because of His victory on the cross. His blood defeated Satan’s charge that a loving devotion to God is impossible. Christ’s victory is claimed by His followers. He identifies with them (Zech 2:8; Matt 25:40, 45; Acts 9:1-6), so they associate with Him, willingly follow wherever He leads (Rev 14:4), and follow Him faithfully even to the point of death. John reports that he heard a loud voice in heaven which described this reality: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short” (Rev 12:10-12). Satan accuses, but God defends and vindicates (Zech 3:1-4; Dan 12:1; Rom 8:31-39; Heb 7:25).

Additional Examples
I have stressed the positive aspect of divine judgment in order to provide a proper framework and thought pattern about this essential activity of God. In order to explain this affirmative value, I provide additional examples from the Hebrew Bible:


30 On how God vindicates Himself before the nations, see Ezek 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16, 23; 39:7. The phrase “I will show Myself holy through you” is only used within the entire Bible in Ezek 36:23 and 38:16.

1. The most elaborate judgment scene in the Hebrew Bible is found in Daniel 7. Verse 22 describes the positive aspect of the heavenly pre-advent judgment (see Dan 7:9-10, 13-14). The Aramaic text literally reads: “Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High.” The special grammatical devise, namely “given for,” contains a preposition lamed which is in this context the “lamed of advantage.” Thus, the text should be translated more precisely in the following way: “Until the Ancient of Days came and the judgment was pronounced in favor of the saints of the Most High” (translation is mine). What a beautiful picture of God who is for us and never against us! He is doing everything possible to legally secure our place in heaven (John 14:1-3). It is significant that this chapter describes God’s condemnation of the little horn (7:26) only after Daniel presents God’s judgment to His people’s advantage (7:22).

2. David prays: “Judge me, O Lord!” David asks God this on three occasions (Pss 7:8; 26:1; 35:24). If judgment mainly has a negative meaning, then, of course, David would never express such a prayer. He is not begging for condemnation or punishment. He hopes for God’s deliverance from his enemies and asks God for protection from his opponents. The context clearly explains that David needs God’s vindication. Enemies were pressing him, and there was no one who could defend him but God, therefore he requests: “Lord, please save me from the hand of my enemies, only you can help me, rescue me, please intervene on my behalf” (my paraphrase).

Did you ever pray: “Judge me, O Lord”? We do not have the courage to pray such a prayer, because we have a wrong perception of the divine

---


33 In that sense the NIV and NKJV correctly translate this verse as do many other modern translations of this Aramaic text.

34 For the fourth time, the same request is made by the sons of Korah (Psalms 42 and 43 form a unit): “Vindicate me, O God” (Ps 43:1).
MOSKALA: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD’S JUDGMENT

judgment—we are scared of it. However, through this prayer, God’s Word helps us to see judgment in a different light.

3. The Messiah announces the Day of the Lord as a day of great salvation. Isaiah declares that God’s vengeance will bring consolation to the mourners of Zion (Isa 61:2-3).

4. Moses in his concluding victorious and prophetic song assures: “The Lord will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. . . . Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants” (Deut 32:36, 43).

5. God through the prophet Isaiah admonishes: “Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm” (Isa 51:4–5). The Hebrew text literally states: “. . . and my arms will judge the peoples [nations],” and thus in God’s judging activity even the nations afar will put their hope! When God judges He establishes justice.

6. David declares: “The Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice” (Ps 9:7-8). What is the purpose of His judgment? “The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (v. 9), and David reassures that the Lord will never forsake those who seek Him (v. 10).

7. King David eloquently presents from God’s perspective an enormous difference between the fates of the wicked and the righteous when He judges the people: “The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them. The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates. On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face” (Ps 11:4-7; see also Matt 5:8).

8. The Poet describes God, from His heavenly command center, setting free those who are doomed to death: “The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he views the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death” (Ps 102:19-20; see also Pss 11:4-5; 68:34-35; 73:16-17, 25-28; 77:12-13). This is why God’s
people are crying for God’s help (Pss 7:1; 27:4-8, 13-14; 28:1-2; 31:1-5; 42:2; 84:1-2; 130:1-8; 142:1-2).

9. When God sends His message of judgment to people, it is a message of grace—an opportunity to repent; see the experience of the Ninevites (Jonah 3:6-10) or Daniel’s messages to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:27-33). God does not want people to die as informed sinners. His message has the power to change people, if they are willing to listen, obey, and repent from their arrogance, stubbornness, or indifference (Isa 55:11).

10. The first-class verse in regard to God’s positive judgment is Isa 35:4. This is an outstanding message to those who are afraid of judgment. God instructs Isaiah to encourage people: “Say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.’” This is the news which needs to be widely preached and spread.

As we have demonstrated above, there is a plethora of positive examples in regard to God’s judgment in the Hebrew Scriptures, and this view is confirmed also in the New Testament. John in his first epistle stresses: “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28) and again “In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him” (1 John 4:17). As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we should be the first to stress this positive meaning of God’s judgment in order that people can be attracted to our gracious and beautiful God, and really understand the Gospel in the judgment (without denying or neglecting the other side of the coin), and look forward to that event, and with full confidence pray: “Judge me, O Lord!” Because if they will not ask for it, God as their Judge cannot justify, save, deliver, and vindicate them.

The Apostle Paul provides the same positive meaning of God’s judgment. In 1 Cor 4:1-5, he declares: “It is the Lord who judges” (v. 4) and then he adds: “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will

---

35 In both texts, the Greek word *parresia* is used which means “bold assurance,” “confidence.” See Bauer, 630; Spicq, 56-62.

36 Ellen G. White stresses how our preaching and teaching has to uplift Christ and be Christ centered. See *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1892), 156 and 315.
**MOSKALA: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD’S JUDGMENT**

expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God” (v. 5). At the judgment God will praise His faithful followers! What a glorious image of God’s love for us!

**Rabbinic Witness**

I support this positive dimension of God’s judgment with ancient rabbinic sources, because in their understanding Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), traditionally known as the Day of Judgment, is actually the Day of Salvation. The paradoxical nature of Yom Kippur is well expressed by Naphtali Winter: “Despite the repentance and abstinence practiced on Yom Kippur, it was never a sad day. Its atmosphere was solemn but this was always accompanied by the confidence and joy at finding atonement.”

This affirmative picture of God’s judgment is documented in the *Mishna* where Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel depicts the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) as a day of joy: “There were no happier days for Israel than the 15th of Ab and the Day of Atonement, for on them the daughters of Israel used to go forth in white raiments . . . to dance in the vineyards.” The *Jerusalem Talmud* aptly states: “Normally, someone standing in judgment would dress somberly, cloaking himself in black robes and not trim his beard. After all, he does not know how it will turn out. Israel is different, though. We dress in white and cloak ourselves in white and trim our beards and eat and drink and are joyous for we know that God will do miracles for us. Being judged by God is at once an awesome thing—He knows all—but He is a merciful God. Even judgment itself need not be devoid of joy.”

Rabbi Akiva reminds people that “the world is judged by [divine] goodness, . . . the judgment is a true judgment, and all is prepared for the banquet.” Rabbi Judah said that the Holy One “sits and issues judgments

---


38 *Ta’anith* 4.8 (Herbert Danby’s translation).

39 *Rosh HaShanah* 1:3.

for the entire world, all of it—when He sees that the world is so guilty as to deserve extermination, He rises from the throne of judgment and sits down on the throne of compassion.”  Rabbi Schwadron asserts that “everyday judgment of God brings joy, because it changes our view of things.”

Crucial Observations

Only people who are on death row can rejoice over the news that there will be a trial addressing their situation. This news means new hope for their case. When we accept that we are condemned to eternal death because of our sins, then we can actually rejoice over the news that there will be God’s judgment. This judgment is our only hope! It is a chance for sinners to be saved, however, in this judgment all depends on our relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We need to realize that the court system in Ancient Israel was different in comparison to our Western system of justice. In our society’s court system, we mainly have two individuals (besides the prosecutor and jury), each with a different function, for ensuring justice in our case (and in our culture we have good reasons for doing so). These two main figures are the judge (whose principal function is understood to be sentencing or condemning people) and an attorney (to defend the accused persons). But in ancient Israel there were no attorneys! Only one person was needed in legal procedures—a judge who was at the same time an attorney. One individual fulfilled both functions. The judge was perceived as the savior! Only he could deliver and vindicate an accused person from injustice. If

---

41 Bailik and Ravnitzky, 510:55. See also the following statement: “The Holy One said: ‘If I create the world with the attribute of mercy alone, its sins will be too many; if with justice alone, how could the world be expected to endure? So I will create it with both justice and mercy, and may it endure’” (Bailik and Ravnitzky, 7:12).

someone needed help, only a judge could intervene and bring solution to the problem (Luke 18:2-8).43

We today associate judgment with fear, but the biblical authors connected judgment with surpassing joy. Consider the verbs in the following biblical passage which describes an attitude toward judgment: “Rejoice . . . be glad . . . resound . . . be jubilant . . . sing for joy . . . sing before the LORD for he comes to judge the earth” (Ps 96:11-13; recited in 1 Chr 16:31-36). Also a psalm of the sons of Korah reiterates: “Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments” (Ps 48:11).

I am convinced that God does not need to organize a judgment in heaven in order to condemn humanity, because we are already condemned to death (we are all sinners, guilty, and doomed to death, and if God would not intervene in our favor we would certainly die). God does not need to condemn us for the second time. But when He judges us again at the pre-advent judgment, it means that His principal purpose is different: He secures legally our place in heaven in front of the heavenly court for all eternity. This judgment also unmasks the antagonistic activities of the little horn before the universe (Daniel 7-8).

Thus, we do not need to be afraid of God’s pre-advent judgment, because at that judgment He affirms, confirms, reveals, discloses, and demonstrates to the heavenly world the decisions we made for Him during our lifetime. He will not add anything else to our decisions and neither will He alter them. As the faithful and true Witness of our lives, He testifies for His people that we are His (Rom 8:31; Rev 3:14). Paul states clearly: “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim 2:19; compare Num 16:5). The pre-advent judgment does not pronounce a new sentence in contrast to what we experience in our daily life. Jesus will only verify and affirm God’s saving activity or the condemnation of a particular person.

The destruction of all the wicked, evil angels, and Satan himself is good news because there will no longer be an evil force or sin which will destroy what is valuable, good, and beautiful. There will be no more death.

---

pain, criminality, or disease. No more cemeteries, jails, and hospitals! Love, peace, creative work and meaningful relationships will be the content of life. God’s love, truth, and justice in judgment will prevail (see Phil 2:10-11; Rev 15:3-4).

The only way we can stand before the holy God is by His grace. We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16; 3:22-31; Eph 2:4-10; Gal 2:16; Titus 2:11-14). He is more than willing to save us; by walking with such a gracious God, it is easier to be saved than to be lost (Rom 8:35-39; Eph 1:9-10; 1 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Tim 1:9-10; 2 Pet 3:9). We have eternal life not because we feel it, but because God says so (Ps 10:12; Isa 1:18; 38:17; Mic 7:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:20)!

Conclusion

We are used to thinking negatively about God’s judgment, however, the Bible provides a different paradigm regarding this essential divine activity, and we need to learn to perceive it as an affirmatory event. God is for His people and never against them! Only when we are attracted to God by His goodness and beauty are we then able to respond positively to Him (Ps 27:4; Rom 2:4), because as a consequence of the first sin, we are all afraid of God, and we are hiding from Him (Gen 3:10). Zimmerli has it right: “The judgment makes known Yahweh’s nature.” He reveals through it who He is. The God-centered nature of judgment in the Bible is evident from all the above mentioned examples. The Lord as Judge is the Savior.

The biblical record is transparent: the primary meaning of God’s judgment is to justify, save, deliver, and vindicate. When we ask God for forgiveness, praying for it honestly, openly, and sincerely, God as our Judge forgives our sins and proclaims us right. He does that and can do it, because He is our heavenly Judge! God’s eschatological judgment breaks into our time, and we are judged favorably; we pass from death to life; we are not condemned and have eternal life (Gen 15:6; John 3:16-17, 36; 5:22-24)! Only when we do not accept the positive dimension of God’s judgment are we under condemnation, i.e., the negative meaning of His judgment!

---


45 For further study, see Zachman’s outstanding article in which he argues about the unity of justice and love and explains that “the judgment of God is an expression of the love of God” (152).
The proclamation of the judgment in the context of Revelation 14 is very good news, and it is a part of the eternal Gospel. From this indicative of the Gospel that “His judgment hour has come” springs the imperative of the Gospel: “Fear God and give glory to him, . . . and worship Him who created” everything (Rev 14:7). The Gospel is a proclamation of the good news about God as our Judge!

Judgment is about restoring justice. The Psalmist cries: “Rise up, O Judge of the earth . . . How long will the wicked, O Lord, how long will the wicked be jubilant” (Ps 94:2-3; see also Ps 74:10; Hab 1:2-3; Rev 6:10)? True uncorrupted justice can be inaugurated only by God; His love, truth, and justice will prevail! The only solution to our sinful situation and in order to not be under condemnation is to accept and personally know our Judge, because in the face of our Judge we can recognize the face of our Savior (Gen 3:9, 15, 21; Isa 63:6-9)!

At the end when Jesus comes in glory with the holy angels, only two groups of people will be there. One group will cry in desperation to the mountains and rocks: “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (Rev 6:15-16), but the other group with victorious shouts of great joy will look up with confidence expressing their realized hope: “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his

Revelation 14:7–8 reveals two kind of judgments—the first one is positive (v. 7) and the second one, judgment on Babylon, is negative (v. 8), as the context demonstrates.


This truth is eloquently explained in the following quotation: “Make friendship with Christ today. Put your case in the hands of the great Advocate. He will plead your cause before the Father. Though you have transgressed the law, and must plead guilty before God, Christ will present his precious blood in your behalf, and through faith and obedience, and vital union with Christ, you may stand acquitted before the Judge of all the earth, and he will be your friend when the final trump shall sound, and the scenes of earth shall be no more” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, 27 July 1888).
Word cannot catch their excitement! The choice is ours!

Can we hide from God? David proclaims that God is everywhere and there is no place to conceal us from Him (Psalm 139). But still, there is a special place where the Heavenly Father cannot “find” those who follow Him. This unique hiding place is in Jesus when we accept Him as our personal Savior. David prays: “Rescue me from my enemies, O Lord, for I hide myself in you” (Pss 32:7; 143:9; see also Zeph 2:3). The “in Christ” motif means that the heavenly Father looks upon us but sees His beloved Son Jesus Christ. When we are in Christ, all that is His is given to us as a free gift, the result of His amazing grace. His purity is our purity, His righteousness is our righteousness, His character is our character, and we are accepted by our heavenly Father as if we had never sinned!

Peter Brunner, former theologian and professor of systematic theology in Heidelberg, excellently and with detailed precision explains the relationship between our identity and God’s judgment. He touches the core of the matter: “Living in every instance in the judgment of God makes our life what it is. Living in the judgment of God is the creative power that makes us what we actually are. We do not make ourselves what we are; God’s judgment about us makes what we are, for the judgment of God works very differently from human judgment. . . . I am what God thinks about me. God’s judgment carries with it the immediate power of execution. God’s decree creates what it says. . . . If God decrees, ‘He is my beloved child,’ then that is what I really am, even when so much seems to speak against it. . . . God’s judgment about you and me creates the basic foundation of our existence. I live as I live in the judgment of God. I am what I am through the judgment of God. Any weight that I might place on the scale of my life produces only a superficial and temporary swing. But what God’s judgment brings into my life shifts the balance for all time and eternity. That is why the question of what God thinks of me is the most important of all questions.”

Praise the Lord that God is our Judge!

---

49 Brunner, 282.
MOSKALA: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD’S JUDGMENT

Jiří Moskala is Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology and Chair of the Old Testament Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Moskala received his Th.D. in 1990 from the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology, which is now renamed the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University, Czech Republic. His dissertation was entitled: “The Book of Daniel and the Maccabean Thesis: The Problem of Authorship, Unity, Structure, and Seventy Weeks in the Book of Daniel (A Contribution to the Discussion on Canonical Apocalyptics)” and was published in the Czech language. In 1998 he completed his Ph.D. from Andrews University. His dissertation was entitled: “The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)” and has been published under the same title. Moskala has authored several books and articles in the Czech and English languages. moskala@andrews.edu
The first part of this article dealt with the Christological designations of the Apocalypse and traced Jesus Christ through the book highlighting his importance for the theology and interpretation of Revelation. This part will focus on his divinity.

1. Humanity and Divinity

A word on Jesus’ humanity in Revelation before we discuss his divinity! It has previously been mentioned that a certain number of the designations used for Jesus emphasizes his human nature such as “male child” and “firstborn of the dead.” The male child of Rev 12 refers to Jesus’ birth and incarnation, an experience that divinity normally would not undergo. Also by definition, God cannot die. But humans are born and die. Jesus has not only experienced birth but also death and afterwards resurrection. He was truly human. However, he was not a sinner. In Revelation, John does not—like in other places or like other NT authors (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22: 1 John 3:5)—state plainly that Jesus did not sin. But the Apocalypse calls him the Holy One and the True One (Rev 3:7), which is a title for God (Rev 6:10). In the Gospels, Jesus was addressed as the Holy One of God by demons and his disciples (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69). This title may in a more
hidden way point out Jesus’ sinlessness as a human being while stressing his divinity. “He is the embodiment of absolute sanctity and truth . . . .”¹

In spite of this emphasis on the humanity of Christ, human titles of Christ or those containing a human element are not the predominant ones in Revelation. They are also fewer in number, probably because the Apocalypse presents an exalted Christology.²

Erickson mentions important practical implications of the humanity of Christ. They include that Jesus died for humanity as one of us and that he can save us. He is able to understand us and sympathize with us. So he functions not only as Savior but also as Revealer of the transcendent God who is no longer only transcendent but has become immanent in Jesus Christ. He is our Mediator, and finally he is the example to be emulated by his followers. He “manifests the true nature of humanity. . . .” not only telling us “what perfect humanity is,” but exhibiting it.³

While Revelation stresses Jesus’ humanity, a number of the designations and titles used for Jesus highlight his divinity, some because Jesus shares them with the Father, others because they point to a divine being or are attributed to God in the OT. These include the designations “True/Amen,” “Son of man,” “Son of God,” “Word of God,” “Alpha and Omega,” “First and Last,” and “Beginning and End.” To these we will turn in a moment.

We agree with Erickson who talks about the complexity of the human-divine nature of Jesus which humans cannot fully comprehend. He writes:

> It is also helpful to think of Jesus as a very complex person. We know some people who have straightforward personalities. One comes to know them fairly quickly, and they may therefore be quite predictable. Other persons have much more complex personalities. They may have a wider range of experience, a more varied educational background, or a more complex emotional makeup. When we think we know them quite well,

¹ Smalley, 88.
another facet of their personality appears that we did not previously know existed. Now if we imagine complexity expanded to an infinite degree, then we have a bit of a glimpse into the “personality of Jesus,” as it were, his two natures in one person. For Jesus’ personality included the qualities and attributes that constitute deity. There were within his person dimensions of experience, knowledge, and love not found in human beings . . . the person of Jesus was not simply an amalgam of human and divine qualities merged into some sort of tertium quid. Rather, his was a personality that in addition to the characteristics of divine nature had all the qualities or attributes of perfect, sinless human nature as well.4

2. Designation and Titles that Jesus Shares with God the Father

(1) True. In Rev 3:7 and 19:11 Jesus is called “true.” He is also the true witness (Rev 3:14). The term “true” occurs ten times in Revelation. Three times it refers to Jesus. Four times God the Father is called “true” (Rev 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2). The Word of God is true, because it comes from God (Rev 19:9; 21:5; 22:6). Truth is connected with God and is the opposite of the deception brought about by Jezebel (Rev 2:20), the dragon/Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:3, 8, 10), the beast out of the earth (Rev 13:14; 19:20), and Babylon (Rev 18:23).5

(2) Lord. The term “Lord” (kyrios) as used by the LXX often refers to Yahweh, a tradition carried on the NT.6 In Revelation “Lord” clearly refers to God the Father thirteen times,7 undoubtedly to the Son five times,8 and once to one of the 24 elders (Rev 7:14). In two places it is difficult to decide which person of the Godhead is meant (Rev 11:4; 14:13).9 One may wonder why one of the elders is called “lord” since in all other places the term is reserved for God and Jesus. However, the

4 Erickson, 754.
5 See also discussion above.
6 Cf. Erickson, 707-708.
term is found in a direct speech of John while he is in vision in the heavenly realm. Possibly he was so overwhelmed with what he saw that he addressed the elder with “lord.” However, when again using the term in another direct speech John knows that ultimately the Lord is the Lord Jesus (Rev 22:20).

(3) *Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Beginning and End.* The expression “Alpha and Omega” appears three times in Revelation–Rev 1:8; 21:6; and 22:13. “Beginning and end” and “first and last” are parallel expressions. The following picture emerges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God the Father:</th>
<th>“I am the Alpha and Omega.”</th>
<th>Rev 1:8(^{10})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus:</td>
<td>“I am the first and the last.”</td>
<td>Rev 1:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God the Father:</td>
<td>“I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”</td>
<td>Rev 21:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus:</td>
<td>“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”</td>
<td>Rev 22:13(^{11})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three expressions may be used synonymously. In Greek thought “beginning and end” pointed to the eternal existence of God.\(^{12}\) However, not only God the Father is the Alpha and Omega, beginning and end. The titles belong to the Son as much as to the Father. They are used seven times in these self-designations of God and Jesus. This may not be an accident in the light of the clearly visible as well as the hidden series of seven in the

---

\(^{10}\) Rev 1:8 with the description of God as the One who is and who was and who is to come and as the Almighty seems to be a clear reference to God the Father. Cf. Kistemaker, 87; Mounce, 51-52; Smalley, 38; Witherington, 77. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 79-80 discusses arguments in favor of the God of Rev 1:8 being God the Father and arguments in favor of this person being Jesus Christ.

\(^{11}\) Cf. Kistemaker, 87.

\(^{12}\) Cf. Bauckham, 27.
Apocalypse. Father and Son are equal in nature. Indeed Jesus is God. His is eternal existence. This is not changed by his death as a human being. Jesus’ threefold title in Rev 22:13 points to the absolute sovereignty of God, which is his. Yet Jesus is not a second God but is included in the eternal being of the one and only God of Israel, the source and aim of all things. The following diagram shows that important themes are associated with the divine designations Alpha and Omega, First and Last, and Beginning and End.

A  Prologue
   God the Father: Alpha and Omega (Rev 1:8)
   Connection to the Second Coming (Rev 1:7)

B  The First Vision of Revelation
   Jesus Christ: First and last (Rev 1:17)
   Connection to new life (Rev 1:18)

B’ The last Vision of Revelation
   God the Father: Alpha and Omega
   Beginning and end (Rev 21:6)
   Connection to new life (Rev 21:5-6)

A’ Epilogue
   Jesus: Alpha and Omega
   First and Last
   Beginning and end (Rev 22:13)
   Connection to the Second Coming (Rev 22:12)

13 The phrase “the first and the last” appears again in Rev 2:8. However, there it is not introduced by “I am.” Cf. Bauckham, 26.
14 Louis A. Brighton, Revelation, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 660, says: “The high Christology of Revelation is brought to a climax and is comprehensively summarized in Rev. 22:13, where the three divine titles describing the eternal magnitude of the infinite God are applied to Jesus Christ.”
15 Cf. Lioy, 156.
16 Bauckham, 27, discusses the meaning of these expressions saying: “God precedes all things, as their creator, and he will bring all things to eschatological fulfillment.”
Hieke and Nicklas do not necessarily consider the three expressions of Rev 22:13 as parallel designations. They maintain that the description of Jesus in Rev 22:13 introduces Jesus as the one who encompasses Scripture (Alpha and Omega), humanity (the first and the last), and the entire creation (beginning and end). Osborne suggests: “The titles refer to the sovereignty of God and Christ over history. They control the beginning of creation and its end, and therefore they control every aspect of history in between.” However that may be, again and again Rev 22:6-21 transfers to Jesus qualifications and titles, which according to the previous context (OT, NT, Rev) are attached to God. Thus, Jesus is identified with God.

3. Descriptions and Titles Pointing to Jesus’ Divinity

Descriptions such as “strong angel” (Rev 10:1-3) and “Word of God” (Rev 19:13) have been discussed earlier. Obviously, they stress Jesus divinity. But there are also others.

(1) **Son of Man and Son of God.** The one like a Son of Man (Rev 1:13; 14:14) is a human and yet divine being, most likely the heavenly being of Dan 7. In Revelation, the Son of Man is portrayed with divine characteristics. Harrington concludes: “What is said of the Ancient of Days (God) in Daniel (Dan 7:9) is here said of the one in human form. John, throughout, does not hesitate to use God-language of Jesus.”

Although the title “Son of God” occurs in Revelation only once (Rev 2:18), it is not unimportant. It is found frequently in the NT, especially in the Gospels. This title points to the peculiar relationship existing between God the Father and Jesus. In John 1:14 the divine Logos of John 1:1 is called son. This son became human. His glory is the glory of the unique and only son of the Father. In John 1:18 the

---

17 The one like a son of man is divine as mentioned above. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas, “Die Worte der Prophetie dieses Buches” Offenbarung 22,6-21 als Schlussstein der christlichen Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments gelesen, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 62 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 90. A different position is taken by Smalley, 573.
18 Osborne, 789.
19 Cf. Lioy, 116.
Son-Father-relationship between Jesus and God is again emphasized. This Son is in the bosom of the Father. He came to reveal the Father, and whoever sees him, sees the Father (John 14:9). This does not mean that the Father is transformed into the Son. There are and remain two distinctive and yet mutually connected persons. According to Matt 11:27 nobody knows the Father apart from the Son and from those to whom the Son reveals him. These statements indicate that we have to reckon with a plurality of persons in one Godhead. John 10:29-36 is very clear. There is a Father-Son-relationship between God and Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God. He is one with the Father. The Jews understood Jesus’ claim to divinity and wanted to stone him. Consequently, the title Son designates the divine person which in Jesus of Nazareth became a human being.\(^{21}\)

In Rev 2:18 Jesus used the title “Son of God” claiming divinity, a close relationship with God the Father, and basic equality with God.\(^{22}\) The divine characteristics of the Son of Man in Rev 1b are connected with the Son of God. The title may also express majesty. There is nobody who would resemble Jesus, and the so-called sons of gods, such as Cesar, cannot be compared to him.\(^{23}\) His eyes like flames of fire indicate that nothing can remain hidden before him. Jesus is omniscient. He tests hearts and minds.\(^{24}\) His feet like burnished bronze stress his strength, power, and steadfastness with which he is able to carry out judgment.


\(^{22}\) Lioy, 115-116, 128. Kistemaker, 136, suggests that Jesus addressed those Jews in the church who questioned or rejected his divinity.

\(^{23}\) Cf. Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 116-117. He points out that the title “Son of God” reflects Psalm 2:7 and “may be set against opposing religious claims or against a syncretistic attempt to equate the person of Christ with deities recognized by the city. . . The pretensions of the imperial cult were seen as a Satanic parody of the realities in Christ.”

\(^{24}\) Kistemaker, 136, writes: “Into Jesus’ holy presence nothing sinful can enter . . . With his eyes of flaming fire he dispels darkness and burns away impurities.”
(2) **The Amen.** In Rev 3:14 Jesus introduces himself as the “Amen.” John may have in mind the Hebrew text of Isa 65:16, in which God is made known as the “God of Amen.” Amen stresses the faithfulness and truthfulness of God. Jesus guarantees the reliability of all that he has proclaimed.  

(3) **The Beginning of God’s Creation.** The designation “the beginning (archē) of God’s creation” (Rev 3:14) can be understood differently. Archē can mean “beginning” (Luke 1:2), “beginner”/“origin”/“first cause” (Rev 21:6), “ruler”/“authority” (Luke 12:11), “rule” (1Cor 15:24), “domain”/“realm” (Jude 1:6), “principle” (Heb 5:12), and “corner” (Acts 10:11). In order to determine the right meaning the context must be consulted. The most important shades of meaning are “beginning” and “ruler.” In the Johannine literature the term appears 21 times and has–apart from Rev 3:14–always the meaning “beginning.” However, “beginning” can be understood actively or passively, namely “beginner” or “beginning.” In Rev 21:6 the term is applied to God the Father. God is “the beginning (archē) and the end.” That does not mean that God has a beginning but that he is the originator of all things. The same is true for Jesus who likewise is “the beginning (archē) and the end.” Rev 3:14 should be understood in this sense. Jesus is the beginner, the originator of God’s creation. This is confirmed in other texts of the NT. Jesus as creator (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:2) is God. He is also God because in Revelation archē...
is used in three places for God and Christ only, two of the three times even in the very same phrase (Rev 21:6; 22:13).

4. Jesus in the Hymns of the Seal Vision

The vision of the seven seals contains seven hymns which are directed to God the Father and the Son. Five hymns appear in the introductory scene to the seven seals (Rev 4 and 5). Two more are sung in Rev 7b, the eschatological description of the seal vision.

a. The Hymns of Rev 4-5

Two of the five hymns of the introductory scene are found in chapter 4 and three more in chapter 5. The first song occurs in Rev 4:8b: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” It is sung by the four living beings around God’s throne. After the four beings have presented the “holy” the elders worship God with a second hymn–Rev 4:11: “Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and because of your will they existed, and were created.” The third hymn is no longer addressed to God the Father but to the Lamb, Jesus the Lord. It is a new song being found in Rev 5:9-10. It is presented by the elders and possibly the cherubim: “Worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals; for you were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” The group of worshipers increases. Millions of angels join and sing with a loud voice–Rev 5:12: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” The fifth hymn is sounded by the entire creation and is directed toward God the Father and God the Son–Rev 5:13b: “To him who sits on the throne, and to

29 Bauckham, 56, states: “That a reference to Christ’s participation in God’s creation of all things is not out of place . . . is clear from 3:14, where the beginning of the message to the church at Laodicea calls him: ‘the origin (archē) of God’s creation.’ This does not mean that he was the first created being or that in his resurrection he was the beginning of God’s new creation. It must have the same sense as the first part of the title, ‘the beginning (archē) and the end,’ as used of both God (21:6) and Christ (22:13). Christ preceded all things as their source.”
the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”
What is left is to say Amen, prostrate oneself, and worship. This happens in
verse 14: “And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”

The five hymns consist of three groups. The first two are directed to God the Father, the next two to the Lamb, and the last to both God and the Lamb. The hymns have similarities, for instance, there are similarities between the second and the third hymns. Both employ the second person singular and start the same way: “Worthy are you.” The fourth also uses the adjective “worthy,” but it begins, “Worthy is the Lamb . . .” while the other hymns contain multiple praises of God or a declaration of the holiness of God, the second and the third provide an explanation of the fact that the Father and the Lamb are declared worthy.

The First Hymn (Rev 4:8).
As in Isaiah where the seraphim sing a threefold holy (Isa 6:3), so it is in the first hymn of Rev 4 the cherubim sing a threefold holy. Three designations of God are associated with the threefold holy. (1) God is the Lord, (2) the Almighty, (3) the one who was and is and is to come. Holy is God; he is the Lord. Holy is God, he is the Almighty who rules everything and everyone. Holy is God, he is without beginning and end.

The Second Hymn (Rev 4:11).
After the first hymn the cherubim had given “glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne, to him who lives forever and ever” (Rev 4:9). Two of these elements are also found in the second hymn, namely glory and honor. A new element is added so that the sum is three again. It is the term “power.” Then a reason for the praise is given. God is praised because he is the creator of all things and all beings. Nobody is similar to him and matches him. Praise, glory, thanks, and power are due to him. Rev 4 introduces God on his throne and in his splendor. He is worthy of worship, because he is the creator who has

---

30 The last designation of God again consists of three elements. In another song in Rev 11:17 the three elements are reduced to two, “. . . the one who is and was.” The reason may be that at that time God the Father may have come.
31 Cf. U. B. Müller, 147.
made everything well. The first hymn praises God because of his nature. The second praises him because of his work.

The Third Hymn (Rev 5:9-10). With the third hymn the person that is worshiped changes. In the place of God the Lamb is found. So John’s weeping “becomes praise and celebration.” While Rev 4 paints a relatively static picture, Rev 5 adds great dynamics. The issue of worthiness permeates this chapter. The worthiness of God the Father consists in being the creator. The worthiness of the Lamb consists in being the savior. This third song is called a new song. As important as creation is, salvation is a new, breathtaking, earth shaking event.

The Fourth Hymn (Rev 5:12). Once more the topic of salvation is stressed. In the third hymn reasons for the worthiness of the Lamb were given. The fourth hymn emphasizes the praise derived from Jesus’ initiative and activity. While the praise of the Father in Rev 4 consisted of three elements, the praise of the Son is increased to seven elements. The terms “glory,” “honor,” and “power” are found in both enumerations which

---


33 Johns, 170.

34 In Rev 5:2 an angel asks: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?” John notices that nobody in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open it, because nobody was worthy. However, one of the elders points to the Lamb, and when the Lamb appears and takes the book, the song is heard: “Worthy are you . . .” and again in verse 12, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain . . .”

35 (1) Jesus was slain–a clear reference to this sacrificial death on the cross. His absolute power and omniscience is complimented by his absolute self-sacrifice. (2) Jesus has purchased with his blood humans from all nations–again a clear hint to his suffering and death with which he has bought us and has set humans free. Therefore, he is the victor (vs. 5). (3) Jesus has made humans a kingdom and priests–a clear reference to the fact that because of his vicarious suffering and death the redeemed have achieved a new position before God. Cf. Alfred Wikenhauser, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, Regensburger Neues Testament (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1959), 57.

36 Wikenhauser, 57, thinks: “Daß gerade sieben Gaben aufgezählt werden, wird symbolische Bedeutung haben und die Fülle der himmlischen Herrlichkeit und Macht des Lammes bezeichnen.”
shows that the Son has the same attributes as the Father. The two cannot be separated. Both are being worshiped. The center of the worship of Rev 4 is God the Creator. The center of the worship in Rev 5 is Jesus the Savior.

The Fifth Hymn (Rev 5:13b). This hymn is sung by the entire creation. A fourfold praise is sounded. Again the elements “glory” and “praise” known from the second and fourth hymns occur. The term “blessing/praise,” the last element of the previous list, has now become the first. The hymns are interconnected. The reader notices also an immense crescendo in praise which finally involves all creation and the entire universe. Johns states that this scene “impels the reader to join in recognizing the Lamb’s victory.” But the worship of Father and Son clearly point out that the Son is God.

b. The Hymns of Rev 7

In Rev 7, which is part of the same major vision, two additional hymns appear. The first is directed to the Father and Son—Rev 7:10: “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” The second refers to God the Father only—Rev 7:12: “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

The First Hymn (Rev 7:10). In contradistinction to the hymns of Rev 4-5 in which the heavenly beings were involved, this song is presented by the great multitude, those finally saved who stand before the throne of God and the Lamb. They attribute their salvation to God the Father and Jesus. This praise, caused by the fact of their salvation, also points to the equality of God and Jesus.

The Second Hymn (Rev 7:12). The second hymn of Rev 7 containing a sevenfold praise of the Father corresponds with the sevenfold praise of the Son in Rev 5:12. Six of the seven elements overlap: blessing/praise

---

37 Johns, 169.
38 These are the 144,000. See above.
39 Cf. Nichol, 7:784. U. B. Müller, 181-182, points out that salvation is the eschatological victory gained through God and the Lamb. Important is the proclamation that this victory of God is already won.
40 Cf. U. B. Müller, 182. “Die Siebenzahl will wohl den nie endenden Lobpreis andeuten.”
(eulogia), glory (doxa), wisdom (sophia), honor (timē), power (dunamis) and might (ischus). “Riches” (ploutos) attributed to the Son is replaced with thanksgiving (eucharistia) in the list addressed to the Father.

c. Conclusions

Three of the seven hymns are directed to the Father, two to the Son, and two to both Father and Son. These hymns make it abundantly clear that Father and Son belong together and should not be separated. Both are honored as God either individually or together.41 The issue is clearly worship (Rev 5:14).42

Nevertheless, two times Revelation unequivocally reveals that worship is due to God only. When John, probably mistakenly, tries to worship another heavenly being, namely an angel, he is warned not to do this but to worship God (Rev 19:10; 22:9).43 However, in Revelation, Jesus is worshiped by heavenly and earthly beings, that is, by the entire creation. The conclusion is obvious, Jesus must be God. This result is affirmed by the same vocabulary being used for Father and Son in many places in the hymns. The hymns to God the Father and the Son and the worship associated with them clearly verify Christ’s divinity. Hoffmann writes:

. . . the entire construction of the hymnic parts in Apc 4 and 5, which has been demonstrated to be set highly in parallel, indicates that the author generally wished to put God and the Lamb on par. Equal status is ascribed to God and the Lamb . . . The Lamb is described in terms that make him appear to be close to God and function as his more active counterpart and representative.44

5. What Father and Son Share

In the Apocalypse the Father and Son share a number of things including the following:
(1) The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God and his Christ (Rev 11:15).

41 Cf. Lioy, 157.
44 Hoffmann, 167-168. Dunn, 987, observes “in Revelation, Christ is as much the object of worship as God (5:13, 7:10).”
(2) The temple of the New Jerusalem is God the Father and the Lamb (Rev 21:22).

(3) The glory of God and the Lamb illumine the city (Rev 21:23).

(4) The river of the water of life comes from the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev 22:1).

(5) God the Father and the Lamb share a throne (Rev 3:21; 22:3).

Interestingly enough, the mention of God the Father and the Lamb is in some cases followed by a personal pronoun in the singular. Two of the texts just mentioned belong to this category—Rev 11:15 and 22:3-4. “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). At first, two persons of the Godhead occur. Then the next phrase reduces the subject to a singular. Nevertheless, “he” in the second clause refers to both. This means that Jesus is God, but he is not a second God next to the first one. Father and Son form one deity. Jesus is included in the Godhead of the Father and yet is distinct from the Father. Therefore, John does not leave behind monotheism as affirmed in the OT and NT.

6. The Trinity

We have already indicated that right at the beginning of the Apocalypse the divine trinity is introduced. “... Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ . . .” (Rev 1:4-5). Throughout

45 Dunn, 987, observes: “More significant is the fact that the Lamb is also said to be ‘in the middle of the throne’ (5:6; 7:17), whereas elsewhere it is God who is described as ‘he who is seated on the throne’ (4:9–10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 21:5). The one throne is evidently shared by both God and the Lamb (22:1). . . Christ has not simply been exalted alongside God as a second divine power in heaven, but in the visionary imagery of the seer is somehow merged with God.”

46 Mounce, 226, holds that “the singular (‘he will reign’) emphasizes the unity of the joint sovereignty.” Kistemaker, 342, commenting on Rev 11:15 notes: “There is one kingdom, not two. There is one God, not two.”

47 Bauckham, 61, talks about “a rather sophisticated attempt to use language that includes Jesus in the eternal being of God without stepping outside the Jewish monotheism which for him was axiomatic . . . .” See Bauckham’s extensive discussion of this topic on pages 58-63.

48 The three divine beings are found next to each other, yet in a different way, e.g., in Rev 2:7, 26-29; 3:5-6, 12-13, 21-22.
Revelation the one “who was and is and is to come” describes God the Father. Sometimes “was” and “is” are reversed. Sometimes “is to come” is missing. But in the five places in Revelation where this formulation is employed it clearly refers to God.\(^49\)

The “seven spirits before his throne” is a description of the Holy Spirit who under this designation appears in Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6. In other places the Holy Spirit is called “Spirit” only.\(^50\) It is remarkable that there is not only a close relationship between Jesus and the Father but also between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the statements about the Holy Spirit found in Jesus’ farewell speeches (John 14-16) indirectly reflect the situation in Revelation. In Rev 5:6 the Lamb is linked to the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ messages to the seven churches are at the same time messages of the Holy Spirit (Rev 2-3). They are also messages for all those willing to listen.

Consequently, Revelation is convinced of the trinity in which Jesus is included. In the center of the book, this divine trinity is confronted with the satanic trinity. To this topic we now turn.

7. The Imitation of Jesus

In the Apocalypse positive powers are often contrasted with negative powers. There are imitations and parodies of entities related to God. The true church of Rev 12 is contrasted with the harlot of Rev 17. The beloved and holy city finds its counterpart in the great city Babylon. The divine trinity of Rev 1:4-5 is imitated by the satanic trinity of Rev 12 and 13 consisting of the dragon, the sea beast, and the beast coming out of the earth. The sea beast of Rev 13 is a parody of the Lamb, Jesus.\(^51\) But it does

\(^{49}\) Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5.

\(^{50}\) E.g., in Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 22:17. Bauckham, 109, writes: “References to the Spirit fall into two major categories: those which refer to ‘the seven Spirits’ and those which refer to ‘the Spirit’. . . . The four references to the sevenfold Spirit correspond to the seven occurrences of the fourfold phrase which designates all the people of the earth (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). They also correspond to the 28 (7x4) references to the Lamb, which . . . indicate the worldwide scope of the Lamb’s victory. The seven Spirits are closely associated with the victorious Lamb (5:6).” See also page 110.

\(^{51}\) The dragon who empowers the sea beast and may appear again in Rev 17 under the symbol of the scarlet beast is a parody of God the Father. The scarlet beast which was and is not and comes out of the abyss and goes to destruction (Rev 17:8) attempts to be like God the Father who was and is and is to come, however, it fails. The beast from the earth is a parody of the Holy Spirit. For instance, the fire falling from heaven (Rev 13:13) may point
not only try to imitate the humanity of Christ but desires his divine privileges. It craves the worship of all humanity (Rev 13:4, 8), although the Apocalypse is very clear about the fact that only God may be worshiped (Rev 19:10; 22:9), emphasizing the validity of the first and second commandments of the Decalogue. The following table compares Jesus with his parody, the sea beast.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus</th>
<th>Sea Beast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lamb looks as though it had been slaughtered (Rev 5:6, 12).</td>
<td>One of the heads of the sea beast looks as if it had been slaughtered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rev 13:3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus has come to life (Rev 2:8; 1:18).</td>
<td>The sea beast has come to life (Rev 13:14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God the Father granted Jesus authority and participation in his throne (Rev 2:27; 3:21). There is a close connection between God the Father and Jesus.</td>
<td>The dragon gives his throne to the sea beast (Rev 13:2). There is a close connection between the dragon and the sea beast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus has power and authority (Rev 12:10).</td>
<td>The dragon gives his power and authority to the beast. The followers of the sea beast attribute to it extensive power (Rev 13:4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus is worshiped by heavenly beings and by the entire creation (Rev 5:9-14).</td>
<td>The beast receives worship from those who dwell on earth (Rev 13:4; 12).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

to a false Pentecost experience which is in contrast to the real Pentecost initiated by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Bauckham, 114, holds that the beast from the earth corresponds to the two witnesses of Rev 11 rather than the “seven spirits” directly.

Thus, in Revelation Christ is contrasted with the antichrist. Humanity is called to make a decision between these two powers. This is not always easy, because the beast uses deception and is quite successful. The lie of the antichrist is therefore contrasted with the faithfulness and truthfulness of Christ. Jesus is the truth. At the very end of time only two groups will exist, and people have to make a decision between these two alternatives.

A life and death battle between Christ and the antichrist as well as their followers is waging which will intensify the longer it lasts. John predicts its outcome. In this battle the beast and its followers will use force and violence. The followers of the lamb will suffer and will be patient. At the end the Lamb and his people will triumph, as Jesus through suffering triumphed on the cross. Finally, all evil will be destroyed.

8. Implications

The divinity of Jesus is clearly emphasized in John’s Apocalypse. It is not an academic question only but affects Christian doctrine and life. The divinity of Christ and the concept of the Trinity are closely linked to other biblical doctrines. To give up one creates problems with other biblical doctrines, for instance, (1) problems with salvation, the plan of redemption, and the love of God, (2) problems with the self-sufficiency of God, (3) problems with the great controversy theme, (4) problems with our relation to God. If, for example, God would have offered his best creature as a sacrifice for lost humanity, yet not himself in the person of Jesus Christ, humans, angels, and the universe might still question his love. But in giving his Son the Father gave himself because the Son together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is the one and only God. Understanding the nature of Jesus helps to accept him as Savior and Lord and grasps some aspects of the Godhead and the concept of the Trinity.

Erickson stresses other significant implications of the doctrine of Christ’s deity not only for Christians, but also for humanity as a whole:

1. We can have real knowledge of God . . . .
2. Redemption is available to us. The death of Christ is sufficient for all sinners who have ever lived, for it was not merely a finite human, but an infinite God who died . . . .
3. God and humanity have been reunited. It was not an angel or a human who came from God to the human race, but God himself crossed the chasm created by sin.
4. Worship of Christ is appropriate. He is not merely the highest of the creatures, but he is God in the same sense and to the same degree as the Father. He is as deserving of our praise, adoration, and obedience as is the Father. 53

The book of Revelation makes an important contribution to biblical theology by emphasizing the divinity of Jesus. Although this concept is found in the Gospels and letters of the NT, Revelation stresses certain aspects such as worship of Jesus in a unique way pointing not only to the fact that Jesus should be and will be worshiped but also that there will be a counter worship and that a decision has to be made by all humans whether to worship the true God or evil powers. Ultimately, the issue of Christ’s divinity becomes a question of humanity’s loyalty to God.

Ekkehardt Mueller (Müller) is deputy director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists where he has served for the last 13 years. He holds a Th.D. in exegesis and theology and a D.Min. from Andrews University. Before coming to Silver Spring, MD, he has served as the director of the education department and as ministerial secretary of the South German Union and as ministerial secretary of the Euro-Africa Division, being heavily involved in continuing education for pastors.

53 Erickson, 720.
The Emerging Church
Part 1: Historical Background

Fernando Canale
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Anglican theologian Alister McGrath describes Protestantism as a “living entity whose identity mutates over time.” “In biological mutation—explains McGrath—, small changes in genetic codes lead to the emergence of new forms.” Postmodernity has brought about deep epochal changes in Western culture and philosophy. These changes reached evangelical circles during the last twenty years generating a number of responses. One of them, the “emerging church” movement is gaining momentum, attention, and influence. Justin Taylor thinks that it involves a “significant shift” in some segments of evangelicalism. The leadership of the Evangelical coalition and the future of the Protestant Reformation may be at stake.

What are the extent and nature of the changes taking place in the emerging Church movement? Moreover, does the emerging church movement represent a minor evolutionary mutation in the history of

---

2 Ibid., 461.
4 Rick Warren seems to assume the Emerging Church is a minor mutation in the practical areas of ministry and worship. “The only way to stay relevant is to anchor your ministry to unchanging truths and eternal purposes while being willing to continually adapt
Evangelicalism or the emergence of a new macro evolutionary form? To answer these questions provisionally we need to keep in mind a brief outline of the Protestant theological experience (part 1), to gain a working knowledge of the present situation in American Evangelicalism (part 2), to become acquainted with a brief sample of “neo-Evangelical” reactions to the changes taking place within the leadership of the Evangelical movement (part 3), to explore the philosophical foundations and levels of these changes (part 4), and to consider the way in which the present situation relates to the future of the Protestant Reformation (part 5).

The goal of this article is to highlight some important theological aspects of the Evangelical experience that may help us to better understand and evaluate the present situation and envision the future. My focus, then, is theological rather than historical. There are many and extensive studies on the basic facts involved in the theological and historical evolution of Protestantism and Evangelicalism. By necessity, any attempt to deal with broad issues briefly will distort and “caricature” them. Caricatures select and overemphasize some features of the reality they represent to make a point. When they are close to reality, caricatures help to communicate general points quickly and clearly. In theology, we rather speak of “models” than “caricatures.” Yet, my limited goal in this article requires less than what a model usually involves in Systematic theology.


David Tracy explains that “a widely accepted dictum in contemporary theology is the need to develop certain basic models or types for understanding the specific task of the contemporary theologian,” David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 22. For further literature on models, see, e.g., Frederick Ferre, Language, Logic and God (New York: Scribners, 1958). Ian Ramsey, Models and Mystery (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), and Christian Discourse (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).
European Protestantism

The history of genetic mutations from which American Evangelicalism springs is complex. As we attempt to describe and assess the nature and span of change Evangelicalism presently experiences in the emerging Church phenomenon, we should keep in mind some of significant earlier mutations.

Greatly simplifying a highly complex reality for the sake of providing a quick historical background to contemporary events, we could say that the Protestant experiment started in Europe with the master minds of the Reformation, Luther (1517), Calvin (1536), and the Radical Reformers (1521). Luther generated a revolutionary idea; Calvin developed the idea into a system; and, the Radical Reformers anticipated the complexity and fragmentation of Protestantism and the roles that Scripture and laity will play in the evolution of the movement.

Eventually “state” churches emerged from the reform movement (1560’s and 1570’s). Confessionalization is the interlocking of “religious beliefs and practices with the objectives of the state.” In the process of organization, Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinistic) communities “defined...
themselves by explicit and extensive doctrinal formulations. Thus, doctrinal and organizational lines were drawn. In England, Anglicanism (1520’s and 1530’s), and, Puritanism (1558) advanced different visions of the Protestant Reformation. Anglicanism, while remaining closer to tradition, attempted to purify the organizational and moral excesses of Roman Catholicism drawing from both Luther and Calvin’s ideas. Following Scripture more closely, Puritanism attempted a more deep and extensive reformation of Christianity following the Calvinistic model from Geneva.

After the thirty years war (1618-1648), an exhausted Europe needed a break from religious debate and reformation. As a secular culture of tolerant rationalism emerged with modernity, religious commitment and church attendance greatly diminished. In this new cultural climate, Protestant renewal and adaptation brought about Pietism (1675). Nikolaus Ludwig Graf Zinzendorf’s (1700-1760) pietistic ideas influenced John Wesley’s (1703-1791) emphasis on the role of experience in the Christian life.

\[\text{Ibid.}, 103.\]

\[\text{10 For a brief introduction to the general differences between Anglican and Puritans, see for instance, D. A. Carson,}\ \text{Worship: Adoration and Action,}\ \text{electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 147-48.}\]

\[\text{11 McGrath,}\ \text{Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution–A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First: 146-47.}\]
American Protestantism

All these ideas and religious practices crossed the Atlantic and populated the fertile soil of early American settling creating, in turn, new developments centering around epoch changing events such as, for instance, the first (1720-1750) and second (1800-1850) Great Awakenings. With the passing of time, the complexity and options of religious practices increased. Centrifugal forces overpowered centripetal ones. To overcome the disadvantages of theological and ecclesiological fragmentation, American Protestant denominations began to cooperate in specific projects, like for instance, missionary outreach and the translation of Scriptures to foreign languages. American Evangelicalism is a coalition of protestant denominations that attempt to overcome their fragmentation by working together in theological and practical tasks.

As Protestantism, American Evangelicalism is a varied, multifaceted, and complex phenomenon that defies neat descriptions and definitions. Moreover, the term “Evangelicalism” may describe historical, doctrinal, and pastoral referents. Historically, it may refer to the sector of American Protestantism influenced by the two Great Awakenings and the Baptist and Methodist denominations strengthened by them. Doctrinally, it may refer to a theological summary of beliefs shared by various denominations. Pastorally, it may refer to a coalition of denominations working for a common cause. In this article, I use the term “Evangelicalism” in a general and inclusive sense to describe the center of American Protestantism during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

---


14 Alister McGrath express it well, Protestantism came into existence as a diverse entity by a multiplicity of driving agendas, cultural contexts, intellectual resources, and directing visions. There is no question of a ‘lost primal unity’ of Protestantism, a golden age of unity that quickly shattered into fragments. Its multiple geographical, cultural, and historical origins made Protestantism diverse from the beginning. McGrath, Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution– History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First: 463.

**Modern Protestant Theology**

After the thirty years war, emerging philosophical trends began to recast the intellectual landscape of European civilization. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Descartes, 1596-1650), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), and John Locke (1632-1704), among others, spear headed a relentless attack on the epistemological foundations of classical philosophy and science opening the way for the emergence of the Modern Age. In various ways, the new age would shake the foundations of Christianity. One of these ways was the rise of the Historical Critical Method based on the claim that Scripture is not an inspired book advanced by philosophers like Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) and John Locke (1632–1704).

More than a century later, Protestant theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernest Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the Father of Modern Protestant Theology, thought that the solution to the epistemological problem presented by Modernity was to accept its premises and readjust theological construction to the new situation. Drawing from his Pietistic tradition Schleiermacher argued that God reveals himself through feeling rather than reason. On this basis, Schleiermacher went on to articulate a system of the Christian Faith that became a solid alternative to the reigning Calvinistic system. Although both systems were Christian, they advanced widely different interpretations of doctrines, life, and ecclesiastical practices. Soon, modern scientific ideas went on to challenge biblical cosmology by means of the evolutionary theory.

---


Fundamentalism

Not surprisingly, leaders of American Protestantism reacted differently to the new scientific ideas and the modernistic approach to theology championed by Schleiermacher. Since the new ideas appealed to intellectuals, they reacted to them first. For various and different reasons, some found the changes in the foundations of Christianity advanced by modernity convincing, others did not. Progressively, some theology professors and Seminaries adjusted to the new ideas, others became critical of them.

During the nineteen century, theologians from the Old Princeton Theological Seminary understood that the acceptance of modern epistemology and cosmology were incompatible with traditional Biblical Protestantism. Acceptance of the Historical Critical Method of Biblical interpretation, Schleiermacher’s theological system, and evolutionary theory, represented a challenge to the foundations of Biblical Protestantism. As the heir to prestigious Old Princeton theologians Archibald Alexander (1772-1851) and Charles Hodge (1797-1878), Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921), used their Calvinistic heritage to defend and reaffirm the classical understanding of Reformed Protestantism against the challenges of modern science and theology. Kevin J. Vanhoozer reminds us “Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield laid the groundwork for conservative evangelical theology.”

---

21 “Princeton Theology began at Princeton Seminary in the work of Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge and was continued by Alexander Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and J. Gresham Machen. In their efforts to defend Calvinism and with it the orthodox doctrines of Christianity, the Princeton Theologians developed a system of doctrines grounded in reason and biblical inerrancy. Thus they stressed the importance of reason in authenticating Christian faith and the need for an inerrant text which revealed ultimate divine truth. The Princeton Theologians made biblical inerrancy one of the cardinal doctrines of Fundamentalism. Their theories regarding verbal inspiration, textual inerrancy, and the sanctity of the original manuscripts became prominent elements of the movement.” Leonard, “The Origin and Character of Fundamentalism,” 7-8.
At the turn of the twentieth century, two very different events were brewing in American Protestantism. On the intellectual front, German Biblical criticism inspired by modern philosophical ideas was eroding the authority of Scripture at the seminaries. The former led to the rise of the Fundamentalist movement that defended the authority of the historical meaning of Scripture. The latter led to the rise of the Charismatic movement that produced a revival in church attendance across denominational lines.

In time, modern ideas and the modern reinterpretations of Christian theology reached popular culture and challenged ministerial practice. This gave rise to what we know now as “Fundamentalism.” As with the words “Protestantism” and “Evangelicalism,” “Fundamentalism” also has a broad range of meanings and different referents. For instance, it can refer to any anti-intellectual, absolutist, and authoritarian position of any kind. It can also refer to any religion in general, and to a particular period in the history of American Evangelicalism. In this article, I use the word “Fundamentalism” to refer to the mutation of American Protestantism that evolved during the first half of the twentieth century.

Some trace the origins of the “Fundamentalist” version of American Evangelicalism to the “Niagara Creed” in 1878. A common enemy, modern culture and modern theologies united a diverse theological spectrum that included millenarians and advocates of Old Princeton theology. Among the 14 affirmations included in the Niagara Creed, five became influential talking points against modernity: biblical

---

24 Ibid., 416-17.
inerrancy, the deity and virgin birth of Christ, Christ's substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection, and the second coming. This action revealed a common modus operandi. Instead of arguing against modernity or showing the shortcomings of modern theology from solid biblical thinking, fundamentalists “contended that the Bible, Christian doctrine, and Christian experience did not need to be redefined in light of the scientific, philosophical, and literary assumptions of modern culture, but rather reaffirmed as the only legitimate challenge to its arrogance. Ironically, according to some, Fundamentalism eventually led to a new version of American Evangelicalism.

Two events became emblematic of the Fundamentalist movement, the publication of The Fundamentals between 1910 and 1915, and the “Scopes Monkey Trial” in 1925. The former, a theological initiative, “defended conservative evangelical Christianity” and the later, a cultural event, produced anti-Darwinian legislation in Tennessee. Because of the theological controversy, several Protestant denominations split up into Fundamentalist and Modernist wings. Because the media in the Scopes monkey trial “labeled theological conservatives as reactionary and anti-intellectual” Evangelicals sought to distance themselves from the “Fundamentalism” label.

31 “[The fundamentalist agenda provided for a theological system which aided the faithful in sorting out the more sophisticated theological issues of the “modern” era. From biblicism to premillennialism, from christology to eschatology, fundamentalists gave the believers a basic and easily constructed system of belief. The security of such a system then and now accounts for much of the popular response to the movement.” Leonard, “The Origin and Character of Fundamentalism.”
32 See note 25.
In short, Fundamentalism came into existence as a response to the challenges Modernity leveled against Christianity in general and conservative Protestantism in particular. There was no new light from Scripture, spiritual revival, or systematical understanding behind it. By its origin and nature, Fundamentalism was an apologetical movement.  

### Neo-Evangelicalism

Several factors led to dissatisfaction with Evangelical Fundamentalism, among them for instance, the fact that much of it was “populist, ignorant, and hostile to intellectual theology,” and brought in isolationism from culture and withdrawal from the mainstream culture of America. By the mid-1940s, “a number of influential thinkers emerged within fundamentalist ranks that sought a corrective to what they perceived as an increasing social and intellectual narrowness in the movement.” Out of this restlessness emerged the Neo-evangelical movement under the initial leadership of E. J. Carnell, Harold Ockenga, and Carl F. H. Henry.

---

37 “Fundamentalism,” which originated in the United States, had from the beginning a very defensive character, since it considered its calling to be a defense against every liberal and modernistic criticism of Christian tenets (for example, those tenets regarding creation and evolution). Fundamentalists wished to defend the “fundamentals,” the objectivity of faith and the central truths of Christianity based on the absolute infallibility and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture.” G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, trans. Jack Rogers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 21.

38 Throughout the history of fundamentalism, several factors facilitated the cartoon genre of its public image. Its submission to the authority of Scripture in opposition to the antiauthoritarianism of the naturalistic scholarship of the post-Darwinian era has made it appear hopelessly out of touch with reality. Its relentless evangelism has brought in masses of people who gladly support strong personalities who appear to have deeply felt, biblically founded convictions. Personal idiosyncrasies, internal feuds, an increasingly narrow moralistic focus, and appeal to the masses have provided a large arena for caricature by the critics of fundamentalism. People like J. Frank Norris, Billy Sunday, and John R. Rice provided energetic leadership and appealed to a large segment of conservative Christians, but also presented an acute profile easily highlighted in comic-strip colors.” Nettles, “Fundamentalism,” 306.


They sought to reform Fundamentalism in the areas of scholarship, apologetics, and its social dimension. Yet, the new Evangelicals continued to fight against the neo-orthodox view of Scripture and the modernist theological system of Schleiermacher. Neo-evangelicals also distanced themselves from Fundamentalism by their social outreach and ecumenical engagement. While Fuller Theological Seminary embraced the reform and became the leading institution of neo-evangelicalism, Christianity Today came to be its unofficial voice.

The Neo-evangelical movement’s deep historical roots go back to the middle of the nineteenth century. On the heels of the second Great Awakening in America, when Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were debating their ideas and Charles Darwin was developing his evolutionary theory, Protestant evangelicals in Europe felt a growing desire to demonstrate spiritual unity. In 1846, this sentiment led eight hundred leaders from fifty-two Christian bodies in eight nations to convene in London and organize the World Evangelical Alliance. The aim of this organization with a strong Pietistic orientation was primarily ecumenical based on a non-authoritative and incomplete statement of beliefs.

---

46 “That the parties composing the Alliance shall be such persons only as hold and maintain what are usually understood to be evangelical views, in regard to the matters of doctrine understated, viz: 1. The Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. 2. The right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. 3. The Unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of Persons therein. 4. The utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall. 5. The incarnation of the Son of God, his work of atonement for sinners of mankind, and his mediatorial intercession and reign. 6. The justification of the sinner by faith alone. 7. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner. 8. The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. 9. The Divine institution of the Christian ministry, and the obligation and perpetuity of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” Howard, *The Dream that Would not Die: The Birth and Growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship 1846-1986*: 11.
Over a century later at the Woudschoten Convention in Holland, an international group of Evangelical leaders organized the World Evangelical Fellowship (1951) as an intra-evangelical ecumenical alternative to the World Council of Churches (1948). John Stott, renowned Anglican minister, helped in redacting the clearly ecumenical aims of the World Evangelical Fellowship: the furtherance, defense, and confirmation of the Gospel; and fellowship in the Gospel. Its doctrinal basis followed the same lines earlier adopted by the World Evangelical Alliance. Not surprisingly, there was little difference between Neo-evangelicals and Fundamentalists in the area of theology. Theological debate on traditional unresolved issues continued.

However, the conviction that Protestants should relate to scientific teachings challenging Evangelical doctrines and practices not by

---

47 “An International Evangelical Convention of Churches met at the Woudschoten a student retreat hostel near Zeist in the Netherlands, on 5–11 August 1951. 91 delegates, visitors, and observers from 21 countries gathered for that week in a spirit of expectancy and hope.” Ibid., 29.
48 Ibid., 31.
49 “The statement of faith included in the constitution was as follows: ‘We believe in the Holy Scriptures as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. . . One God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . . Our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His personal return in power and glory. . . The Salvation of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. . . the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ. . . The Unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ. . . The Resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of Damnation.’ (Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL; accession #67–17, Box 20, Summary of the International Conference at Woudschoten, Holland, Aug. 4–10, 1951, unpublished minutes). It is worthy of note that this doctrinal statement has remained unchanged since 1951 and today is, word for word, the doctrinal statement of the World Evangelical Fellowship.” Ibid.
51 Hart, The Dictionary of Historical Theology, 198.
ignoring them but by engaging them intellectually was growing among evangelical intellectuals. Eventually, it became the watershed distinguishing Neo-evangelicals from Fundamentalists. Progressively embracing their evangelical doctrinal, theological, and ecumenical traditions, Neo-evangelicals engaged Modernity in areas such as social responsibility, ecclesiology, science, Scripture, and theology.

In society, Neo-evangelicals engaged culture by pursuing the social application of the gospel. In ecclesiology, they faced Modernity from within their seminaries, churches, and mission organizations. In science, they moved from recent creationism to embrace the deep time of evolutionary history. In Scripture, they moved from full inerrancy and use of the historical critical method. Arguably, with the passing of time, more evangelicals sided with Bernard Ramm’s (1916-1992) than with Carl Henry’s (1913-2003) vision of evangelicalism. These were the hot issues at the time.

However, not all Neo-evangelicals were happy with the new trends described above. In theological circles, controversy over biblical inerrancy arose and continues in the twenty-first century. This controversy takes place within evangelical institutions and seminaries. Norman Geisler, for instance, thinks that the new evangelical

---

54 Ibid., 4: 162-200.
56 “As documented in Harold Lindsell’s book *The Battle for the Bible*, Fuller Seminary has been a leader in the move to a neo-evangelical view of Scripture. The movement began in the 1960s when the faculty split over the inerrancy of the Bible, after the school eliminated it from its doctrinal position. Those who opposed this move left the seminary, including notable evangelicals such as Harold Lindsell, Carl Henry, Charles Woodbridge, Wilbur Smith, and Gleason Archer. The movement against inerrancy was championed by Daniel Fuller, George Ladd, Paul Jewett, and the president of the seminary, David Hubbard. The most significant work defending the neo-evangelical view was subsequently produced by faculty member Jack Rogers, titled *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*.” Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005), 1: 394.
accommodation to the historical critical method’s demands is a “deviation from the longstanding evangelical teaching on Scripture.”

In the midst of theological controversy, Protestant historical orthodoxy continued unchanged.

Overall, in the practice of ministry there was little change. Early enthusiasm stirred by Billy Graham’s evangelistic campaigns in the 50’s and 60’s diminished with the passing of time and the secularization of American society. Fundamentalism survived in the ethos of evangelical ministry, with some describing this phenomenon as “Neo-fundamentalism.” Thus, while Evangelical theologians faced challenges springing from modern science, Evangelical ministers faced challenges springing from modern culture. Apparently, Evangelical theology and ministerial practice faced the same enemy, Modernity, without much interdisciplinary cooperation.

By the middle of the twentieth century, deep philosophical and cultural changes emerged in western culture triggered by the first (1914-1918) and second (1939-1945) World Wars. As the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Europe diminished the authority of Christian faith as a trusted guide for civilization and ushered in the Modern age of reason, the two World Wars produced a loss of trust in reason and human institutions paving the way for the Post-modern age of individual and communitarian freedom. Existentialism in Europe (40’s and 50’s), and,

---

57 Ibid., 1: 388.
58 “The neo-evangelical label on people, schools, or organizations meant disassociation; thus, neo-fundamentalists refused to cooperate with Billy Graham in his evangelistic campaigns, rejected the journal Christianity Today, and excoriated schools like Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary for inviting certain evangelical speakers. Other writers have identified the neo-fundamentalist movement with fundamentalist leaders like Jerry Falwell, Tim La Haye, Hal Lindsey, and Pat Robertson. These leaders have spoken out publicly Neo-fundamentalism may be identified as the modern movement that, while holding to the historic fundamental doctrines of Scripture, has evolved into a movement with different emphases and perspectives. Neofundamentalism has remained true to the historic doctrines of the Christian faith, steadfastly defending those doctrines in pulpits and classrooms. However, although historic fundamentalism has fielded intellectual giants like Robert Dick Wilson, W. H. Griffith Thomas, Bishop J. C. Ryle, J. Gresham Machen, and many others, neo-fundamentalism has tended to reject intellectualism and seminary training.” Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology: 619-20.
the Hippy movement in America (60’s and 70’s) emphasized individual freedom and became forerunners of post-modernity. Evangelical ministers now faced the impact of modern secular culture with its materialism, individualism, and subjectivism in their own churches. As always, the new ideas reached first and transformed faster the younger generations.

By the same time, Protestantism was experiencing epochal changes as well. After the Second World War, Pentecostalism had “overtaken most of the mainline denominations that dominated the American religious landscape from 1800-1950.” The Charismatic renewal of Evangelicalism “has led to new informal worship styles, an explosion in “worship songs,” a new concern for the dynamics of worship, and an increasing dislike of the traditionalism of formal liturgical worship.”

---

60 “At the same time another element emerged. The hippie movement cried out for absolute, autonomous freedom. They stood, whether consciously or not, in the stream of Rousseau, Thoreau, the Bohemian life and hedonism. Any authority was met with the cry of ‘fascist’ or ‘Cossack.’ In their definition a fascist or Cossack included anybody who suggested any restraint on freedom of the individual. Basically, with these students the rebellion was apolitical. The hippies simply dropped out of society, literally doing nothing much one way or another for or against society. They just opted out.” Francis A. Schaeffer, The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, 5 vols. (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 4: 1. 2.

61 McGrath, Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution–A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First: 418.

62 “The term ‘charismatic movement’ was coined by H. Bredesen and J. Stone in 1963 to designate what was at first called neo-Pentecostalism, that is, the occurrence of Pentecostal-type blessing within the historic Protestant denominations. This was the general connotation of ‘charismatic movement’ in the mid-1960s. By the late 1960s, however, there were independent groups and ministries, often calling themselves nondenominational, that identified more with the charismatic movement than with Pentecostalism per se. These nondenominational currents, which spread in the 1970s and mushroomed in the 1980s, are now generally recognized as part of the overall charismatic movement, in which we may distinguish three major strands: (1) charismatic renewal in the historic Protestant churches (from the 1950s); (2) charismatic renewal in the Roman Catholic Church (from 1967); (3) charismatic renewal in the independent sector (from the late 1960s).” Peter Hocken, “Charismatic Movement,” in The Encyclopedia of Christianity, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Eerdmans; Brill, 1999–2003), 1: 404. For a brief historical outline of the Charismatic movement see, for instance, James P. Eckman, Exploring Church History (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 97–98.

Yet, we find the distinctiveness of the Charismatic renewal not in the styles, but in the nature of worship that calls for them. Worship, according to Charismatism, is the “immediate encounter with God through the Holy Spirit and the ensuing transformation of the individuals.”\(^{64}\) External miraculous manifestations in worship proved an irresistible attraction for many, including the unlearned, materialistic, secularized, and rationalistically minded. Direct access to God, unmediated by priest, pastor, church, doctrine, or creed was available just by going to church. As Alister McGrath correctly underlies, this phenomenon implied the need of a lot of rethinking in Christian theology and practices.\(^{65}\)

In time, Neo-evangelical pastors discovered that while biblical preaching and orthodox doctrine did not increase church attendance, Charismatic worship did. This discovery paved the way to a pragmatic use of worship styles to reach secular minded people\(^{66}\) led by Bill Hybels of Willow Creek (1975-2000).\(^{67}\)

As the end of the twentieth century drew near, in the midst of these vertiginous changes culture was eclipsing Scripture in Evangelicalism; the changes were almost unnoticed, yet not quite. In 1984 Francis Schaeffer mused,

There is a growing acceptance of the neo-orthodox existential methodology. There is a growing infiltration of humanistic ideas into both theology and practice. There is a growing acceptance of pluralism

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 424.

\(^{65}\) “We see here a classical example of what the historian of science Thomas Kuhn famously described as a ‘paradigm shift’ in the development of the natural sciences—the emergence of new approaches when the capacity of older theories to account for new experiences and observations is seen to be defective.” Ibid.


While Schaeffer decried the surrender of Evangelical leaders in their battle against Modernity, Modernity was evolving into Post-modernism, perhaps the greatest philosophical and cultural mutation since Plato. In 1988, Roman Catholic Theologian Hans Küng announced to fellow theologians that the advent of a new age in western civilization was underway. “After the paradigm changes of the Reformation in the sixteenth century and of modernity in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, we experience, as I believe, at the end of the twentieth century, a new paradigm change to a ‘New Age’ that we tentatively call ‘postmodern.’” 69 Everything was about to change.

Conclusions

From the brief and partial description of some points in the long, complex, and variegated history of Protestantism, we can underline the following points because they may help us to better understand present developments at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

· Protestantism emerged from Scripture as a reform of the Roman Catholic Church and a serious challenge to culture. For a variety of reasons, the reformation of the Roman Catholic Church evolved outside of its walls.

· The Reformation achieved during the sixteenth century was incomplete and continued during the seventeenth century notably with Puritan theologians.

· The Reformation was fragmentary due to its incapability to develop a coherent theological system based on the sola Scriptura principle.

· Luther and Calvin developed a system of Protestant Theology using Roman Catholic philosophical foundations. This system provides the center for Evangelical unity in denominational diversity even in postmodern times.


Arguably, the development of the Protestant Reformation slowed down when Modern philosophy and science leveled serious challenges to the former’s biblical foundation.

The fact that Protestantism faced the challenges of Modernity by way of apologetics slowed down its development and distracted it from its evangelical mission. Moreover, Apologetics did not solve the intellectual problems that still stood unanswered confronting successive generations of evangelical intellectuals.

In the absence of intellectual answers to modern scientific and philosophical challenges to Scripture, Bible believing Neo-evangelical leaders have progressively accommodated Bible interpretations and teachings to the dictates of science and popular culture in the areas of theology, doctrines, ministry, and worship. In short, Neo-evangelicals faced secularization by adopting a modernistic neo-Orthodox view of Scripture and secularizing worship music and liturgy.

Springing from the Protestant heritage, the Charismatic renewal competes with Scripture and seems to divert Protestantism away from Scripture.

Post-modern culture and philosophy add new challenges to Protestantism.

After two centuries of gradually emerging from Scripture, Protestantism confronted challenges from science and culture during the last three centuries. Seemingly, the focus of the Protestant Reformation is switching progressively from Scripture to culture. Is the Protestant Reformation emerging from Scripture coming to an end?

Fernando Canale is Professor of Theology and Philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, where he has taught since 1985. Before coming to Andrews University, he was a pastor in Argentina and Uruguay and taught Philosophy and Theology at River Plate Adventist College in Argentina. canale@andrews.edu
1. Introduction

Adventism is changing and experiencing a crisis of identity and deep theological divisions. Although there are undoubtedly many causes behind the present situation, in this series of two articles, we have chosen to explore one: The eclipse of Scripture in the mind and action of the Church. The eclipse of Scripture is the blocking, covering, obscuring, hiding, concealing, veiling, shrouding, and darkening of the role and understanding of Scripture’s contents in the life, worship, spirituality, thinking, and acting of Adventist believers. The eclipse of Scripture is always partial. It starts with neglect of Bible study and proceeds to block the understanding of Scripture by the embrace of different cultural ways of thinking and interpreting Scripture.

The hypothesis we are exploring in this series, is that the eclipse of Scripture in Adventism stems, among other causes, from the process of protestantization of the Adventist mind. This process, in turn, stems from the conviction that Evangelical theology is correct because it flows from a consistent application of the sola-tota-prima Scriptura (Scripture only, in all its parts, and first). Consequently, Adventists feel free to adopt Evangelical theologies and ministerial practices in everything but in what relates to Adventist distinctives.
To support this hypothesis, we considered in the first article selected statements from *Questions on Doctrines*¹ and *Movement of Destiny*² that reveal how some influential Adventist leaders came to think of Adventism as an Evangelical denomination holding most Evangelical doctrines and differing only in a few Eschatological details. These Adventist leaders still held to the Sanctuary doctrine as the essential distinctive of Adventist uniqueness. However, they implicitly began to use the Gospel as the macro hermeneutical role for biblical interpretation, theological construction, and ministerial methodologies. This subtle and implicit shift in the macro hermeneutics of Adventist theological methodology becomes the basis of the protestantization of Adventism we experience in the twenty first century.

Slowly, the Evangelical theological understanding of the doctrine of Justification by Faith (the doctrine on which the Protestant Church stands or falls) replaced the doctrine of the Sanctuary as the macro hermeneutical vision from which early Adventists interpreted Scripture and thought theologically. This paradigm change at the very ground on which the Remnant Church stands or falls represents a stark turnabout from the experience of early Adventist pioneers who, dissatisfied with traditional Protestant theologies, decided to follow their own understanding of Scriptural truth, abandoning their evangelical denominations to become the remnant Church.

Officially as an institution, Adventist leaders continue to affirm biblical doctrines with their brains while Evangelical theologies and practices progressively shape their hearts and actions.³

³ “The legacy of Adventist evangelicalism proved to be experiential rather than doctrinal. The attention drawn to justification by faith allowed many Adventists to follow the spirit rather than the letter of the law. In consequence, the legalistic style of argumentation and behavior that had characterized Adventist fundamentalism eventually came to be confined to the self-defined-historical Adventists. For others, as Adventism moved into a fourth stage, there was a greater sense of spiritual freedom, often accompanied by a considerable relaxation of Adventist taboos and a more expressive style of worship.” Malcolm Bull, and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the*
In this article, I will explore the further protestantization of the Adventist mind at the scholarly and ministerial levels. I will look at (1) the Adventist engagement with scholarly research; and, (2) the ensuing move from doctrine to exegesis. Then, I will explore the protestantization of the Adventist mind at the ministerial level, by considering (3) the move from exegesis to the Evangelical ministerial paradigm.

2. Engaging the Scholarly World of Christian Tradition

When Adventists ventured in the halls of secular Universities and Evangelical Seminaries during the 1960's, their Adventist experience and self understanding was strongly influenced by the emerging protestantization of Adventism nurtured by *QOD*. As they faced millennia of unfamiliar theological thinking with their “brain” doctrines and evangelical minds, a sense of bewilderment overcame many young Adventists. For instance, in the early 70’s Jerry Gladson, then a Seventh-day Adventist believer, went to Vanderbilt University to pursue graduate studies in Old Testament. Like the ten faithless Israelites Moses sent to spy on the land of Canaan, Gladson understood Vanderbilt was a land of “theological” giants. He was not sure his “backwoods theology would be sufficient to slay the giant intellects” that inhabited Vanderbilt University. Unlike the ten spies, Gladson was ready to fight. “I saw in each professor a formidable adversary. In order to survive, I thought, I must be able intellectually to impale him upon the logic of my theological position.” Unfortunately, his theological background was not strong enough to stand against the historical critical method of exegesis. In the end, he became an ordained Evangelical minister in the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ. Seemingly, Gladson left Adventism because he lost an intellectual battle. Many in the church have lost the same battle or simply capitulated without fighting. They feel ill equipped to fight the intellectual giants of the land.

In earlier days, Adventist intellectuals concentrated their efforts in Chronological studies in order to provide a solid foundation for the

---

*American Dream*, 2 ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 106-07. The reader can observe turnabout of the Adventist mind first hand by browsing through the last 20 years of the *Adventist Review*.

historical interpretation of Daniel’s prophecies. When Adventists moved to the secular universities and faced Christian scholarly traditions, they purposely concentrated in exegesis and biblical studies, avoiding Systematic Theology because of its obvious non-biblical philosophical foundations. However, like Gladson, many found the historical critical method attractive and convincing, and employed it to find the meaning and truth of biblical texts.

In response to this trend, Adventism declared officially that Bible teachers should not use the historical critical method because of its naturalistic presuppositions.5 However, because Adventist scholars have not been able to replace the naturalistic assumptions they are supposed to avoid, the debate on the scholarly method of biblical exegesis stills goes on unabated, and many Adventist Bible teachers continue to use it as their tool of choice.

The historical critical method stands on the same multiplicity of sources interpretation of the material condition of theological method on which Roman Catholic and Evangelical theologies stand. Consequently, Adventists applying the historical critical method go a step further than QOD and MOD. While the latter did not change their unexpressed historical temporal ontological assumption,6 historical critical theologians implicitly assume the timeless non-historical ontological assumption on which Roman Catholic and Evangelical doctrines stand.7 As a result of the

---

5 The data in biblical exegesis are the texts of the Old and New Testaments. The goal is to understand them. However, where do the hermeneutical conditions or presuppositions come from? Some years ago, an official statement of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Annual Council addressing the issue of Bible study identified some of the presuppositions we carry to the task of biblical interpretation and that therefore form part of our method of biblical studies. This document affirms that (1) the divine inspiration of Scripture, 2) its authority over reason, and (3) the role of the Holy Spirit are necessary presuppositions arising from the claims of Scripture. The document only enumerates and outlines the content of these basic presuppositions without explaining how we get to know they are in fact presuppositions and arrive at their contents. General Conference Committee Annual Council, “Methods of Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles and Methods,” (Rio de Janeiro: Biblical Research Institute, 1986).

6 See the first article of this series, section 11.

7 Raúl Kerbs, “El Método Histórico-Crítico En Teología: En Búsqueda De Su Estructura Básica Y De Las Interpretaciones Filosóficas Subyacentes (Parte 1),” DavarLogos 1, no. 2 (2002); ______, “El Método Histórico-Crítico En Teología: En Búsqueda De Su Estructura Básica Y De Las Interpretaciones Filosóficas Subyacentes )Parte Ii,” DavarLogos 2, no. 1
application of the historical critical method of exegesis to the study of Scripture, the already experienced “brainy” and theoretical statements of Adventist distinctive doctrines found themselves without biblical foundations and exegetical support.

In some sectors of the Church, the combination of the QOD/MOD switch from the Sanctuary to the Evangelical Gospel with the progressive utilization of historical critical methodology led to the intensification of the protestantization of the Adventist mind and lifestyle. Desmond Ford revealed the consequences of this methodological combination. According to him, justification by faith and historical critical methodology leaves the Sanctuary doctrine groundless. Moreover, the application of the Evangelical understanding of the Gospel as the hermeneutical principle of theological method finds that the Sanctuary doctrine contradicts the view of a complete atonement in Christ. On this basis, Ford and many after him believe Adventists should recognize their error and reject the Sanctuary doctrine and the historical interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation.

As many Adventists become convinced that the Gospel and the historical critical method show the doctrinal distinctives of their church to

(2003).

8 Consider how Desmond Ford clearly embraced the Protestant concept of justification by faith and how it does contradict the Sanctuary doctrine. “He who accepts Christ the Saviour has God’s ultimate verdict concerning his destiny. Despite his sins, weaknesses, failures, he is without condemnation, accepted in the beloved, complete in Him, translated into the heavenly kingdom, and sealed with Christ in heavenly places. None can condemn him. None can take eternal life from him. Provided he trust wholly in Christ’s imputed merits, he cannot perish.” Desmond Ford, Daniel 8:14 the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgement (Casselberry, FL: Euangelion Press, 1980), 411. We can see here Ford falling into Evangelical self-contradiction. While the Gospel is God’s ultimate verdict concerning the believer’s destiny. This implies God will not change His verdict. Yet, Ford makes it conditional to continuous trust. If it is conditional, then it is not final. If it is final, then, it cannot be conditional. Finally, the reader should notice that according to Ford continuous trust is placed on Christ’s imputed merits, not on Christ Himself as divine person.

9 “Because we, as with all other Christians, have been entrusted with ‘the everlasting gospel,’ it is essential that nothing in our doctrinal presentation should compete or clash with that gospel. To even infer that Christ’s atoning work at Calvary was not complete but required another phase;” . . “is to imperil the blessed gospel, forget the warning of Jude 3 RSV, and invite the curse of Gal. 1:8.” Ibid., i.
be “erroneous” they can no longer accept Adventism as the remnant true visible church. For them, such a claim is groundless and a sign of institutional arrogance. They believe that Adventists are only one of many Evangelical denominations that make up the visible body of Christ, the Church.¹⁰

3. Responding to Ford’s Challenge from QOD’s Perspective
Since Desmond Ford’s explicit denial of the Adventist view of the Sanctuary as a biblical doctrine,¹¹ the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference and many scholars have given exegetical support to the biblical doctrine of the Sanctuary that now stands on a stronger biblical foundation and exegetical detail.¹² Yet, in the area of theological understanding and spiritual experience, Adventist leadership has not advanced far beyond QOD and MOD. Their efforts have shown that the Adventist doctrine of the Sanctuary is biblical. Yet, QOD’s challenge to the hermeneutical role of the sanctuary doctrine remains unanswered.

George Knight, a widely read and influential historian of Adventism, helps us to understand the way in which QOD and MOD continues to shape the theological thinking of conservative biblical Adventist thought leaders at the beginning of the twenty first century. Knight correctly reports that during the late 1840s Adventist thought “was a theology rather than a list

of discrete doctrines as QOD popularized.” Thus, Knight, implicitly recognizes the fact that Adventism originated from a systematic understanding of biblical theology. Yet, as QOD and MOD before him, Knight fails to observe and apply the macro hermeneutical role that the Sanctuary doctrine plays in the interpretation of Scripture and the construction of a sola-tota-prima Scriptura Systematic theology.

As QOD and MOD, Knight reports that Adventist doctrines divide into two clusters. In the first cluster, we find the “central pillar doctrines developed in the early years of Adventism” which loosely corresponds to Froom’s “separative doctrines.” The second absolutely central cluster in Adventist theology consists of a number of beliefs that Adventism shares with other Christians, such as the Godhead; the divine inspiration of the Bible; the problem of sin; the life, substitutionary death, and resurrection of Jesus; and the plan of salvation. The Minneapolis era began to highlight those truths. The close similarity to QOD and MOD is clear perhaps because Knight is reporting historical facts. Yet, since he presents these ideas in the last two pages of his book under the heading: “Lessons on Theological Essentials” one may understand the similarity between

14 “Adventist history demonstrates two essential clusters of truth that define what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. The first are the central pillar doctrines developed in the early years of Adventism: the seventh-day Sabbath, the Second Advent, the two-phase ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, conditional immortality, and the perpetuity of spiritual gifts (including the gift of prophecy) until the end of time. Those truths defined Sabbatarian Adventism and subsequently Seventh-day Adventism over against other Adventists and other Christians groups.” Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Belief, 203. See also George R. Knight, The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008), 13. While Knight views Adventism as an evangelical denomination with a prophetic message, The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism, 28; he does not endorse what I have called Evangelical Adventism. See, ———, The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism, 10; Canale, “From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part 1: Historical Review.”
15 Froom, Movement of Destiny, 35.
16 Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, 203.
Knight’s report and QOD to represent his personal theological position and the position he believes Adventists should embrace. Be that as it may, Knight still seems to follow QOD and MOD when he suggests that “the genius of Seventh-day Adventism does not lie so much in those doctrines that make it distinctive or in those beliefs that it shares with other Christians. Rather it is a combination of both sets of understandings within the framework of the great controversy theme found in the apocalyptic core of the book of Revelation running from Revelation 11:19 through the end of chapter 14.”17 Knight maintains, then, that Adventists teach Christian doctrines and the Gospel they share with Evangelicals (protestantization of Adventism) within the eschatological framework of the last days of earth history. Hence, an eschatological insight (the great controversy theology first worked out by Bates in the mid-1840s) is the doctrine “that distinguishes Seventh-day Adventists from other Adventists, other sabbatarians, and all other Christians.”18 Knight correctly observes that this eschatological understanding has driven Adventist missions around the world. “When that vision is lost, Seventh-day Adventism will have lost its genius. It will have become merely another somewhat harmless denomination with some rather peculiar doctrines instead of being a dynamic movement of prophecy.”19 Knight seems to agree and provide the doctrinal base for Provonsha’s proposal that Adventism is a “prophetic minority” within the visible church composed by all Evangelical denominations.20

Although Knight is aware that early Adventists “found the unifying focal point of their [systematic] theology in the apocalyptic core of the

17 Ibid., 203-04 (emphasis in the original).
18 “It is that prophetic insight [Revelation 11:19-14] that distinguishes Seventh-day Adventists from other Adventists, other sabbatarians, and all other Christians. The great controversy theology (first worked out by Bates in the mid-1840s) has led Seventh-day Adventism to see itself as a prophetic people. That understanding has driven Adventists to the far corners of the earth as they have sought to sound the messages of the three angels before the great harvest day. When that vision is lost, Seventh-day Adventism will have lost its genius. It will have become merely another somewhat harmless denomination with some rather peculiar doctrines instead of being a dynamic movement of prophecy.” Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Provonsha, A Remnant in Crisis, 49-60.
book of Revelation,” he suggests Adventists doctrines center around the cross of Christ. This suggestion seems to imply that in his mind the Evangelical interpretation of the Gospel (“eternal verities of Froom”) has implicitly replaced the sanctuary Doctrine as the macro hermeneutical condition of the Adventist theological method. Working from this implicit macro hermeneutics, some Adventists go a step further and believe with Ford that the interpretation of the Sanctuary and apocalyptic prophecies no longer is the key to interpret the Gospel, but rather, that the Gospel is the key to interpret apocalyptic prophecies. This shows how the protestantization of the Adventist mind continues to evolve in spite of doctrinal orthodoxy and the exegetical reaffirmation of the sanctuary doctrine by Adventist leaders and scholars.

21 According to Knight, early Adventists “found the unifying focal point of their [systematic] theology in the apocalyptic core of the book of Revelation. The passage running from Revelation 11:19 through 14:20 intertwined the Second Advent with an understanding of the opening of the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary and the eschatological importance of the Ten Commandments, especially the Sabbath. The various aspects of that theology did not exist as isola-tota-prima-ted units. To the contrary, it was a united whole with each aspect related to the others. The placement of their theology in the framework of the last great conflict between good and evil set forth in the heart of the book of Revelation gave it an urgency that eventually set the Sabbatarians upon an ever-expanding mission of warning the world.” Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Belief, 86.


24 Recently, a small representative group of Adventist leaders met with representatives of the World Evangelical Alliance. Following the pattern advanced by QOD and MOD, Adventists leaders agreed with Evangelicals on all major Christian doctrines. Differences revolve around our “distinctive doctrines”: the Sabbath, Sanctuary, and Spirit of Prophecy doctrines. “The participants were pleased to be able to ascertain an extensive commonality of belief and spirituality. Adventists can subscribe to the WEA Statement of Faith. (Document attached below). They fully accept the authority and supremacy of the Word of God, the Trinity, the divine and human natures of Christ, salvation by faith in Christ alone, the importance of prayer, personal conversion, and sanctification, and hold dear the blessed hope in the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the final judgment. There was agreement that there should never be any date-setting regarding the Second Advent.” This statement corroborates the protestantization of the Adventist mind in present worldwide Adventist leadership. World Evangelization Alliance and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Joint
The full protestantization of Adventism is taking place where “progressive Adventists” embrace modernity and its postmodern cultural relativism. This sector experiences the full Protestantization of Adventism as the way back from Scripture to Evangelical and Scientific traditions. From there, the way back to Rome is only a matter of time.


The original theological vision of the pioneers was never finished by succeeding generations of Adventists.25 With the passing of time, an early pragmatic missionary mind set in church leadership replaced the original theological drive of the first pioneers.26 The strong drive for theological understanding of the early pioneers and Ellen White seems to have withered after their deaths. A determination to baptize new converts replaced a passion for understanding God’s word. As a result, progressively new generations of Adventists received and transmitted a theoretical disconnected summary of denominationally sanctioned doctrines, a “head knowledge tradition” without the spirit of theological understanding on which Christianity stands.


26 This does not mean that doctrines or Bible study have disappeared from the Church. Since I am speaking about a “mind set” it is difficult, maybe even impossible, to prove this point with factual evidence. Moreover, we should not expect the “Adventist mind set” to be uniform around the world. Besides, the practical mind set will function differently in different levels of church activities (administration, ministry, education etc. . .). My contention flows mostly from about half a century of church experience. In my experience, I have found leaders discouraging in various ways Bible study and understanding, and promoting practical undertakings. As a pastor, I was encouraged to seek the Holy Spirit rather than biblical knowledge, in order to baptize as many as possible. In educational institutions, I found the notion that we should instruct seminary students more in practical than in biblical matters widely accepted. Very few feel the need to give attention to the theological development of the Church. Readers should judge this claim from the experiences and facts available to them.
The protestantization of the Adventist mind produced by the forgetfulness of the Sanctuary doctrine as a hermeneutical key to the Biblical system of Christian teachings (hermeneutical condition of method) led the denomination to further neglecting theological reflection and to work with general doctrinal statements (the Fundamental Beliefs).

The move from pastoral and administrative handling of Church doctrines to the study of their exegetical foundations at the scholarly level of research intensified the implicit and unspoken replacement of the sola-tota-prima Scriptura principle (material condition of theological method) with the multiplicity of sources.

Some may think these “theoretical” occurrences do not affect the unity and the mission of the Church. Although many leaders are aware of the issues we are dealing with in these articles, they seem to assume that theological problems do not affect sound ministerial practices. On the contrary, I suggest that the macro-hermeneutical moving away from the sanctuary doctrine and the ensuing eclipse of Scripture is changing the ministerial and missionary paradigm of Adventism around the world (teleological condition of theological methodology). Changes in the conditions of theological methodology necessarily bring changes in the thinking, lifestyle, administration, and mission of the Church. Briefly put, if with QOD and MOD administrators, teachers, and pastors believe that Evangelical and Adventist theologies are the same with the exception of a few “distinctives,” there is no reason why they will not freely borrow also their ministerial and missionary practices. I suggest to the reader that such borrowing is transforming the ministerial practices of the Church from a Biblical to a Charismatic paradigm. This change is currently intensifying

---

27 In this article, I use the word “paradigm” in the sense of a broad constellation of principles operative in the life (thinking and action) of a community. The paradigm applies primarily to the community not to the individual in the sense that we will not find the members of the community internalizing these principles completely and in the same way. However, all share, in various ways, in its general principles.

28 I have no data about how extensive the borrowing from Evangelical ministerial and missionary paradigms is among Adventist leaders. I see the results of the borrowing in the practices of many local churches I visit. Frequently, I hear reports about leaders and pastors visiting mega churches to learn “successful” ministerial methods. Pastors who do the borrowing have the naïve conviction that “methods” are theologically neutral. That is, borrowing Evangelical conservative or modernistic ministerial methods do not involve theological convictions. That is rarely the case. Most of the time as viruses, non-biblical
and disseminating the protestantization of Adventism and the eclipse of Scripture.

5. The Charismatic Ministerial Paradigm

At the beginning of the twenty first century, the Charismatic (supernatural power/praise) paradigm of ministry Evangelical churches are using to face the challenges of modern thinking and society is

presuppositions are attached to the methods and shape their outcome. In time, these presuppositions will distort the theological understanding and spiritual experience creating divisions in the church and skewing the gospel message. After all, “[t]he traditions of men, like floating germs, attach themselves to the truth of God, and men regard them as a part of the truth,” Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 589. Detecting traditions attached to Christian theologies and methodologies requires deep knowledge of Biblical truth. Theoretically, this characteristic should be common to all believers; in practice, however, it is rare even among Christian leaders.

This paradigm is connected but not identical to the Pentecostal denominations. The latter do share with other denominations the Charismatic liturgical paradigm.

The Charismatic paradigm conceives worship as a direct encounter with God through rituals. “In worship we are met by God himself, our thoughts and words turn to perceptions and experience of God, who is then really present to us in some degree of his greatness, beauty, and goodness. This will make for an immediate, dramatic change in our lives,” Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 178. In worship as in spirituality, the encounter of the believer with God is mystical. For an introduction to mysticism and its role in worship see Vanderlei Dorneles, *Cristãos Em Busca Do Êxtase: Para Compreender a Nova Liturgia E O Papel Da Música Na Adoração Contemporânea* (Engenheiro Coelho, SP: UNASPRESS, 2005). In this model, for instance, repetition of God’s worthiness (praise) is important. As we repeat our praise of divine worthiness “the good we adore enters our minds and hearts to increase our faith and strengthen us to be as he is,” Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, 178. Clearly, Charismatic worship not only eclipses but also replaces the words of God in Scripture. Charismatic Liturgy began to spread in American Evangelicalism with the introduction of popular Rock music in evangelical liturgy. In the early nineties, conservative Evangelicals recognized the existence of the “Celebration” style of worship and the “divergence” in worship it was producing; see Millard J. Erickson, *Where Is Theology Going: Issues and Perspectives on the Future of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 41-42. “Celebration” worship evolved into “Praise Worship” a “music driven casual worship” that “has become the mark of the contemporary mega church and the symbol of what attracts and holds the young” Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 187; Herbert E. Douglass, *Truth Matters: An Analysis of the Purpose Driven Life Movement* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2006),

113
replacing the Word (Bible study/theological understanding) paradigm\textsuperscript{31} of ministry of earlier Adventists. As result of this mostly unchallenged phenomenon, the protestantization of Adventism is reaching the pews around the world. By adopting and promoting the Evangelical-Celebration-Charismatic ministerial paradigm,\textsuperscript{32} in spite of

17-18. Evangelical leaders have realized that the secularization and materialization of Western culture will soon empty American churches as they did in Europe, Philip Clayton, \textit{Transforming Christian Theology: For Church and Society} (Minneapolis, MN Fortress, 2010), 46. The use of popular music is central to the strategy to avoid the secularization of society which will empty the American churches as it did in Europe.

\textsuperscript{31} The Word paradigm of worship was revived by the Reformation, see, Robert E. Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 98, 114. Adventism stands or falls on the Word/Spirit worship paradigm. Christ told us to worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24 KJV). Later in His discourse on the “bread of life,” Christ clearly affirmed: “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

\textsuperscript{32} For instance, consider that at least 13 years ago “Adventists, both pastors and lay people, consistently make up one of the largest groups at Willow Creek’s half-dozen annual seminars—including church leadership conferences in May and October and a leadership summit in August” Andy Nash, “On Willow Creek,” \textit{Adventist Review}, December 18 1997, 6. Adventist leaders also seem to hold Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church and Leadership seminars in high esteem. J. David Newman, “Hidden Heresy: Is Spiritualism Invading?,” \textit{Adventist Today} 2005, 23. I personally think there is nothing wrong with visiting a church and getting some ideas I can use within the Biblical theological and ministerial paradigms. Yet, I do not think that is what is going on in Adventism because through the protestantization of the Adventist mind, Adventists are likely to have neither a theological nor a ministerial paradigm of their own. If this is the case, then, a large number of leaders may be incorporating in their ministries “Willow Creek principles” using the same criteria Andy Nash implicitly uses: Sabbath observance and Adventist distinctive beliefs, see Nash, “On Willow Creek,” 6. Clearly, Nash does not have either a theology or a ministerial paradigm from which to evaluate ministerial practices. Moreover, I wonder how the belief in being the Remnant Church factors in this phenomenon. Discussing this issue with a leader highly respected around the world, I was surprised to learn he considered Willow Creek and all Evangelical denominations to be the true visible Church of Christ on earth. Now, if that is the case, I can understand why Adventists are proactive in copying from other churches both theological and ministerial paradigms. At this point into our analysis, we are directed back to the theological foundations of Adventism and the progressive eclipse of Scripture that results from the protestantization of the Adventist mind. Hence, when visiting other churches or reading on ministry, chances are they will be importing not only\textit{isola-tota-prima-ted} ideas but also the ministerial and theological paradigms on which they stand. See also, Martin Weber, “Give Praise a Chance,” (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, 1995).
isolated opposition, many leaders are intensifying the protestantization of Adventism and the eclipse of Scripture. Most Adventist leaders, however, including me, contribute to this process by allowing the Charismatic model to develop without serious biblical theological evaluation. Without a solid biblical foundation, even statements decrying doctrines as “brain knowledge,” or speaking about the Gospel as the “essence” of Adventism may encourage the protestantization of Adventism.

According to the Charismatic ministerial paradigm, God grants salvation by His supernatural decision and power. Consequently, the ministerial method becomes the proclamation of the cross as complete atonement, justification, and the assurance of salvation. As a result, Adventist ministers following the Charismatic paradigm no longer see the need for Bible studies as a condition for baptism, spirituality, or salvation.

Neither salvation nor baptism requires knowledge (doctrines), much less the theological understanding of biblical truth. The only requirement for baptism is faith in the Gospel proclamation that Christ saves without any conditions. When we see pastors baptizing people without expecting them to understand Biblical doctrines, to be disciples, or having any real ongoing personal spiritual experience with Christ, we can suspect they are implicitly assuming the Charismatic ministerial paradigm. If “saved” believers possessing an absolute “assurance” of salvation grow restless waiting for Christ’s Second Coming, pastors may encourage them to join a variety of optional church programs among them Discipleship and Spiritual formation.

The conviction that salvation and the Christian experience does not require Bible study, theological understanding of God’s person, revelation, acts, teachings, and will, does not spring only from “progressive” and “evangelical” Adventist circles but also from mainstream Adventism. This trend is reducing Adventist communities in America and Europe to social

---


34 “God was our friend when He died for us, although we were His enemies. And that is the essence of our best method of evangelism and witness.” Bertil Wiklander, “The Essential Ingredient: It’s Not Our Preaching That Moves the Hearts of Unbelievers. It’s Not Our High Standards. Nor Is It the Correctness of Our Doctrine. Then What Is It?,” *Adventist Review*, July 12 2001.
clubs that instead of engaging in evangelism, giving personal Bible studies, and engaging in missionary enterprises, prefer to satisfy the felt needs of their members.35

The application of the Charismatic ministerial and missionary paradigm intensifies the protestantization of the Adventist mind and lifestyle to its highest level. As relics from the past, the orthodox formulation of Adventist fundamental doctrines passes from one generation of leaders to the next as theoretical statements empty of theological meaning and spiritual power. The adoption of this ministerial paradigm will produce the rapid abandonment of personal and communal search for biblical truth from Adventist ministry and experience.

Because the Evangelical understanding of the Gospel continues to play the macro-hermeneutical role in theological method, Adventists feel free to drink from Evangelical theological reflection and ministerial practices. In this way, Evangelical theologies and ministerial practices will shape Adventist thinking and lifestyle for years to come.

The Charismatic ministerial and missionary paradigms include a corresponding Charismatic liturgical paradigm. The Charismatic worship paradigm is an extension of the Roman Catholic sacramental worship paradigm that obviously assumes Roman Catholic traditions, theology, and ontological principles derived from Greek philosophy.

---

35 Meeting “felt needs” rather than fostering the spiritual understanding and practice of Scripture seems to be guiding ministerial efforts. “The name: “Vervent” is synonymous with the NAD Church Resource Center. It reflects our service to local congregations. The name contains within it the combined elements of developing resources with “verve”—with energy and vitality—and which are appropriately “relevant,” in today’s environment. In the future, “Vervent” will become increasingly a brand name associated with a group of deliberately innovative products and services developed by the North American Division. Vervent represents resources that are both intentionally “cutting edge” and of broad benefit to congregations seeking to minister within the North American context. To be more specific, Vervent represents resources emerging in direct response to “felt needs,” expressed in various surveys, focus groups and other forms of research conducted with leaders of local congregations.” North American Division, “Vervent: NAD Church Resource Center,” North American Division, http://www.vervent.org/about. Perhaps we need to meet real spiritual needs by helping the church and the world understand the meaning and power of God’s Word.
Sacraments are “signs”\textsuperscript{36} that cause\textsuperscript{37} God’s grace\textsuperscript{38} and Christ’s presence (divinity and humanity)\textsuperscript{39} in the soul of the believer in worship. Following the Aristotelian ontological pattern, Roman Catholics believe that sacraments have a divine invisible form and a created visible matter.\textsuperscript{40} The material component of the sacrament/ritual (bread, wine, water, etc.) allows the divine spiritual content (grace and Christ’s presence) to reach the soul of human beings. Finally, only a divine institution\textsuperscript{41} can determine the material forms for worship.\textsuperscript{42}

Charismatic liturgy accepts these premises but it is less formal and willing to broaden the choices of material containers of divine grace and presence. Not only a divine institution but also cultural trends can determine the choice of material conduits of divine grace and presence. God, His grace and Christ’s presence continue to operate as in the Roman Catholic sacramental paradigm, only the choice of material components mediating divine grace and presence are broadened to engage more people in worship. Different material choices determine the existence of different “worship styles.” For instance, by its power of attraction, popular music has become a central “sacrament” (ritual) in Charismatic worship. “The Reformers moved the presence of God from the Eucharist [Sacramental

\textsuperscript{36} “Properly speaking a sacrament, as considered by us now, is defined as being the sign of a holy thing so far as it makes men holy.” Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), IIIa. 60. 2.

\textsuperscript{37} “... We have it on the authority of many saints that the sacraments of the New Law not only signify, but also cause grace.” Ibid., IIIa. 62. 1.

\textsuperscript{38} “I answer that, We must needs say that in some way the sacraments of the New Law cause grace.” Ibid., IIIa. 62. 1.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., IIIa. 75. 1.

\textsuperscript{40} “Consequently, since the sacred things which are signified by the sacraments, are the spiritual and intelligible goods by means of which man is sanctified, it follows that the sacramental signs consist in sensible things.” Ibid., IIIa. 60. 4. “I answer that, As stated above (A. 6 ad 2), in the sacraments the words are as the form, and sensible things are as the matter.” Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, IIIa. 60. 7. “I answer that, Sacraments are necessary for man’s salvation, in so far as they are sensible signs of invisible things whereby man is made holy” \textit{Summa Theologica}, IIIa. 61. 3.

\textsuperscript{41} I am not exactly clear about what Aquinas meant by “Divine institution.” It seems to imply divine revelation of some sort, either in Scripture or according to Roman Catholic thinking by the institution of the Church.

\textsuperscript{42} Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, IIIa. 60. 5.
paradigm] to the Word [Word paradigm]. Today, the new revolution in worship is locating the presence of God in music [Charismatic paradigm].” Clearly, the Sacramental and Charismatic worship paradigms build on the same ontological foundations and oppose the Word paradigm initiated by the Reformation.

Yet the Reformers never fully developed the Word ministerial and worship paradigms from the sola-tota-prima Scriptura principle. Instead, they continued to assume the Roman Catholic ontology and Sacramental paradigm. This background in their tradition has encouraged Evangelical leaders facing rapid changes in postmodern culture to revive the Roman Catholic sacramental paradigm and other ancient mystical practices creating an eclectic approach to worship and spirituality. Charismatic worship is not disappearing but evolving into emergent worship liturgies and spiritual disciplines. Both the problems emergent liturgy faces and the solutions it advances spring from postmodern cultural trends. Emerging liturgy is culturally grounded and all-inclusive. According to it, there are many ways to worship the true God and all have the same validity.

---

44 John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), IV. 14. 1. Luther explains God works in and through the Sacrament and makes the preaching of the Gospel a sacrament. The sacramentalization of preaching raises a question mark on the way, role and work of how the Word paradigm functions in Protestantism. “For a sacrament is a matter of faith, because in it only the works of God proceed and are effected—through his Word! Therefore, those who consider the sacrament to be thus in the Word will forget both worship and adoration. That is what the apostles did at the Supper [Matt. 26:26] and yet without any doubt they were most acceptable and did him the proper honor. They acted just as one does when he hears the gospel, the Word of God—to which the highest honor is nonetheless due because God is nearer in it than Christ is in the bread and wine. Yet no one thinks of bowing before the gospel; instead everyone sits still, and in listening gives no thought whatever to the kind of honor he will do to the Word.” Martin Luther, Luther’s Work (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1999), 36:295.
46 Ibid., 219-20.
47 “The emerging church desires new wineskins for worship. These new wineskins are needed in response to our new postmodern culture. It is a terrible mistake to ignore this, and a somewhat arrogant one if we still believe that how we currently worship is the one and only way to worship God.” Dan Kimball, Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 9.
Among new liturgies (rites/sacraments), we find a desire to reconnect with ancient practices of the Roman Catholic liturgy, monastic and mystical spiritual disciplines, making the Eucharist central, integrating tradition with contemporary culture, art, and symbols.

Evangelical Christianity is experiencing a near total eclipse of Scripture and shows no willingness to turn to Scripture. Incredibly, Adventists continue to follow Evangelical practices with undiminished confidence. Because of their basic implicit operative assumption that Evangelical theology and practices are compatible with Scripture, Adventist leaders are embracing the Charismatic liturgical paradigm and its Ancient/Future postmodern upgrade advanced recently by “emergent churches.” Consequently, some Adventist churches are not only promoting the use of a variety of music styles but also the need for using a variety of “worship styles.”

6. The Word Ministerial Paradigm

Christ’s Word ministerial paradigm, however, shines clearly in Scripture, and operates in Adventism around the world. Let us review some of its salient features.

48 “The arts are not mere decorations that enhance worship, nor are they mere illustrations of truth. Instead, the arts participate in their eschatological meaning. They are creation put to praise.” Webber, The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World, 200.

49 Gibbs, Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Communities in Postmodern Cultures, 227-34.

50 Robert Webber (1933-2007), an Evangelical professor of ministry at Northern Seminary in Lombard Illinois, used the Ancient/Future designation to refer to the need to remember and retrieve ancient practices of Roman Catholicism as we move into the contemporary world.

51 Apparently, La Sierra University offers 27 worship styles to students. La Sierra University, “Faith Is Formed at La Sierra University,” Adventist World, February 2010, 48.

52 Ellen White is the main representative of this model. She has developed it extensively throughout her writings, probably better than any other theologian and minister. Adventism works within this model. See also, Philip G. Samaan, Christ’s Way of Reaching People: The Fine Art of Relational Witnessing (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990); _____, Christ’s Way to Spiritual Growth (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995); _____, Christ’s Way to Pray: How Christ Prays for Us and with Us (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2003); _____, Christ’s Way of Making Disciples (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999).
According to Christ’s ministerial paradigm, baptism requires the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit operating through Bible study to generate theological/spiritual understanding that may lead to faith, personal conviction of sins, repentance, confession, and forgiveness of sins (justification by faith).

When this theological/spiritual transformation takes place in a person, he or she has become a spiritual disciple of Christ adopted into his Family. Such believers are ready for baptism. Christ saves disciples. After all, Christ commanded the Church to baptize disciples and then, once they became spiritual disciples, to teach them all the things He had commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). They in turn will go on to make disciples themselves.  

Only the application of Christ’s ministerial paradigm will revive/reform the church, change the world, and hasten Christ’s Second Coming. According to Christ’s ministerial paradigm, God’s power operates through the understanding of Scripture. This is the only true method of “church growth.” Christ’s commission to the Church is not to grow an institution but to sharpen the spiritual instrument for the proclamation of God’s final message to the world.  

The Word ministerial paradigm assumes that God operates salvation through the revelation and understanding of His word in Scripture. Paul clearly explains that salvation is by faith (Romans 3:22, 25), and that faith is generated from hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). For Paul, faith is not a mere mental assent but the obedience of faith that comes from understanding and accepting the content of divine revelation of Christ in the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments. Thus, biblical revelation and its understanding becomes central to the experience of Salvation and therefore to the ministerial paradigm of Scripture.

Understanding the axis of ministerial experience well, Ellen White grasped that “[i]n the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”\(^{56}\) The Word ministerial paradigm, then, stands on the revelation of Scripture and the educational process necessary to generate faith and obedience in the life of human beings.

Failure to recognize this simple methodological foundation has prevented Adventist ministry from retrieving and building on the clear and deep reflection Ellen White has provided in this area. As a result, Adventists connect education with primary teaching and school activities rather than with pastoral and church ministries. This momentous neglect may be the most significant methodological blunder in modern Adventism.

Since the power of ministry is in the Word of God (John 6:54, 63; Romans 1:16),\(^ {57}\) neglect and weak performance in this area directly translates into diminishing returns in regards to the unity and mission of the church. Instead of uncritically downloading from the web the latest ministerial resources inspired by postmodern cultural trends and based on foundations alien to Scripture, Adventists should become leaders and trend setters in building solid Christian experiences and communities on the Word of God.

To achieve such a high level of servant leadership we need to become “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.”\(^ {58}\) Adventists need to create a generation that think and act in the light of Scripture rather than in the light of tradition and culture. This requires nothing less than a macro-paradigm change in ministry, liturgy, and Seminary education. Such changes will become instrumental in overcoming the protestantization of the Adventist mind and will diffuse the eclipse of Scripture by removing


\(^{57}\) “The life of God, which gives life to the world, is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons. By His word He stilled the sea and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God as He had spoken it to all the Old Testament writers. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ. It is our only source of power.” _____, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), 250. On the nature of the power of words see Esther Sánchez, and Víctor Armenteros, “Visualizaciones De La Misión: Aproximación Narratológica a Los Relatos De La Misión En Los Evangelios Y En Ellen G. White,” *DavarLogos* 8, no. 2 (2009): 105-06.

\(^{58}\) White, *Education*, 17.
cultural traditions that prevent its light from shining in the hearts of human beings in the church and the world.

5. Summary

The limited and partial phenomenological analysis of selected evidence explored in the two articles of this series does not lead to final but rather initial conclusions calling for further research and verification. Based on the phenomenological description of a few marks and traces of the Adventist theological and ministerial practices, I suggest that the protestantization of the Adventist mind and lifestyle is real, uneven, ongoing, broad reaching, and intensifying. Disconnected from the doctrinal formulations of the Church, the protestantization phenomenon takes place at the existential level of thinking, feeling, and acting.

The protestantization of Adventism came into existence by way of a progressive forgetfulness of the Biblical system of theology that originated its being. Because early Adventist pioneers stood on the consistent and relentless methodological application of the sola, tota, prima Scriptura principle, and, the discovering of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, they were destined to move beyond Protestant theologies and practices.

In the first article of this series, we reviewed how early Adventists’ implicit understanding of the conditions of theological methodology, specially the Sanctuary doctrine as the hermeneutical key to the complete and harmonious understanding of Christianity, guided them in the initial and exhilarating task of discovering the inner historical logic of Biblical truths. As they applied the Protestant sola Scriptura principle they found themselves further developing the theological task that Protestant theology had left unfinished. They were the heirs of the Sola Scriptura Systematic Theology project initiated by the Reformation.

Sadly, the theological revolution implicit in the doctrinal discovery of the early formative years (1844-1850) and its methodological implications for Christian theology decelerated. With the passing of time Adventists did not recognize or apply the macro-hermeneutical principles they implicitly discovered, notably the sanctuary doctrine, to the entire range of Christian theology and teachings. Ellen White, however, was the glaring exception. Consistently through her long writing carrier, she used the Sanctuary and the “pillars of the Adventist faith” as hermeneutical principles guiding her
Bible interpretation and construction of a comprehensive, yet incomplete, outline of Christian theological thinking and ministerial praxis.

Nonetheless, Adventists became distracted with church business and neglected their emerging theological thought and Ellen White’s explicit macro-hermeneutical pointers. *QOD’s* superficial affirmation that Adventism shares most Protestant doctrines opened the gates to the protestantization of Adventism. Eventually, they forgot the hermeneutical role that the Doctrine of the Sanctuary plays in their theological methodology and replaced it with the Evangelical hermeneutical principle of justification by faith. This macro-hermeneutical paradigm shift revealed and intensified the protestantization of the Adventist mind. Moreover, as the Reformers, Adventists overlooked the *sola, tota, prima Scriptura* principle, and embraced the plurality of theological sources on which the Roman Catholic theological system stands.59

In this article, we surveyed briefly the impact of this shift in scholarly and ministerial methodologies in the last fifty years. In scholarship, the church moved from doctrines to exegesis, systematically neglecting the areas of Systematic and Fundamental theologies. By default, this movement facilitated reliance on Evangelical theologies to fill the vacuum left open by Adventist scholarship.

While studying Scripture at deep scholarly levels, Protestant theological traditions were shaping the mind of the Church. Moreover, in exegetical scholarship the lack of a Biblical Fundamental Theology led many Adventists to utilize the historical critical method, thereby extending the eclipse of Scripture at the very point where its light should dawn in the mind of the Church.

Simultaneously, through the protestantization of the Adventist mind a momentous paradigm shift occurred from its Biblical Word/Spirit paradigm to the Charismatic paradigm of contemporary Evangelicalism. Although

---

59 Probably unawares and unintentionally, *QOD* and *MOD* reveal a foundational paradigm shift in the Adventist understanding of the hermeneutical and material condition of Adventist theological methodology. If Adventists’ beliefs on God and the Gospel are Evangelical as *QOD* and *MOD* affirm, Adventists accept implicitly the plurality of revealed sources of theology on which the Evangelical Doctrines stand. Early Adventist commitment to the *sola, tota, and prima Scriptura* principle and to the deconstruction of Evangelical theology evanesced in main stream biblical Adventism. This phenomenon partially explains the existence of “evangelical” and “progressive” Adventist communities.
the Charismatic ministerial paradigm fits the theologies of Evangelical and Progressive Adventists, lack of development in the Word ministerial paradigm has led Biblical Adventists to adopt it as the only perceived way to face the challenges of postmodern cultural changes.

The shift in the ministerial and liturgical paradigms becomes visible around Adventists institutions in western developed countries and is yet in its initial stages of development. Adventists have not yet formally embraced the Charismatic ministerial and liturgical paradigms. Yet, some promote them; some use them for pragmatic reasons. The majority of Biblical Adventists quietly condone their existence through silence. Stealthily, a new Charismatic generation of Adventist leaders is underway. They will challenge the sola-tota-prima Scriptura; the platform on which the Remnant Church stands or falls.

As a result of its ongoing protestantization, Adventism walks through a theological and spiritual crisis of self-understanding that seriously detracts from its unity and mission and eclipses Scripture. Adventist leaders continue to affirm biblical doctrines with their brains while Evangelical theologies and practices progressively shape their hearts, lifestyle, and mission.

Perhaps, if a new generation revives the sola-tota-prima Scriptura principle, and the Sanctuary doctrine as the macro-hermeneutical vision, Adventism will overcome its protestantization, reverse the eclipse of Scripture, and strengthen the Word/Spirit ministerial and liturgical paradigms.

6. Conclusion
Life is change, therefore Adventism changes. In a worldwide community, changes have a multiplicity of causes that pass from one generation to another via tradition. One of them, the long-held traditional conviction that Evangelical theology and ministerial paradigm are biblical has encouraged successive generations of Adventist leaders to increase and broaden the uncritical adoption of theological, ministerial, and liturgical Evangelical practices. These practices eclipse Scripture, produce divisions, and hinder the mission of the Church. Above all, they destroy the essence of Adventism and the reason for its existence as the remnant church.

The protestantization of the Adventist mind has created a well-established Adventist tradition. Instead of fighting Protestant traditions by discovering biblical truth, a growing number of Adventists
evangelize without understanding or thinking through what they believe and preach. They offer complete instantaneous salvation wrapped in empty doctrinal formulations. Moreover, Adventist pragmatism encourages Church life to revolve around missionary work. Within this context, it is not surprising to find many Adventist leaders that implicitly encourage evangelists and reward ministers to neglect and even discourage Bible study and theological understanding as unrelated to church life and mission.

Because of this mindset, a growing number of Adventist leaders and church members are ignorant of Biblical thinking and doctrinally illiterate. As believers receive doctrines without a spiritual theological understanding, a high number of Adventists experience biblical doctrine as “head knowledge,” unrelated to salvation and spiritual life. In short, the protestantization of the Adventist ministerial paradigm promotes evangelization, mission, and church growth, but disregards theological/spiritual understanding of Scripture. Personal study and understanding of the Bible, once at the very heart of the Adventist ministerial paradigm and spiritual experience becomes the unnecessary indulgence of ivory tower professors.

I assume that most Adventist leaders are honestly unaware of the protestantization of their Adventist faith and experience. In a simplistic uncritical way, partially conditioned by QOD and MOD, mainstream Adventist leaders assume by default that Evangelical theology and ministerial practices are biblical and therefore compatible with Adventist beliefs. Yet, some are well acquainted with this trend and promote it as a true expression of the Adventist experience.

Due to the protestantization of the Adventist mind, Adventist changes in theology, ministry, mission, and liturgy mimic Evangelical changes in the same areas. These changes, in turn, intensify the protestantization of

---

60 Neal C. Wilson, “The President Calls for Renewal,” *Adventist Review*, April 7, 1988, 12.

61 Of course, in the Charismatic ministerial paradigm there is a place for Bible study. Yet, the experience of Salvation and relation to God takes place directly from God to the soul of the believer without the mediation of Christ or His words in Scripture. The direct encounter between God and the soul of the believer is the center of the Charismatic model of ministry that stands at the center of contemporary Evangelical and Roman Catholic spirituality. Bible study is not the place of the encounter between Christ and the believer, but a step we can take toward a direct experiencing of God.
Adventism and the eclipse of Scripture in the mind and actions of the Church.

Why do QOD and MOD view Evangelical theology and ministerial patterns as complementary to Adventist distinctive doctrines? What is the foundation for the generally positive view Adventists have of Evangelicalism? From the methodological perspective, the uncritical assumption that Evangelical theology and practices flow from the unambiguous affirmation of the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle may explain the foundation on which the protestantization of the Adventist mind stands. How could it be otherwise? After all, if Evangelicals study Scripture as the inerrant Word of God and believe in Jesus as their Savior, their theological and ministerial conclusions should be in harmony with Scripture. Of course, Adventists have a few eschatological details to add (in Froom’s view Adventist separative doctrines, and in Knight’s eschatological affirmation), but they are not seen as challenging, but rather, expanding Evangelical Christianity (the rest of the broad spectrum of Christian doctrines). As we explained earlier, present day Adventists have inherited this view at least since QOD and probably ever since the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference meetings.62

In my view, this assumption has permeated the Adventist mind for a long time. My own personal experience testifies to this fact. I remember fondly my first class in Systematic Theology. At the time, I was in my third year of theological studies, the year was 1965, and I had no way to know that Leroy Froom was about to publish MOD. The professor, a missionary holding a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University, required us to study the one volume on Christian theology written by Arminian theologians Orton H. Wiley and Culbertson’s one volume on Christian Theology.64 He told us, most of the book was theologically correct.

---

62 I suspect this much. Yet, I have no time to do the necessary historical research on the full history of the protestantization of the Adventist mind briefly sketched in this series of articles. I hope Adventist historians will explore this issue and either confirm or falsify my suspicions.


However, he warned us not to accept the few portions that dealt with the Sabbath and prophecies.

Years later, when as a rookie professor of theology I was preparing my lecture on God I freely “downloaded” from Evangelical theologian Augustus Strong’s *Systematic Theology*. At the time, I felt I was doing what the Adventist denomination expected from me. However, I had some early warnings that what I was doing was not compatible with Adventist and Biblical beliefs. One student told me my teachings had a “Thomistic” bend. Since I was unfamiliar with Aquinas’ works at that time, I dismissed the idea. Yet, when I had time to check the biblical references Strong used to support his teachings I got a second puzzling warning. The biblical texts did not support and even contradicted Strong’s positions. I also dismissed this warning. I thought deeper theological training would help me to see what Strong saw in his biblical references. I never suspected Strong could be wrong in his teachings on God. After all, my professors of Systematic Theology had told me to trust in Evangelical authors.

Yet, scholarly training in Scripture’s original languages, and, in Historical, Biblical, and Systematic theologies did not help me to see what Strong saw in his biblical references. I was puzzled, but I still implicitly trusted Evangelical theologians. I still trusted my first professor of Systematic Theology.

To break long held implicit assumptions was very difficult. Yet, a strong conviction on the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle and studies in ontology helped me break the spell under which I was operating as an ordained Adventist minister and professor of theology.

Could this long held working assumption be wrong? Does Evangelical theology stand on the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle? Adventists should double check this assumption. I suspect Evangelical theology works from non-biblical philosophical assumptions and therefore does build on the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle. Additionally, Adventists should take a serious look at current developments in Evangelical thinking. To face the challenge of postmodernity Evangelical leadership is leaving Scripture further behind by embracing Roman Catholic thinking and postmodern culture.

---

Should Adventism accept or challenge the methodological basis articulated by QOD and MOD? Promoting the protestantization of Adventism or letting it continue to run unchallenged will eventually turn Adventism into another Progressive Charismatic Evangelical denomination moving back to Rome. Should Adventists be concerned about this trend? I think we should because it is transforming the very essence, identity, and mission of the Church. In my opinion, Adventism as a whole should carefully evaluate this trend and attempt to overcome it.

7. Epilogue

If we do nothing, mere inertia will lead Adventism to the next step in the eclipse of Scripture: The replacement of the Biblical ontology and metaphysics implicit in the Sanctuary doctrine with classical philosophical thinking. After all, the Evangelical theologies and practices Adventism follows implicitly assume the same classical philosophical ideas from which Roman Catholic macro-hermeneutics flow. They implicitly lead to postmodern panentheism, which lies behind the Charismatic worship renewal and spirituality Adventists are incorporating from the leaders of the rapidly mutating Evangelical coalition. Ellen White clearly understood that “[t]he spiritualistic theories regarding the personality of God,” implicit in Kellogg’s panentheism, “followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy.” According to her, Adventism will face the same ideas again.

As some Adventists implicitly incorporate these ontological views from their readings of Evangelical literature, their understanding of theological method will progressively intensify the protestantization of Adventist thinking, inviting twenty-first century Adventists to venture into ecumenical postmodern waters. While the protestantization of Adventism is changing the minds and hearts of biblical Adventists around the world, doctrinal formulations remain conservative and reflect earlier times when the Sanctuary doctrine was the hermeneutical key that opened to view a complete and harmonious system of biblical theology.

---

67 “We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.” Ibid., 197.
Clearly, the protestantization of Adventism and the eclipse of Scripture are more difficult to assess because they are not external but internal to the Adventist experience. Moreover, the changes and challenges they produce are not cosmetic or superficial but deeply affect the foundation, essence, and mission of the Remnant church. Yet, most Adventists promoting innovations closely following the latest evangelical trends are not aware they are changing the essence and nature of Adventism. Moreover, I believe that the immense majority of Adventist leaders and church members do not understand the assumptions and the unintended consequences of changes taking place in the practice of ministry.

What should biblical Adventists do? Should they keep silent to preserve the unity of the Church? In a similar situation when panentheistic ideas seriously challenged the pillars of the Adventist church, Ellen White’s message was: “No longer consent to listen without protest to the perversion of truth. Unmask the pretentious sophistries which, if received, will lead ministers . . . to ignore the truth.”68 Some Adventists leaders, following Ellen White’s advice are alerting the church about the dangers from within.69 Yet, mere denunciation of wrong will not bring constructive change. The only way to avoid this outcome is theological development in faithfulness to Scripture. Such a task is enormous and complex. No single individual can achieve it. To start the conversation about how to overcome the protestantization of the Adventist mind and the eclipse of Scripture, let me share three suggestions.

First, Adventism needs to move beyond exegesis and doctrine to a full theological understanding of divine revelation in Scripture. In other words, Adventists need to find in Scripture what they sought to find in Evangelical theologies and ministerial practice, a sound and harmonious understanding of biblical truths. We need to move beyond exegesis and doctrines to the full understanding of the harmonious system of truth that the Sanctuary doctrine opened to the view of early Adventist pioneers. The

68 Ibid., I: 196.
protestantization of Adventism and the eclipse of Scripture are leading Adventism back to tradition, culture, and philosophies. Because in the process we have neglected and lost the harmonious understanding of biblical truth, we constantly seek an ever-elusive “proper balance” between doctrines, practical emphasis, and even between evangelical Christianity and our eschatological distinctive doctrines. The need for balance assumes an unbalanced reality or theological system. In Adventism, the assumption that Evangelical theology is biblical and therefore truth, brings in a perpetual systemic state of unbalance that stems from deep theological distortions caused by the philosophical assumptions implicit in Evangelical theologies.

Second, the mission of the remnant necessarily involves establishing “Christianity upon an eternal basis.” Thus, instead of balance, we need to seek for the inner harmony of Biblical thinking by consistently applying the sola-tota-prima Scriptura principle. This means to search for a proper and

---

70 “As I have sought to demonstrate in such books as A Search for Identity, a struggle for a balanced Adventism has been at the center of the historical development of Seventh-day Adventist theology. Over time we have oscillated between overemphasizing those aspects of our belief system that make us Christians and those that distinguish us as distinctively Adventists [Here Knight perpetuates QOD understanding of Adventism as an Evangelical based denomination]. Today we have in the church what I call the Adventist Adventists, who see everything that the denomination teaches to be uniquely Adventist and groan a bit when we call ourselves evangelical. On the other extreme are those Adventists that we can describe as Christian Christians. Those at the pole of the denomination are overjoyed to be evangelical and shy away from Ellen White, the eschatological implications of the Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary, and so on. Fortunately, in the middle we find some who might may be styled Christian Adventists, whose Adventism finds meaning in the evangelical framework that we share with other Christians.” Knight, The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism, 13. Clearly, Knight not only believes that Evangelical theology is correct and adopts it as Adventist, but thinks that Adventists find the meaning of what make them Adventists in the framework of Evangelical theology. That is precisely what has led to the neutering of Adventism that he correctly describes and decries. Perhaps, there is room for Adventist Christianity, a reinterpretation of all Christian doctrines from the hermeneutical perspective of the Sanctuary doctrine. See my series on “From Vision to System.”

71 Arguably, Evangelical theology is in itself unbalanced in nature precisely because it attempts to be faithful to Scripture on the hermeneutical basis of tradition that operates from philosophical ideas that are not only non-biblical but also incompatible with biblical ontology.

72 White, Selected Messages, 3: 407.
harmonious understanding of Biblical truth from the philosophical presuppositions built in the doctrine of the Sanctuary. This project is not new. Early Adventist pioneers started it. Ellen White developed it extensively. In time, the protestantization and eclipse of Scripture led to the discontinuation, neglect, abandonment, and replacement of the Sanctuary as the hermeneutical principle of Christian theology with Evangelical hermeneutical principles. Nowadays, when referring to Adventist theological hermeneutics, Biblical Adventists no longer refer to the Sanctuary but to the “Great Controversy.”\(^{73}\) They are closely related but not identical. Moreover, the Sanctuary Doctrine provides the inner theological framework for the theological interpretation of Salvation History as the Great Controversy. For this and other reasons, the Sanctuary Doctrine continues to be the broad inner biblical structure that opens to view the

\(^{73}\) “But the genius of Seventh-day Adventism does not lie so much in those doctrines that make it distinctive or in those beliefs that it shares with other Christians. Rather it is a combination of both sets of understandings within the framework of the Great Controversy theme found in the apocalyptic core of the book of Revelation.” Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*, 203. Yet, Knight does not give many clues as to how the Great Controversy functions hermeneutically. Herbert Douglass has expanded this idea considerably. “The Great Controversy Theme is the organizing principle of what has come to be known as the distinctive message of Seventh-day Adventists. It provides the glue of coherence to all of his teachings-theology, health principles (health maintenance plus the prevention and cure of disease), education, missiology, ecclesiology, social relations, environmental stewardship, etc.” Herbert Douglass, *God at Risk: The Cost of Freedom in the Great Controversy* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2004), 19. Adventist theologian Norman Gulley is pioneering the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* Systematic theology project in his ongoing Systematic Theology, the first to use the Great Controversy as the guiding hermeneutical principle. In so doing, Gulley moves beyond the protestantization of Adventism and the eclipse of Scripture. He explains, “[t]he cosmic controversy is the biblical metanarrative within which human creation, the great stories of the Old Testament, the life and death of Christ, and the great stories of the New Testament took place; where the resurrected ministry of Christ and work of the Spirit of Christ take place; where the return of Christ and the final judgment will take place. So the cosmic controversy is the biblical context for all self-revelation of God in Scripture.” Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), xxii. Gulley expounds further, “[t]he cosmic controversy metanarrative provides the worldview within which the inner coherence of all doctrines is seen by their placement within the unfolding drama.” Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, xxvi. Although these authors move away from tradition to Scripture, they are just pointing to or starting the immense task of reinterpreting all Christian doctrines from Scripture.
inner logic of biblical thinking necessary to bring Christian theology to an eternal basis. This task requires not only the explanation and interpretation of the Seventh-day Adventist “distinctives” but also a reinterpretation of the entire range of Christian doctrines, teachings, practice, and mission. The full and consistent application of the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle requires nothing less.

Understanding the inner harmony of biblical thinking dispels the need for balance. A harmonious truth and practice does not need balance. Moreover, the harmonious understanding of Bible truths will justify the existence of the Remnant Church squarely on Scripture. Incorporating this understanding spiritually in the minds, hearts, and actions of believers will foster unity, teaching, and practice, and advance its global eschatological mission.

Third, the mere existence of a harmonious theology will achieve nothing unless it permeates the mind/spirit and actions of the church. This will require the conviction that theological understanding is central to salvation and the ministry and mission of the Church. New generations of Adventist administrators, pastors, and professors need to engage closely in interdisciplinary dialogue and research as the ongoing default method of church business. Finally, pastors and missionaries should intentionally work within the Word/Spirit educational paradigm bringing the harmonious understanding of biblical truth to the mind of each person within the church and in the world.

In a time when Protestant leaders are going back to Rome, Adventist leaders, administrators, pastors, seminary, and university professors should start going back to Scripture and using the Sanctuary Doctrine as the macro-hermeneutical key to understand the complete and harmonious system of Biblical truth. Should we open our hearts to the inner logic of God’s word through the educational ministry of the Holy Spirit and treasure it in the inner recesses of our spirits, we will no longer experience doctrines as “brain” knowledge but as the transforming and saving power of God through the Holy Spirit. Then, the church will be of one mind and Adventism will fulfill its God-given final mission.

---

Fernando Canale is Professor of Theology and Philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, where he has taught since 1985. Before coming to Andrews University, he was a pastor in Argentina and Uruguay and taught Philosophy and Theology at River Plate Adventist College in Argentina. canale@andrews.edu
The Validity of the Levitical Food Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals: A Case Study of Biblical Hermeneutics

Jiří Moskala
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

The Apostle Paul boldly declares that God’s kingdom does not consist of “eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). Sevent-day Adventist doctrines center on God, the redemption in Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19–20; Rom 5:1–5; 8:9–11; 1 Cor 12:3–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 1:13–14). The person, deeds, and teachings of Jesus Christ lie at the heart of our faith. The proper lifestyle springs from this faith in Him. A true religion of love leads to right choices in the matter of eating and drinking, because we were not only created to enjoy food (Gen 1:31) but also to reflect God’s glory in our habits of eating (1 Cor 10:31; see also 1 Cor 6:19–20).

It is crucial to note that God’s first commandments to humans were related to eating (Gen 2:16–17; the Hebrew root tshawah “command” is used here for the first time), but unfortunately the fall into sin was connected with food too (Gen 3:6). One can observe how important food is by the

---

1 All biblical quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.
2 Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2d ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 23–77.
The way of eating and its choices bring consequences. However, God’s legislation of Pentateuchal dietary laws, where certain food is prohibited for human consumption, was not given for the purpose of gaining salvation. Eating or fasting does not convey anyone into heaven, because biblical dietary laws do not “eat” the way into holiness. These regulations God gave to holy people! They were already saved, liberated from the bondage of slavery, and should maintain their holiness. They received God’s gift of food legislation, because they were holy. In Deuteronomy it is aptly explained: “You are the children of the Lord your God. . . you are a people holy to the Lord your God. . . the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession” (14:1–2; ESV) and only then God commands: “Do not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals you may eat. . .” (Deut 14:3). This is the correct and the only proper sequence of things: first comes God’s grace and then He provides His instruction on how to live in holiness. People thus respond to this revelation in thankful recognition of His loving and unique leadership.

In my native country of the Czech Republic, the national dish is dumplings, cabbage, and pork (served together with a beer)! My friends were curious why I did not eat this kind of meat (or drink beer). This led me to study this issue in depth in order to provide a good answer. Our answer needs to be God-centered not law-centered. Jesus did not eat any unclean food.4 J. A. Thompson, Deuteronomy, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 177: “In the matter of food, a holy people must refrain from eating any abominable thing.”

5 This proper sequence can be clearly seen in the literary structures of Paul’s epistles to Romans and Ephesians. Romans 1–8 explains the indicative of the Gospel, and then Romans 12–16 speaks about the imperative of the Gospel. In Ephesians 1–3 Paul presents God’s rich mercy (theology), and in Ephesians 4–6 interprets how to walk/live according to His grace (ethics). Paul rightly declares: “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal 5:6).

6 My friends asked me “why” questions, and I had no good satisfying answers, because I was pointing to the Mosaic dietary regulations or health aspects. Later when I studied at the Protestant Theological Faculty it was even more obvious. Today my first initial response to such a question is very straightforward (even though oversimplified): “Jesus never ate pork, so I do not eat pork. He is my example of faith and practice.” A Christ-centered answer! Jesus carefully observed the law He gave to His covenant people (Matt 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; Mark 12:26; Acts 7:35–38; 1 Cor 10:1–4). After pointing to Jesus, we can engage in further details in a conversation if there is an interest.

---

4 J. A. Thompson, Deuteronomy, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 177: “In the matter of food, a holy people must refrain from eating any abominable thing.”

5 This proper sequence can be clearly seen in the literary structures of Paul’s epistles to Romans and Ephesians. Romans 1–8 explains the indicative of the Gospel, and then Romans 12–16 speaks about the imperative of the Gospel. In Ephesians 1–3 Paul presents God’s rich mercy (theology), and in Ephesians 4–6 interprets how to walk/live according to His grace (ethics). Paul rightly declares: “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal 5:6).

6 My friends asked me “why” questions, and I had no good satisfying answers, because I was pointing to the Mosaic dietary regulations or health aspects. Later when I studied at the Protestant Theological Faculty it was even more obvious. Today my first initial response to such a question is very straightforward (even though oversimplified): “Jesus never ate pork, so I do not eat pork. He is my example of faith and practice.” A Christ-centered answer! Jesus carefully observed the law He gave to His covenant people (Matt 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; Mark 12:26; Acts 7:35–38; 1 Cor 10:1–4). After pointing to Jesus, we can engage in further details in a conversation if there is an interest.
MOSKALA: LEVITICAL FOOD LAWS

food (Matt 5:17-20; 15:16-20), and such an answer sets a Christocentric tone to our discussions with our friends or those who oppose our food choice. This makes us known as people who follow Jesus and are in love with Him.7

The Mosaic dietary laws as recorded in Leviticus 11 are very unique (see Lev 11:1–23, 41–45 and the main parallel passage in Deut 4:1–21; also Lev 20:22–26). No such list of clean and unclean animals is known in the Bible outside of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, or in the Near Eastern Ancient Literature.8 This legislation is not only about eating or restraining from consuming pork. This list is very comprehensive and broad and includes all categories of living creatures as it is seen in the detailed literary structure of Leviticus 11 where sections A and A’ deal with the universal division of animals for human consumption. On the basis of the terminological, phraseological, and structural study, Leviticus 11 can be divided in the following way:

Introduction, vss. 1–2a
1. Formula of divine speech, vs. 1
2. Specific living creatures may be eaten, vs. 2a
A. Edible and Inedible Living Creatures, vss. 2b–23
   1. Land living creatures, vss. 2b–8
      a. Edible land creatures, vss. 2b–3
      b. Inedible land creatures, vss. 4–8
   2. Water living creatures, vss. 9–12
      a. Edible water animals, vs. 9
      b. Inedible water animals, vss. 10–12

---

7 See Ellen G. White’s strong admonitions: “The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the Cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, Salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers” (Gospel Workers, rev. and enl. ed. [Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing, 1948], 315). “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world” (ibid., 156).

3. Air living creatures, vss. 13–23
   a. Inedible birds, vss. 13–19
   b. Winged insects, vss. 20–23
      I. Inedible winged insects, vs. 20
      ii. Edible winged insects, vss. 21–22
      iii. Inedible winged insects, vs. 23
B. Acquired Uncleanliness Resulting from Contact with Carcasses and its Elimination, vss. 24–40
   1. Unclean dead land creatures, vss. 24–28
      a. Introducing the principle, vss. 24–25
      b. Carcasses of land creatures, vss. 26–28
   2. Swarming dead creatures, vss. 29–38
   3. Clean dead land creatures, vss. 39–40
A’. Inedible Swarming Living Creatures, vss. 41–43
Conclusion, vss. 44–47
   1. Basic rationale: Be Holy for I am Holy, vss. 44–45
   2. Final summary, vss. 46–47

Scholars usually treat the laws of clean/unclean animals/food in the narrow context of Leviticus 11–15. Jacob Milgrom, however, rightly claims that “the diet laws of Leviticus 11 cannot be comprehended in isolation” and that “they form part of a larger dietary system. . . . Only when the system is viewed in its totality does the significance of Lev11 become clear.” This is why he starts the exploration of the subject with Gen 9:3–4. Nevertheless, I hold that this move is not sufficient. It is my conviction, supported by the early stand of Mary Douglas, that the starting

---

11 Ibid., 704–742.
point for the explanation of the dietary code regarding permitted and forbidden animals has to be put within an even larger context, namely Creation itself. Her claim was done on anthropological grounds and built on Genesis cosmology. My interpretation has broader connotations and is made on exegetical, stylistic, structural, conceptual, and theological grounds. In addition, there is clear intertextual dependency among key texts dealing with the dietary laws, namely Genesis 1–2; Genesis 3; Genesis 6–9; Leviticus 11; and Deuteronomy 14.

There were many attempts to explain the rationale behind the distinction of clean and unclean animals/food. At least 14 theories/hypotheses were suggested by scholars: the arbitrary command explanation; the cultic explanation; the sociological explanation; the symbolic explanation; the didactic explanation; the psychological/repulsiveness explanation; the taboo and totemism explanation; the death-life antithesis explanation; the anthropological explanation; the nature/culture boundary explanation; the ethical/moral explanation; the sacrificial paradigm explanation; the economic explanation; and the hygienic/health explanation. Unfortunately, there is no consensus reached in that regard even until today.

Two main objections are given against the observance of the Mosaic dietary laws regarding clean and unclean food: (1) selectivity—choosing...
only one Pentateuchal uncleanness, namely uncleanness of animals, and neglecting others, is arbitrary; (2) the New Testament explicitly abolishes laws of clean and unclean dietary regulations. Thus, many Christians claim that they are under no obligation to observe these obsolete food regulations. Are the laws regarding clean and unclean animals of Leviticus 11 still valid?

Response to these objections involves reasoning from different angles in order to demonstrate the validity of these dietary instructions. Here are the main arguments for maintaining their relevancy.

I. Respect for The Creator God

The principal rationale behind the distinction between clean and unclean food is respect for the Creator God. This theological concept of respecting the Creator is also strongly present in the New Testament (John 1:1–3; Col 1:16–17; Rev 14:7). There are at least ten close connections between the first Creation Genesis story and Leviticus 11, and another three links to Gen 2.

Links Between Leviticus 11 and Genesis 1

The parallelism between Creation and the Mosaic dietary laws will enable us to see a literary design and main rationale behind these laws.

First Link: Key Terminology

Key lexicography occurs in both chapters in the forms of nouns (e.g., earth, water, seas, animals, birds, kind), demonstrative pronouns (e.g., these, all), Divine name (e.g., God) and verbs (e.g., eat, separate, be holy).


17 For a detailed study of the Mosaic dietary laws of clean and unclean food, see Moskala, The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11.

18 For details, see Jiří Moskala, “Dietary Laws of Leviticus 11 and Creation,” 17–29. For the sake of convenience I refer to the first Creation account (Gen 1:1–2:4a) as “Genesis 1” although it also includes Gen 2:1–4a, and to the second Creation account (Gen 2:4b–25) as “Genesis 2.”
Second Link: Universal Taxonomy

The universal taxonomy of the animal kingdom (Leviticus 11) is built on the universal view of Creation (Genesis 1). In Leviticus 11 the Hebrew word הַלְוָיִם “all,” “everything,” “everyone” occurs 36 times. These occurrences testify to the universal view of the author of the chapter who sees the animal kingdom as a whole and classifies it comprehensively. This points back to Creation where the word הַלְוָיִם is used 29 times. God’s whole creation is finished and classified as very good (Gen 1:31).

Third Link: Three Habitats for the Living Creatures

According to the first Creation story God created three habitats for the living creatures: land (vv. 2, 9–10), water (vv. 2, 6–7, 9–10), and air/sky/firmament (vv. 6–8). In Leviticus 11 the same three habitats are implemented for living creatures (land—vv. 1–8, 41–43; water—vv. 9–12; air—13–23). This threefold division of the created world is the foundation of biblical cosmology, and it is significant that they are mentioned in the same sequence.

Fourth Link: Four Categories of Living Creatures

Living creatures were created to fill space—the land, water, and air (Gen 1:20–21, 24–25). Four different categories of living creatures were made: animals, fish, birds, and swarmers. This Creation scheme is reflected in Leviticus 11 in its classification of the whole animal kingdom into four categories of living creatures, although with slightly different terminology. Careful comparative analysis of different categories of Leviticus 11 and Genesis 1 reveals that both chapters describe the same four categories of living creatures. This can be demonstrated by drawing parallels between these two chapters and their use of terms in regard to living creatures as seen in the table below.

---

19 In Leviticus 11 the term הַלְוָיִם occurs in vv. 2, 3, 9 (twice), 10, 12, 15, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26 (twice), 27 (3 times), 31 (twice), 32 (3 times), 33 (twice), 34 (3 times), 35, 37, 41, 42 (4 times), 44, 46 (twice).
20 In Genesis 1 the term הַלְוָיִם occurs in vv. 21 (twice), 25, 26 (twice), 28, 29 (3 times), 30 (4 times), 31; 2:1, 2, 3, 5 (twice), 6, 9, 11, 13, 16, 19 (3 times), 20 (twice).
Comparison of Categories of the Living Creatures Between Leviticus 11 and Genesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Living Creatures</th>
<th>Genesis 1</th>
<th>Leviticus 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>land animals (quadrupeds)</td>
<td>בְּהֵמָה מָזָה</td>
<td>בְּהֵמָה מָזָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>נָשֶׁשׁ תֶּהֶוֶת . . . קָפָה</td>
<td>נָשֶׁשׁ תֶּהֶוֶת . . . קָפָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birds</td>
<td>תֵועַ</td>
<td>תֵועַ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swarvers (reptiles, rodents)</td>
<td>רֶמֶשׁ</td>
<td>שְׁרֵן</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carmichael acknowledges the connection between Leviticus 11 and the Creation story: “The clean and unclean water creatures and the birds of the sacrificial and dietary rules in Lev 11:9–19 and Deut 14:9–20 have a fundamental link to day five of creation.”

**Fifth Link: The Same Rules for Reproduction**

According to the first Creation story, reproduction must be done “according to its kind.” The Hebrew term מִין “kind,” with its various forms, is a keyword of Genesis 1 where this word occurs ten times out of the 31 times that it is used in the Hebrew Bible. The expression (always used with the inseparable preposition ל and pronominal suffixes) also occurs in Genesis 6–7 (7 times), Leviticus 11 (9 times) and Deuteronomy 14 (4 times). Creation is about the establishment of order. God sets boundaries,

---


22 The Hebrew word מִין occurs 30 times in the Pentateuch and only once in the rest of the whole Hebrew Bible, i.e., Ezek 47:10, but the form used there מַלֶּהֶוֶת is a hapax legomenon. Various forms occur in the Pentateuch in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>מִין</th>
<th>Gen 1:11; Lev 11:15, 22; Deut 14:14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לַמָּהֶוֶת</td>
<td>Gen 1:12 (twice), 21, 25; 6:20 (twice); 7:14 (twice); Lev 11:16, 22 (3 times), 29; Deut 14:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לַמָּהֲהָ</td>
<td>Gen 1:21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and living creatures of different species and of different kinds are expected to keep them. Leviticus 11 preserves that Creation order and respects these boundaries.

**Sixth Link: The Concept of Separation**

Creation is a process of separation, division, and distinction. The word בָּדָלָא is used five times in the Creation story itself (Gen 1:4, 6, 7, 14, and 18; outside of Genesis 1 this word is used 37 times in the Hebrew text). God separated light from darkness, day from night, the heavens from the waters (sea), land from water, the Sabbath from the other six days, etc.

The idea of separation or division explicitly connects the Creation account with the dietary laws. This term is also used in Lev 10:10 (once); Lev 11:47 (once); and Lev 20:24–26 (4 times), thus occurring eleven times in the passages under scrutiny. This phenomenon is very important when we take into consideration that in the Pentateuch itself this expression is used only twenty times. This means that more than half of these occurrences are related to our key texts. It is crucial to notice that this word is not used elsewhere in Leviticus 11–15 or in the Holiness Code. This does not appear to be the result of chance; it reflects intentionality and design. This link shows that the same Creation activity (i.e., separation) must be involved in the decision-making process when God intervenes (it is significant to note that all these occurrences of the verb **badal** are in the Hifil, i.e., causative form which testifies of God’s activity of separation) and separates/distinguishes between clean and unclean food. It is His ultimate decision. When humans distinguish between clean and unclean food they are participating in God’s creative activity. Thus the dietary laws teach their observers the ability to choose in everyday matters of life what is right, and help them to make right decisions.

---

It is very important to note that the syntactical elements mentioned above are used only in the key texts dealing with the Creation, Flood, and dietary rules. These texts are thus strongly linked together.

Seventh Link: The Concept of Locomotion

Created life is not static; motion is involved. Each species has its own sphere and can move in that realm. This is stressed in the second couplet of God’s creative activity—on the fourth, fifth, and sixth days. God brings forth entities that have locomotion: first sun and moon, then birds, fish, animals, and finally humans. The feature of motion in the Creation story is stressed by the notion of separation (which is also a kind of motion). The element of locomotion is reflected in Leviticus 11. This is a feature of the Creation account which Mary Douglas stresses in her interpretation of the Mosaic dietary laws. Her dictum that “any class of creatures which is not equipped for the right kind of locomotion in its element is contrary to holiness”24 may go too far; nevertheless, it is important to observe that locomotion plays a specific role in the identification of clean living creatures according to Leviticus 11. Dietary laws thus stress motion as one of the specific signs in the enumeration of clean animals, such as split hoofs for quadrupeds, fins for fish, and hopping for edible locusts.

Eighth Link: The Concept of Eating

God provides food for humans. Even though the diet was changed, the same principle remains—God as the Creator points out what is good and proper for human consumption (Gen 1:29; Lev 11:1–23, 41–47). God’s given diet for the whole created primeval world was vegetarian. Humans and animals were given כּוֹצֶה “herbage,” “herb,” “plant” as food (Gen 1:29–30).

Ninth Link: God as the Subject of Creation and of the Dietary Laws

God is the subject of Creation; therefore, He determines what is clean and unclean (Gen 1:1; Lev 11:1). God is the Creator and the Giver of life. He is also the Giver of the dietary regulations. The goal for the act of eating is the sustaining of life. His Sovereignty is stressed by this observation.

Tenth Link: The Concept of Holiness and Imitatio Dei

The concept of holiness is at the conclusion of the first Creation account as well as at the conclusion of the dietary laws (Gen 2:3; Lev

24 Douglas, Purity and Danger, 55.
MOSKALA: LEVITICAL FOOD LAWS

11:44–45), and functions as a climax to these two chapters. Humans were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27); and according to Lev 11:44, 45, they must imitate God, i.e., be holy as He is holy. Milgrom aptly says: “Holiness means imitatio Dei—the life of godliness.”

The Second Creation Account and Leviticus 11

There are at least three important links between the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Genesis 2. Besides the key terminology used in these two chapters, there is a very significant concept expressed in relation to eating in Genesis 2 which is later repeated in Leviticus 11. God’s first positive and negative commands are given in relationship to eating (Gen 2:16, 17). In Leviticus 11 there is also first a positive command (v. 3) and then a negative one (v. 4). These commands have in both cases exactly the same idea: what you may and what you may not eat.

The third important issue in the second Creation story in connection with Leviticus 11 is the perspective of death or separation in relation to the forbidden. The transgression of the command “you may not eat” has as its ultimate end—death: explicitly stated in Gen 2:17 and implicitly included in connection with the dietary laws, separation from the holiness of God brings as a final result—death. God is life, and everything in relation to

---

25 To be created in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27) means that humans have the capacity to relate to God. They can communicate with Him and build a relationship with Him based on love, respect, freedom, and truth. This also means that humans have the responsibility to be God’s representatives before His creation by taking care of the rest of creation. God holds us responsible for how we relate to others. This can be demonstrated by participating in the maintenance of God’s created order, and by respecting the boundaries of meat consumption. The concept of the imitatio Dei is at the core of human existence.

26 Milgrom, Leviticus 1–16, 731.

27 The key vocabulary is used in Genesis 2 and Leviticus 11 as follows: חָי (Gen 2:4b, 5 [twice], 6, 11, 12, 13; Lev 11:2, 21, 29, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46), אֱלֹהִים (Gen 2:9, 16 [twice], 17 [twice]; Lev 11:2, 3, 4, 8, 9 [twice], 11, 13, 21, 22, 34 [twice], 40, 41, 42, 47 [twice]), יָד (Gen 2:19, 20; Lev 11:2, 27, 47 [twice]), יָדְת (Gen 2:7, 19; Lev 11:10, 46), הָאָדָם (Gen 2:20; Lev 11:2, 3, 26, 39, 46), סּוּ (Gen 2:19, 20; Lev 11:13, 20, 21, 23, 46), רַע (Gen 2:23 [twice]; Lev 11:2, 46), הָיְתָה (Gen 2:4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22; Lev 11:1, 44, 45), הַרְעָה (Gen 2:4b, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22 [always as an expression מָרְאָה לָהֶם]; Lev 11:44, 45), אַלְמָה (Gen 2:10; Lev 11:20, 21, 23, 27, 42), חֲרוּבָה (Gen 2:14; Lev 11:20, 21, 27), יָדָה (Gen 2:9 [twice], 16, 17; Lev 11:32), and אָדָם (Gen 2:17 [twice]; Lev 11:39).

Thus, on the basis of linguistic, stylistic, conceptual, and theological analysis of Leviticus 11 in relation to the Creation accounts of Genesis 1–2, I conclude that Creation is the overall umbrella for discovering a rationale behind the biblical dietary laws, and that the theme of Creation unites different factors of this rationale which may be discovered from the biblical text. Thus, behind the legislation of clean and unclean animals/food lies a deep theological reason, which is the respect for the Creator, the Holy One.

II. Two Categories of Uncleannesses

I engaged in a comparative study among all different kinds of Pentateuchal uncleannesses in regard to their origin as stated in the biblical text, length, isolation, purification rites, and sacrifices in order that these factors help me to differentiate among them and to establish basic categories or types of uncleanness as is demonstrated in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varieties of Uncleanness</th>
<th>Key Biblical References</th>
<th>Length of Unclean-ness</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
<th>Purification Rites</th>
<th>Sacrifice</th>
<th>Categories of Uncleanness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Uncleanness by touching animal carcasses</td>
<td>Lev 5:2, 6, 11:24–40</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>Temporary (Acquired)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### MOSKALA: LEVITICAL FOOD LAWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varieties of Uncleanliness</th>
<th>Key Biblical References</th>
<th>Length of Uncleanness</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
<th>Purification Rites</th>
<th>Sacrifice</th>
<th>Categories of Uncleanness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Uncleanness of a person whose impurity is accidentally prolonged</td>
<td>Lev 5:1–13</td>
<td>x day(s) of his original uncleanness + 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Temporary (Acquired)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Uncleanness by eating a carcass of the clean animal | Lev 11:40  
Lev 17:15  
Lev 22:8 | 1 day | | X | | Temporary (Acquired) |
| 5. Uncleanness after childbirth | Lev 12:1–8 | 7 + 33 days (boy)  
14 + 66 days (girl) | | X | X | Temporary (Acquired) |
| 6. Uncleanness related to skin diseases | Lev 13:1–46  
Lev 14:1–32  
Num 5:2, 3 | 7 + 7 days till healing or till death | X | X | X | Temporary (Acquired) |
| 7. Uncleanness related to the mildew in clothing or in a house | Lev 13:47–59  
Lev 14:33–57 | 7 days + burn  
7 + 7 days (+ burn or tear down) | | X | X | Temporary (Acquired) |
| 8. Sexual uncleanness | Lev 15:1–33  
Lev 18:19  
Lev 22:4  
Num 5:2  
Deut 23:11, 12 | 1 day  
7 days till healing + 7 days | | X | X | Temporary (Acquired) |
| 9. Uncleanness of handlers of Red Cow, scapegoat or sin offering | Lev 16:26–28  
Num 19:7–10 | 1 day | | | X | Temporary (Acquired) |
This comparative study indicates that the eleven different kinds of uncleannesses can be classified into two basic categories, one is temporary and the other one is a permanent uncleanness. These two types can be differentiated in the following way:

A. Permanent uncleanness uniquely characterizes the dietary laws. The type of uncleanness of the unclean animals is permanent, and thus natural, hereditary, non-cultic, and universal, while the other kind is acquired, temporary, and ritual/ceremonial. An unclean animal is born unclean and dies unclean. This uncleanness means that an unclean animal is not fit for human consumption. This definition is evident in the chiastic parallelism of Lev 11:47 where unclean equals uneatable, and clean, edible: “You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.”

B. Impurity of living unclean animals is not contagious. There are six sources of uncleanness: carcasses, corpses, various skin diseases, mildew; and sexual discharges—blood or semen, but no living unclean animal belongs to this category of the “fathers” of uncleanness because they cannot cause uncleanness, transmit its impurity, or pollute someone or something.
The nontransferability of the natural uncleanness indicates that it is of a different nature than ritual/cultic impurity.28

C. Touching or carrying a living unclean animal does not result in exclusion from social or religious activities such as visiting the temple or worshiping in the sanctuary. One could ride a donkey or caress a dog, and then enter the temple without any offence to worship God.

D. There is no provision for making unclean animals clean. There is no remedy for the removal of this type of uncleanness. It is impossible to cleanse it or cure it. There is no purification rite capable of making an unclean animal clean. Cooking, slaughtering, or even the time element cannot change it.

E. There is no punishment for disobedience against these food prescriptions, no penalty for the actual eating of the meat of an unclean animal. However, it does not mean that these dietary laws are taken lightly. They belong to the category of sins which were not atoned by rituals in the sanctuary, such as the moral offenses of murder, marital unfaithfulness, or idolatry.29

F. The dietary laws are not related to the Old Testament earthly sanctuary services or to the visible presence of the Lord (so-called resident Shekinah) among God’s people. No cultic ceremony is prescribed when transgression of these dietary laws occurs in contrast to other kinds of uncleannesses.

G. A comparison between Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 demonstrates that the repetition and abbreviation of the dietary code in Deuteronomy 14 is free from ceremonial or ritual regulations connected with the sanctuary, i.e., holy space.30

H. The origin of the dietary laws is presented in the Pentateuch as being much older than laws related to other kinds of uncleanness; they are pre-Mosaic. The distinction between clean and unclean animals was known in the antediluvian world in connection with Noah’s flood (Gen 7:2–3) which

28 For details, see Moskala, The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11, 173–174.
is strong evidence that they form an integral part of universal law, and thus should form an integral part with the Noahide laws.  

I. The Pentateuchal dietary regulations are applicable to the “sojourner/alien.” From the whole corpus of uncleanness of Leviticus 11–15 only these laws are applicable to the ger (“alien sojourner”) via the law of hunting, which was binding on the Israelites as well as on aliens (Lev 17:13). Thus the universal-law aspect of the dietary code is stressed.

This comparison of internal evidences of different kinds of uncleannesses in the Pentateuch clearly demonstrate that choosing the uncleanness of animals and rejecting others is not an arbitrary choice, because this impurity is of a different category.

III. Call to Holiness

The call to holiness, the dominant theme in the book of Leviticus, contains a strong emphasis and admonition for Christians in the New Testament writings. The imitatio Dei is an ongoing demand. It is significant that Peter’s reason for being holy (1 Pet 1:15–16) is substantiated by the text derived from the passage dealing with the Mosaic dietary laws (Lev 11:44–45).

IV. Abomination Practices

The close connection between dietary prohibitions, warning against idolatry, and prohibition of all immoral sexual behavior (all three activities are called to‘ebah, “abomination”) is a strong indication that this triune ordinance has to find continuity in the New Testament era. The moral

---

31 On seven Noahide laws, see New World Encyclopedia, entry “Noahide Laws.”
32 For the insightful discussion on ritual and moral impurity, see Jonathan Klawans, Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism (Oxford: University Press, 2000).
33 It does not mean that the principles behind different kinds of uncleanness are no more binding for Christians. All principles which lie behind these various regulations are valid even though not the detailed prescriptions which are mixed with different ceremonial/ cultic particulars. For example, Christians should not include any sexual practices into their worship (behind the sexual uncleanness is a wall against infiltration of immoral pagan activities into true worship).
aspect of the dietary law plays a crucial role in the Old Testament (Lev 11:44–45; Deut 14:3; Ezek 33:25–26).  

V. Prohibition of Blood Consumption

In our consumptive society, it is important to cultivate respect for life. The Pentateuchal dietary regulations include this ethical dimension by stressing the prohibition of blood consumption in seven passages in the Pentateuch: Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:10–14; 19:26; Deut 12:16, 23–25; 15:23. The prohibition of blood is explicitly given as a command after the flood (Gen 9:4) when God gives a new creation order and for the first time allows humans to eat the flesh of living creatures. The prohibition of eating blood in Lev 11 is implied by two factors: (1) eating blood is forbidden in the larger context, see especially Lev 7:26–27 and 17:10–14 where it is mentioned in connection to eating clean meat; and (2) clean animals that are permitted for human consumption are herbivorous (all carnivorous animals are excluded), thus the command of not eating blood is applied to the eating behavior of animals as well.  

Even though God permitted the eating of meat, man was still to have reverence for the life which he would be required to take. This is the reason for the command to “pour out blood” and the prohibition against eating it.


35 It is true that some unclean animals also do not eat blood. In order to identify an animal as clean, it is not sufficient to point out this one feature—its herbivorous behavior—even though it is a significant issue. There are other specific characteristics for recognizing clean animals and distinguishing them from the unclean ones. See Moskala, The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11, 315–343, for more about this issue.

In addition to this, the manner in which living creatures were to be slaughtered was also referred to (Deut 12:21), although the actual specifics of slaughtering were nowhere explained in the Torah. Later in the Mosaic law a more detailed explanation of the prohibitions against the consumption of blood is given: the blood of animals and birds is prohibited (Lev 7:26), but not that of fish or clean locusts.

The removal of blood is a significant lesson for humanity. Blood is a symbol of life (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11, 14) which belongs to the Creator. Reverence for life is thus codified. Human beings must be constantly aware of the concession that God has made in allowing them to take the life of another creature for the sake of food. They were also to be reminded of this responsibility as ones created in the image of God. Their humanness and humaneness must be maintained even in the act of killing. They need to keep in mind that they are not God. They must be reminded that they are dependent on their Creator who alone is the Giver of life.

From the fact that in the beginning a vegetarian diet is given to animals as well as to humans, and that in the future kingdom of God it will again be the same (Isa 11:7), we can conclude that the eating of blood is also not natural for animals and is a trespass on God’s given order from Creation. This is why all carnivorous animals and carnivorous birds are excluded from the list of edible animals. It means that the preservation of the original sacred life (a main feature of creation) is envisaged by these dietary regulations. Firmage correctly observes: “Unlike the rest of the code of


37 Jacob Milgrom defends the rabbinic position on slaughter. See Milgrom, “Profane Slaughter and a Formulaic Key to the Composition of Deuteronomy,” Hebrew Union College Annual 47 (1976): 1–17. Animals prepared for food must be alive and properly slaughtered (blood must be poured out). This means that all naturally dead or torn animals (carcasses) even of clean animals are eliminated for eating (Gen 9:3; Exod 22:31; Lev 11:40; 17:15–16; Deut 14:21). By analogy, it seems that all animals who feed on dead and decaying matter, on carrion or carcasses, are excluded from human consumption; i.e., scavengers (hyena, jackals, vultures, some kinds of beetles and flies, etc.) are off the list of the clean animals.
MOSKALA: LEVITICAL FOOD LAWS

impurities, the dietary laws place a value on behavior and so belong in the category of moral imperatives."

VI. Health Aspect

The aspect of health should not be overlooked. Even though the primary purpose of the dietary laws is not health, this dimension is one factor which must be taken seriously, because it is a quality of life valid at any time.

Holiness means wholeness and completeness. On that well-recognized basis I suggest that there is also a close relationship between holiness and health, that health is one important aspect of holiness. It is significant to note that there is no specific word in biblical Hebrew for the English equivalent of "health." When God or biblical writers speak about health they use different language from what we would expect. In Hebrew thinking health expresses the totality of wellness of the human being. The physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects are included. The psychosomatic approach can be discerned from the Hebrew Bible. In the words of Hasel: "Health in the biblical view is not one particular quality among many that pertain to the human being; it is the wholeness and completeness of being in itself, and in relation to God, to fellow humans, and to the world." Biblical speaking health is total well-being, a comprehensive wholeness.

---


39 Douglas, Purity and Danger, 51–53; Milgrom, Leviticus 1–16, 721.

40 In modern Hebrew these words are used for expressing the idea of health: תוראה ("health"); תורא ("healthful"); תוריא ("heal"); תוריא ("healthy"); תוריא ("healthfulness, healthiness." It is interesting that the biblical Hebrew word כפירה ("fat") (Gen 41:2, 4) means "healthy" in modern Hebrew.

41 People usually understand health in the negative sense as "absence of sickness." Negatively stated, a healthy person is one who is not sick. The World Health Organization defines health in deeper way: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The opening paragraph of the WHO Constitution, 1948 (Albert Deutsch, The World Health Organization—Its Global Battle Against Disease, Public Affairs Pamphlet, no. 265 [New York: Public Affairs Committee, 1958], 5).

Even though in biblical Hebrew there is no specific word for health, nevertheless the idea is expressed by words we in our culture do not expect. The concept of health can be expressed by the following words: ים “wholeness, well-being, peace” (Gen 37:14; 43:28; 1 Sam 25:6; 2 Sam 20:9; Isa 57:18–19) and כות “holy, complete, whole” (Lev 11:44–45; 21:23; Deut 14:21), and קדש “clean, pure, genuine” (Lev 13:17–20; 14:9; 2 Kgs 5:14).

The Hebrew Bible has a concern for health. God promised: “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God . . . I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you” (Exod 15:26). God also stated that if the people would obey His laws, pay attention to His commandments, and keep covenant with Him, He would keep them “from every disease” (Deut 7:15), but if they would not obey, He would bring upon them “all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded” (Deut 28:60). God’s blessing is described in such a way that it includes good health (often stated negatively), prosperity, and promise of long life (Gen 15:15; Exod 23:25–26; Deut 28:27, 35; Ps 32:3–5; Prov 3:8; 4:22; 12:18; 13:17; 16:24). God takes care of all our physical needs. It is God who heals (Gen 20:17; Exod 15:26; Deut 32:39; Ps 103:3).43

Man was created as a unit. Biblical anthropology states that a human being is a living soul. According to the Creation story, humans have no soul, they are a soul (Gen 2:7). This holistic view of humanity has something to do with holiness, because holiness also means wholeness. This fact emphasizes the unity of our nature. It follows that if we are to live to the glory of God we must do so in all dimensions of life—physical, emotional, spiritual, and social (1 Thess 5:23).

---

A result of respecting the Mosaic dietary laws appears in the realm of hygiene. Although I agree with Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., that “observing salutary results is not necessarily the same as discerning the intent for issuing these dietary restrictions,” yet I maintain that both aspects are here valid (health intent as well as health benefits). Some important scientific studies demonstrate that eating meat from clean animals is healthier for human consumption than eating the flesh of unclean ones.

**VII. Distinction Given for Food or Sacrifice?**

The origin of the regulations regarding laws of clean and unclean animals is connected with the pre-flood world. Noah had to make a distinction between clean and unclean animals (Gen 7:2–3; compare with 6:19–21), but for what reason?

*Noah knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals.* The biblical text gives no indication whether Adam had such knowledge after the entrance of sin, because it is not known when exactly this distinction originated. One can assume that it was revealed sometime after the Fall, most probably in connection with the Flood when a new creation order was presented. It is highly significant that at the first mention of sacrifice in the book of Genesis (Gen 4), there is no indication of the distinction between clean and unclean animals, but when permission to eat flesh is mentioned for the first time (Gen 9), the distinction between clean and unclean animals/food is understood.

*Offerings completely burnt till the time of Moses.* It seems that until the time of Moses (when the sacrificial system was fully developed) the meat of animal offerings was completely burnt (Gen 8:20; compare with Deut...
33:10; Ps 51:19). There is no case recorded in the book of Genesis in which the meat of the offered animals was eaten (Gen 4:3–5; 8:20; 22:13). When Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob built their altars to worship God, there is no indication that they consumed the sacrifice (Gen 12:7–8; 13:4, 18; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7). Nothing was left for food from a burnt offering. Only later, when the Tabernacle was built in the wilderness, were meat portions of some sacrifices given as food to the priests (Lev 6:26, 29; 7:6–7, 31–34) and to the participants (Lev 7:15–17).

Only a few clean animals sacrificed. Only a few clean animals were used for sacrificial purposes: three species of animal (cattle, sheep, and goat), two species of bird (turtledove and pigeon), and no fish.

It seems that the distinction between clean and unclean animals was not made primarily for the purpose of delineating animals that could be used for sacrifices. Sacrifices could be taken only from among the clean animals.


47 For specificity of which animals were sacrificed on what occasions, see Lev 1-7. The biblical text Gen 8:20 is ambivalent in regard to the precise species Noah sacrificed, because the meaning of the Hebrew phrase: מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וְיִשָּׂאָם מִצַּלָּה הָאָרֶץ מְדָמֹם לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ מְדָמֹם לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ יְבִיא הַמַּכָּה מֵעֲלֵיהֶם מִצַּלָּה הָאָרֶץ מְדָמֹם לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ מְדָמֹם לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ יְבִיא (Lev 27:1–10).
However, not all clean animals could be used in the sacrificial services. I hold therefore that the primary purpose of these laws was to regulate diet.

VIII. Unclean Food and the New Testament

Unclean food legislation is not abrogated in the New Testament.

1. There is a basic continuity between the Old and New Covenants and this fundamental premise is supported by many scholars from a variety of interpretive approaches. It is true that the New Testament abolishes the ceremonial/sacrificial system of the Old Testament because it was typological and/or symbolic in nature. At the cross Jesus brought to an end the whole sanctuary system which pointed to Him as its ultimate fulfillment (Dan 9:27; Eph 2:15; Col 2:14; Heb 8:1–6; Matt 27:50–51; cf. 1 Cor 7:19). However, there is nothing typological or symbolic in the nature or rationale of the Mosaic dietary laws regarding clean and unclean animals/food which would point to the fulfillment in Christ, the church or the last events (the eschaton).

2. In order to interpret correctly many New Testament passages dealing with this subject, one must take into consideration the difference between two Greek words which represent two different concepts: *akathartos* (“unclean”) which reflects the Old Testament teaching, and *koinos* (“common, polluted”) which on the other hand points to the special rabbinical concept adopted sometime in the intertestamental period (most probably in the second century B.C.) and known as defilement by association. It was believed that if something clean touched something unclean, it would become *koinos* (“defiled, polluted, common”).

---


3. Jesus statement in Mark 7:19b katharizon panta ta bromata (“cleansing all the food”) can be understood as an irony.\textsuperscript{50} Christ is contrasting the tradition of the elders with the biblical law and demonstrates the difference between spiritual and physical defilement.

Many scholars recognize today that Jesus and the apostles were not against the dietary laws, but against their misuse. Since their original intent was distorted He had to restore their true meaning. Jesus’ teaching does not diminish the validity of the dietary regulations. Danger to the purity of the mind and the heart is more important than what goes into the stomach.

Modern translators often fail to reflect that Jesus is referring in Mark 7 to food that is \textit{koinos}—desecrated/polluted by association—and not to food that is \textit{akathartos} (“unclean”), because the word “unclean” does not appear in this pericope. The same can be said about Matt 15:11, 17–20.\textsuperscript{51}

4. When I ask my audience what kind of animals were in the sheet Peter saw in his vision according to Acts 10, the typical answer is a “variety of different kinds of unclean animals.” However, this answer is wrong, because the biblical text shows that in the sheet were unclean as well as clean animals. This observation leads to a crucial question: What was then the problem for Peter? He could pick up the clean animal and “kill and eat,” but he refused. Bruce is right when he asserts that Peter “was scandalized by the unholy mixture of clean animals with unclean; this is particularly important when we recall the practical way in which he had immediately to apply the lesson of the vision.”\textsuperscript{52} Thus, the real problem for Peter was association of clean animals with the unclean animals otherwise he could pick up a cow, sheep, or goat from the shown creatures and prepare it for food. Peter felt he could not eat anything, because even the clean animals became unclean by association with the unclean animals, a concept which

\textsuperscript{50} Such an interpretative possibility is mentioned by Petr Pokorný, \textit{Výklad evangelia podle Marka}, 2d ed. (Praha: Kalich, 1981), 148. Herman Ridderboss, \textit{The Coming of the Kingdom} (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 332, argues for only one correct translation of this phrase: “Some authors translate Mark 7:19b by ‘and thus he declared all meats to be pure’; but katharizoon must be taken as the continuation of ekporeuetai. The process of digestion is at the same time the purification of the food!”

\textsuperscript{51} For more details, see David Merling, “Clean and Unclean Meat,” \textit{Ministry} 72, June 1999, 28–30.

\textsuperscript{52} F. F. Bruce, \textit{The Book of the Acts} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 218.
MOSKALA: LEVITICAL FOOD LAWS

is not supported by the Hebrew Scriptures (a living unclean animal is not a source for uncleanness!), but only by rabbinic tradition.

God asked Peter to stop calling the clean animals koinos, i.e., defiled by association with the unclean animals. This meant that he (a Jew) had to stop considering himself unclean by associating with Gentiles. This goes along with a different concept which was also developed during the intertestamental period—the symbolic interpretation of animals into two categories: clean animals represented the Jews and unclean animals symbolized the Gentiles/pagans. This had tremendous implications for their social life, because they needed to be constantly watching not to become defiled by association with unclean pagans. If a Jew was in close contact with a pagan he thus became polluted. In the time of Jesus and the apostles, there were huge social barriers between Jews and Gentiles. They could not eat together or visit each other in their homes for a variety of reasons (food could have been offered to idols; connected with unclean animals; prejudices). Through the vision, Peter was taught that the social barriers between Jews and Gentiles had fallen down (he was now free to socialize with them and visit the house of a pagan Cornelius), and not that a biblical distinction between clean and unclean animals was no longer valid (see Acts 10:28; 11:12).

5. Another confirmation of the validity of the Mosaic dietary laws may be seen in Acts 15 where the eating of blood is prohibited. This prohibition is included in the Levitical dietary legislation. Acts 15:29 affirms that the new non-Jewish believers should continue to “abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.” These four binding prohibitions of the so-called Apostolic Decree clearly reflect the universal laws of Leviticus 17–18.

It is highly significant that the four issues decided at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:20, 29) are found in the same sequence in Leviticus 17–18, and all of them are related to the ger (“alien”)—Lev 17:8, 10, 12, 13, 15; 18:26: (1) food offered to idols (Lev 17:3–9); (2) prohibition of blood (Lev 17:10–14); (3) abstaining from the meat of strangled animals

---


In light of Lev 17:10–14 these apostolic prohibitions implicitly include the clean and unclean food distinctions. It is plainly stated: “So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.” (Lev 17:13 NASB). It is important to observe that three of these four minimum requirements for the Gentile believers are related to food regulations.

6. In Romans 14 Paul is probably addressing problems relating to ascetics among the Essenes or is confronting the same issue as the Corinthian problem: meat offered to idols. In Rom 14:14–23, Paul explains that the most important law is the law of love. He declares that nothing is koinos (“common,” or “polluted”) in itself. He does not say that nothing is akathartos (“unclean”). The concept behind this assertion is pollution by association. Nothing becomes polluted by association with idols.

7. In 1 Cor 8:1–13 and 10:23–33, Paul explains the hot problem in the apostolic Church: “Is it permitted to eat meat offered to idols or not?” This question of conscience is dealing with an issue that has no clear-cut answer in Scripture. Paul holds that since idols are nothing more than human creations one is free to eat meat that has been offered to them on condition that this is done apart from the cultic setting. His concern is very pastoral. He wants to stress that love must prevent the misuse of this knowledge for the sake of the weaker brother.

8. In 1 Tim 4:1–5 it is stressed that food which was created for human consumption (reference to Gen 1:31) and sanctified by prayer is suitable for food. The author of that epistle is not advocating eating anything! He is in polemic with gnostic ascetics who despised God’s creation and had negative attitudes toward physical matter under the influence of Greek thinking and culture.

**Conclusion**

There is nothing in the New Testament when taken in its context to suggest that the distinction between clean and unclean food has been abolished. Professor Kilgallen aptly declares: “The simplest supposition, that Jesus faced the Leviticus statement, and directly and explicitly canceled it, is not verifiable.” Heiki Sariola explains that Mark 7:1–23...
MOSKALA: LEVITICAL FOOD LAWS

should not be understood in such a way that the author (Mark) “rejects the dietary laws.”\textsuperscript{56} The same is attested by David Rudolph: “It is ‘historically unimaginable’ to an increasing number of NT scholars that Jesus taught against the Torah’s dietary laws.”\textsuperscript{57} Péter-Contesse correctly states: “As for the notion of cleaness and uncleanness, it seems at first glance that the perspective of the New Testament is diametrically opposed to that of the Old Testament. . . . These texts [Mark 7:19; Acts 10:12–15; Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 8; 2 Cor 7:1; Phil 1:10; 1 Thess 4:7; Heb 9:13–14; James 4:8] do not deal with the distinction between what is clean and what is unclean as in the case of the Old Testament ritual (cultic) texts. The notions are spiritualized and the stress lies no longer on ritual purity, but on moral purity. . . . The break which Jesus brings is not demonstrated in relationship to the fundamental Old Testament doctrine, but in contrast to the formalism of the scribes and Pharisees of his time.”\textsuperscript{58} Kleinig plainly argues when discussing Christ’s teaching on purity (Matt 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23) that Jesus did not abolish dietary laws: “He [Jesus] did not ridicule their concern for purity and abolish the rules for purity in Leviticus. Instead, he reaffirmed them and deepened them. His teaching on purity presupposes that his disciples shared in his holiness with their hearts rather than just with their bodies.”\textsuperscript{59}

The Mosaic laws form a mosaic. It would do great damage if we threw away the Mosaic laws simply because they are present in the Pentateuch. There are many examples of laws that Christians accept even though they are included in the Mosaic legislation like laws against idolatry, prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality, and incest (Leviticus 18–19). The two greatest commandments are also taken from the Pentateuch: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Deut 6:5), and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18).

\textsuperscript{59} Kleinig, 260.
By not eating things our Lord prohibited, humans exercise deep respect for their holy Creator and thus our tables become silent witnesses for our allegiance to our Creator God. By not eating certain food, Christians do not earn salvation or gain God’s favor, because the observation of these dietary principles is not a way to heaven, but an expression of faithfulness to God. In this way we live to the glory of God in a more consistent way. Moses actually assures that these laws are for the saved people, and that it is a lifestyle of the children of God: “You are the children of the LORD your God, . . . You are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession. Do not eat any detestable thing” (Deut 14:1–3). Taking seriously His revelation is a celebration of God’s gift of creation. The best way to know the benefits of God’s dietary instruction is to follow them.

Rabbi Kushner put it well: “We sanctify the act of eating with the dietary laws.”60 The Talmud says: “A man’s table is like the altar.”61 It matters not only what but especially how we eat as MacDonald expresses it appropriately in his outstanding study on food in the Old Testament: “You are how you eat.”62 Food is related to our identity.63 Food should be taken as an expression of gratitude and thankfulness, because it is God who provides everything that we need. Thus a common thing such as eating becomes something special. The ordinary is made extraordinary. Our tables should be unspoken silent witnesses of our respect for our holy Creator. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

---

61 Hagigah 27a.
Jiří Moskala is Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology and Chair of the Old Testament Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Moskala received his Th.D. in 1990 from the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology, which is now renamed the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University, Czech Republic. His dissertation was entitled: “The Book of Daniel and the Maccabean Thesis: The Problem of Authorship, Unity, Structure, and Seventy Weeks in the Book of Daniel (A Contribution to the Discussion on Canonical Apocalyptic)” and was published in the Czech language. In 1998 he completed his Ph.D. from Andrews University. His dissertation was entitled: “The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)” and has been published under the same title. Moskala has authored several books and articles in the Czech and English languages.

moskala@andrews.edu
Apocalyptic and Free Will

Robert M. Johnston
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Adventism, historically speaking, is firmly grounded in apocalypticism, as indeed also was early Christianity. Adventism, as an heir of Millerism, was born of the study of the books of Daniel and Revelation, supplemented by the Little Apocalypse of the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, Luke 21), and even, during the beginnings of the movement, some attention to 2 Esdras.

It has become commonplace to distinguish between two types of Hebrew literary prophecy: classical and apocalyptic. Classical prophecy had its roots in the warnings and promises of Deuteronomy 27-30. The summation is 30:15-18:

See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping

---

1 One of the most important chapters in the New Testament was Daniel 7. From verses 9-18 come some of its most important motifs and terminology: the final Judgment, the Son of Man, the Kingdom of God, the Saints.

2 See “A Word to the Little Flock,” reprinted in Earliest Seventh-day Adventist Periodicals (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005), Part I. The tract was an account of visions received by Ellen White, but references to passages throughout the Bible are incorporated, as well as multiple references to 2 Esdras 2, 6, 15, 16, 43. There is also one reference to Wisdom of Solomon 5:1-5. The scriptural references for the visions are said to have been supplied by James White. But that is enough to establish early Adventist interest in this apocryphal apocalypse. In respect to canonical biblical books some apocalyptic flavor has also been detected in Zechariah.
his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.  

As Isaiah puts it succinctly, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken: (Isaiah 1:19, 20).

All the classical prophecies are warnings or promises that are explicitly or implicitly conditional upon the response and behavior of the people of Israel. It assumes that they have within their power the ability to choose the path that they will take, and the fulfillment is in this age. The predictions of disaster will be fulfilled only if the people does not respond to them by repentance and obedience. In other words, classical prophecy is predicated on the assumption of free will.

Apocalyptic prophecy is different. It assumes that the future is completely out of human control. Divine intervention comes from without and brings history to an end, and the history is predetermined from the beginning. The present world is hopeless, but in the end God will be victorious, and he has total control of events. As Gowan says, “The basis for this hope is strongly deterministic theology which appears most prominently in two places: where the existence of evil is explained . . . and where the future is predicted. Obviously the seer can know what the future will be only if it has already been determined by someone with the power to assure that things will come out that way, and they firmly believe that to be true about the God of Israel.”

---

3 All biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.
4 A typical description of classical prophecy, in contrast to apocalypticism, is that in it “the future grows out of the present and salvation and fulfillment are looked for in history;” it is conditional; the prophetic messages were preached; and they were often poetic in form. Thus Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 477.
5 Donald E. Gowan, Bridge Between the Testaments: Reappraisal of Judaism From the Exile to the Birth of Christianity, 3rd ed., Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series, 14 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1995) 361. Gowan also suggests a formal distinction: Classical prophecy would have first been preached and was usually expressed
Examination of a book like Daniel seems to confirm the accuracy of this description. Not only do we see a scripted scenario, but there are time tables that will be followed. The train is on a track, and it will not be derailed, diverted, or detained. There is nothing than any human can do to change the destiny that is predicted.  

In the first century of our era the three principle Jewish denominations were differentiated partly by the ways in which they responded to the apocalyptic vision. The Sadducees, who accepted as canonical only the five books of Moses, believed totally in free will.  

The Essenes, who cherished every apocalypse they could get their hands on, were strongly deterministic in their outlook. They believed that God had revealed his unalterable plan to them. In their view, all prophecies were for the time of the end, which was their time. They could be understood by inspired interpretations, called pesharim, supplied by their leader, the Teacher of Righteousness. By putting the time prophecies of Daniel together with certain other prophecies they were able to calculate when the end of the age would come. After one disappointment their final calculation was that the end would come in A.D. 70.

in poetry, while apocalyptic prophecy was a literary production written in prose.

That Daniel is deterministic has been vigorously disputed by Dalton D. Baldwin, “Free Will and Conditionality in Daniel,” in To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea, ed. By David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: The Institute of Archaeoloogy/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 163-72. Baldwin points to numerous references in Daniel that imply that “. . . divine action in reference to human beings is conditioned on their free choices.” Furthermore, if Daniel was written to encourage Jews to remain faithful, it implies that they had the capability not to do so (165). On this see below.

Josephus, Jewish War 2.162. Also Philo of Alexandria defended free will and opposed fatalism. See De providentia 1.80.

Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18.18. Most scholars accept that the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls were Essenes, so we may also note 1QS 3.15, “From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed He established their whole design, and when, as ordained for them, they come into being, it is in accord with His glorious design that they accomplish their task without change. The laws of all things are in His hand and He provides them with all their needs.” Translation from Geza Vermes, the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 4th ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 101.


Hartmut Stegemann, The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 205-209.
The Pharisees, like many after them, sought to have it both ways. As the influential Rabbi Aqiba b. Joseph said, “All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given.”11

Apocalyptic prophecy is predicated on the proposition that God has a script, a plan the outworking of which is inevitable. The detailed scenarios and time tables hardly make sense otherwise. Later extensions and interpretations only intensify this picture by elaborating details. Adventism has latter-day pesharim which spell out the future history of such entities as the Catholic Church, Protestantism, and the United States of America.12 The possibility is not entertained that any of these entities can change course and proceed in a different direction than the one that is marked out.

What happens when apocalypticism, with its strong determinism and insistence upon God’s irresistible sovereignty and complete control over history and the destiny of men, becomes laminated to Arminianism with its vigorous resistance to determinism? Among the propositions set forth in the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610 are that God’s saving grace is not irresistible, and that it is possible for Christians to fall from grace. It follows that no one is predestined, apart from his own choice, to damnation or salvation. These views were taken up by English and American Methodism, and by the anti-Calvinist Christian Connexion, and from these they passed into Adventism. In this view the human will is not only free but potent, at least to the extent that it can choose to serve God. Typical statements are these:

God does not force the will of His creatures. He can not accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton.13

---

11 Mishnah Aboth 3:16.
What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You can not change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him.  

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator,—individuality, power to think and to do.

In the officially affirmed doctrinal statement of the Adventist Church, known as the “Fundamental Beliefs,” article 7, entitled “The Nature of Man,” we find it stated thus:

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and soul, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else.

It would seem, then, that Adventism was originally deterministic in its eschatology and antideterministic in its anthropology. Its soteriology is delicately poised between the two. Over time the theology has been gradually moving to the side of indeterminism. The Second Coming of Christ has been made postponable and conditional upon human action of various kinds. The translation of 2 Peter 3:12 is favored that reads, “waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” The Lord delays his coming out of mercy: “The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9). The development of genuine godliness becomes almost a prerequisite for the Day of the Lord, as is also the completion of the missionary task (Matthew 24:14). A common expression of Adventist piety is “Let’s finish the work so the Lord can come.” It is hard to imagine a sentiment more out of tune with the emphasis on divine sovereignty that

14 Ibid., 52.
16 Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, revised ([Hagerstown, MD]: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990.)
is characteristic of apocalypticism. It looks like classical prophecy in an apocalyptic disguise.

Nevertheless the paradox is sometimes felt, and indeed it is one that has been felt ever since the first century.\textsuperscript{17} How serious is it, and how can it be resolved?

One answer to the problem is to say that the destiny of the aggregate is determined, but not that of the individual. Thus Gowan notes that apocalypticists

remain faithful to the Old Testament in that their determinism does not extend to the destiny of the individual. Although repentance is seldom spoken of, apostasy is seen as a definite possibility and, although there is nothing one can do to alter the course of history it is necessary to exhort believers to remain faithful so that they may come out on the right side when the end comes.\textsuperscript{18}

This turns on its head the teaching of the staunchly deterministic Augustine of Hippo. Needing to explain 1 Timothy 2:4 (“[God] who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”) he says “all men” means every sort of man, “the human race in all its varieties of rank and circumstance” (with the word “all” having the same force as in Luke 11:42), but it does not mean every individual.\textsuperscript{19} In any case, the will of God cannot be overcome by the will of man.

Thus, in complete contrast to Augustine’s view, the fate of individuals is not sealed ahead of time, but that of the nations or groups to which they belong is predestined. A possible objection to this distinction between the individual and the aggregate is the Bible concept of corporate personality. To a certain extent every individual shares the fate of his nation or his group. But there are exceptions, like Noah and his family, like Abraham, and like Rahab. They chose to be different.

\textsuperscript{17} Whether the messianic redemption will come at a predestined time or can be hastened or delayed by Israel’s behavior was the subject of a classic debate between R. Eliezer b.Hyrcanus and R. Joshua b. Hananiah in Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97b ff. The issue is also the subtext of 2 Peter 3.

\textsuperscript{18} Gowan, \textit{Bridge}, 361. Most of the references cited by Baldwin, “Free Will and Conditionality,” come under this rubric.

\textsuperscript{19} Augustine \textit{Enchiridion} 103.
Another option is to ignore the paradox by distinguishing between destiny and foreknowledge, and to say, like R. Aqiba: “All is foreseen, but free will is given.” This entails accepting that God does not control the choices that people make, but he has foreknowledge of what they will choose; and on the basis of that foreknowledge he decrees their fate. Thus Justin Martyr was at pains to explain why prophecy does not defeat human responsibility:

So that none may infer from what we have said that the events we speak of, because they were foreknown and predicted, took place according to inevitable destiny—I can explain this too. We have learned from the prophets, and declare as the truth, that penalties and punishments and good rewards are given according to the quality of each man’s actions. If this were not so, nothing would be left up to us. For if it is destined that one man should be good and another wicked, then neither is the one acceptable nor the other blameworthy.

But we do say that deserved rewards are irrevocably destined for those who have chosen to do good, and likewise their just deserts for those [who have chosen] the opposite. But God did not make man like other [beings], such as trees and animals, which have no power of choice. For he would not be worthy of rewards or praise if he did not choose the good of himself, but was so made.

Finally, after quoting Deuteronomy 30:15, Isaiah 1:16-20, and Plato’s Republic 617E, Justin concludes:

So when we say that things yet to happen have been prophesied, we do not say that they take place by inevitable destiny, but since God foreknows what all men will do, and it is his decree that each will be rewarded according to the quality of his actions, he foretells by the prophetic Spirit what he will do in accordance with the quality of what they do.

---

20 Mishnah Aboth 3:16, quoted above.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid. 1:44.
Justin was fighting Valentinian Gnosticism, which taught that people are hylics, psychics, or pneumatics by destiny. But that was not Augustine’s problem, and he had no patience for such a line of argument as Justin’s. Commenting on Romans 9:10-18 (the case of Jacob and Esau), he remarks:

Now if the apostle had wished us to understand that there were future good works of the one, and evil works of the other, which of course God foreknew, he would never have said, “not of works,” but “of future works,” and in that way would have solved the difficulty, or rather there would have been no difficulty to solve. . . . But he will have mercy on whom he will.24

Perhaps it is a question of whether a choice is a work. If we are saved by our own choice, are we still saved by God’s grace?

But the question we must address is: Are the scenarios and time tables of apocalyptic prophecy an expression of God’s foreknowledge or a declaration of God’s plan? More practically, can anyone—whether individual, nation, or church—do anything different from that which has been foretold? If not, foreknowledge looks very much like predestination, and we have a verbal distinction without a practical difference.

A third way to resolve the paradox is to remove or reduce the difference between apocalyptic and classical prophecy. We may recall again Gowan’s observation, already quoted, that in apocalyptic “Although repentance is seldom spoken of, apostasy is seen as a definite possibility and, although there is nothing one can do to alter the course of history it is necessary to exhort believers to remain faithful so that they may come out on the right side when the end comes.”25

But even beyond that, the difference between the two kinds of prophecy may not be absolute. After all, the classic example of conditionality in prophecy is Jonah, whose prophecy of doom included an unambiguous time table: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”26 On the apocalyptic side, Daniel concludes the pesher of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream

25 Gowan, Bridge, 361.
26 Jonah 3:4.
by suggesting that his prophesied destiny might be averted or at least modified somewhat by repentance: “Break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your tranquillity.”27 The Book of Revelation is replete with warnings and promises that imply the need to make right decisions, and with appeals for repentance.28

If the distinctiveness of apocalyptic prophecy is diminished there are losses and gains. On the one hand, certainty about future events is reduced.29 On the other hand, fatalism and the futility of human effort is reduced. The kind of hope that is dependent upon God’s sovereign power is replaced with hope that is placed on the potency of human decisions and effort. God is still in the picture as the Rewarder and Punisher, but the outcome depends on what we do.30 The attractiveness of apocalypticism, and whether one wants to drink it without mixture or drink it diluted probably depends on the degree of pessimism or optimism of the times.

We have reviewed three ways of dissolving the paradox that is produced when apocalypticism is laminated to Arminianism: (1) distinguish between aggregate destiny and individual destiny; (2) distinguish between foreknowledge and predestinating decree; (3) dissolve the distinction between classical prophecy and apocalyptic prophecy, resolving the tension between them in favor of free will.

There remains only a fourth way to deal with the problem: Simply accept the paradox as paradox and live with it. It would not be the only antinomy in Christian theology.

27 Daniel 4:27.
29 If this direction is taken, the possibility opens up that the Pope may declare that Christians should keep the seventh-day Sabbath, and the United States of America may end up as a paragon of national virtue.
30 Thus Baldwin concludes: “Daniel is not written from a deterministic world view. The condemnation of the rebellious choices of beastly powers, the many appeals to free right choice and the frequent description of God’s action as conditioned on human free choices indicate that the books is written from a world view that includes free choices and conditionality.” “Free Will and Conditionality,” 172.
Robert M. Johnston is emeritus professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, where he has taught since 1974. Before that he was a missionary in the Far East for 12 years. bobjohn@andrews.edu
Christological Concepts in the Book of Revelation–Part 3: The Lamb Christology

Ekkehardt Mueller
Biblical Research Institute
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Although Jesus as the Lamb was already presented in the second article of this series, we must return to this subject and expand on it, to further study the nature of the Lamb, the activities of the Lamb, and the people of the Lamb. In doing so we need to keep in mind that the Lamb is divine\(^1\) as discussed in the second section of the second article in the series. In this final part, we will try to use only those data which directly relate to the Lamb and largely avoid information that can be derived from other descriptions and titles of Jesus in Revelation. It is true that in one way or another the other designations of Jesus are indirectly connected to the Lamb, since they also point to Jesus. However, they will not be our focus. Therefore, the passages dealing with the nature, the ministry, and the people of the Lamb do not reflect a complete Christology of Revelation, but provide a Lamb Christology of the book.

1. The Nature and Character of the Lamb

   No title and image referring to Jesus is used as frequently as is the symbol of the Lamb. In Revelation Jesus is first of all the Lamb. By employing this symbol so often John may have wanted to communicate an important message.

\(^1\) E.g., it is worshiped (Rev 5:8-14) and together with God the Father it is the temple and the source of light for the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:22, 23).
a. The Lamb as Sacrificial Animal

The context of Revelation with its strong emphasis on the sanctuary classifies the Lamb (to arnion) as a sacrificial animal. In his Gospel John calls Jesus the “Lamb (ho amnos) of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). Paul understood Jesus to be the Passover Lamb (to pascha; 1Cor 5:7). The OT background for the lamb in Revelation could be Isa 53:7 (to probaton, LXX). There, as in Rev 5, lamb terminology is connected to the word family “to slaughter.” It is true that different Greek terms are used to describe such a lamb. Yet in spite of the different terms for lamb, the concept remains the same.

Johns has discussed the possible background of the lamb in Revelation. He looked at the sacrificial lamb, the Paschal Lamb, the suffering servant of Isa 53 compared to a lamb, Daniel’s ram and goat in Dan 8, the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22, called the Aqedah, the lambs of Micah 5:6, the lambs of eschatological peace in Isa 11:6 and Isa 65:25, and the vulnerable lamb (arnion) of the LXX. He denies that the idea of sacrifice or substitution is associated or at least is dominant with arnion in Revelation. He seems to suggest that none of the OT backgrounds fits perfectly with the lamb in the

---

2 Cf. Sophie Laws, In the Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody, and Theology in the Apocalypse of John, Good News Studies 31 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 29; Ulrich B. Müller, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1984), 158. Ben Witherington III, Revelation, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 120-121, states: “The term chosen, coupled with the emphasis on this being the slain lamb, favors the translation lamb rather than ram. But this lamb had horns, and so we have a fusion of sacrificial lamb and ram features, conveying a deliberate paradox. The lamb is vulnerable and is slain, but the lamb is strong like a ram as well.” Steve Moyise, The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction. The Continuum Biblical Studies Series (London: Continuum, 2001), 125, notes: “The Lamb is probably the Passover Lamb or perhaps the Lamb of Isa 53:10 (or both) and represents gentleness and self-sacrifice.”


Apocalypse and that the lamb of Revelation is not a vulnerable lamb but “one who wages war with the sword of his mouth . . . Rather than playing the helpless victim, the Lamb of the Apocalypse is a conquering, victorious lamb.” Therefore, Revelation would be a call to non-violent resistance more than a document stressing substitutionary atonement.

However, the concepts of purchasing humans through the Lamb’s blood (Rev 5:9; cf. 14:3,4), the freeing of humans from their sins through Jesus’ blood (Rev 1:5), the washing of believers’ robes and the process of making them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14, cf. 22:14) point to the idea of a sacrifice on Jesus’ part. The term “to slaughter” is not just a military term but is also used in connection with sacrifice. Hoffmann talks about Jesus as the Passover Lamb and “the salvific Passover Lamb.” So it is difficult to exclude the concept of sacrifice from the slain Lamb, and it should not be done either. Bredin argues against the thesis that sphazō relates exclusively to murder and killing and thuō is used in a sacrificial context only:

The Greek word John used for ‘slain’ (σφαζω) can mean both ‘to murder’ and ‘to sacrifice’, but, on the whole, sacrificial slaying is conveyed (Gen. 22:10; Ex. 12:6; Ezr. 6:20; Lev. 1:5, 11; 4:24; 9:8; Num. 19:3). Also, θομ need not indicate a sacrificial death (Jn 10:10; Acts 10:13; 11:7). It is difficult to understand Revelation 7:14 other than as sacrifice. Those who have been saved wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. . . It is not

---

6 Johns, 149.
7 Cf. Johns, 130 and 202-205. On page 161, he states:“While it is certainly true that the slaughter of the lamb is central to the rhetorical force of the image, it is not true that expiation is. In fact, the logic and language of slaughter as expiatory sacrifice are quite rare in the Apocalypse, while the logic and language of slaughter as political resistance and martyrdom are common. Because ‘sacrificial’ language is imprecise and often implies a sacrificial force, such language should be avoided with reference to the Apocalypse.”
necessary to say that if the Lamb is a martyred figure, then it cannot be a sacrifice. . . .

This information helps us to describe the nature and character of the Lamb. Since Jesus is compared to a lamb, his unparalleled dedication and self-sacrifice are alluded to. The Lamb is vulnerable. Even the risen Lamb looks as if slaughtered (Rev 5:6). One of the possible OT backgrounds, Isa 53, describes the humility of the servant of God, his suffering and substitutionary death for humanity, his non-violence and gentleness. The servant of God does not defend himself. No evil is found in him. In him truth resides. He is righteous and yet lives for others and is willing to bear their sin and guilt. However, the Lamb is not a symbol of weakness. It is a symbol of strength in suffering. In spite of its vulnerability it is victorious. This is also expressed with the title Lion.

b. Lion and Lamb

According to Rev 5:5 the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has won the victory and is able to open the scroll sealed with seven seals. The Lion is a symbol for Jesus. The OT background may be Gen 49:9. Jesus as Lion is the victorious king. He carries out his plan and brings human history to his intended goal. However, power and might, assertiveness and sovereignty are only half of the picture. What John has heard in Rev 5:5 is the explanation of the elder who affirms that the Lion is able to break the seals and open the book. However, as soon as John takes a look–Rev 5:6–he does not see a lion but a lamb. Interestingly and surprisingly, even shockingly, the mirror image of the lion is a lamb. Jesus

10 Bredin, 182-183. On page 183 he also states that “It is difficult to find evidence of a Lamb as a military leader.” See also 185.
13 See Johns, 167-168.
14 Johns, 164-168, takes a look at the various backgrounds of this important symbol. On page 167, he concludes: “The author thus chose the lion to represent the powerful aggressive force inherent in one vision of Israel’s role in the eschaton and the lamb to represent the vulnerability inherent in another vision of the eschaton.”
as a lion is a lamb; he is not a lion in lamb’s clothes as Bredin points out.\textsuperscript{15} Because Jesus occurs as a lion just once in Revelation but so frequently as the Lamb, undoubtedly, the image of the lamb is the predominant one. Johns suggests that the reversal from the Lion to the slaughtered Lamb of Rev 5:6 “lies at the theological heart of the Apocalypse. It is specifically designed to communicate the shock, irony, and ethical import of his message that \textit{the Conquering one conquers by being a slain lamb}, not a devouring lion.”\textsuperscript{16} The lion-lamb imagery communicates some important concepts:

1. **Non-Violent Victory (Rev 5:5-6).** Oftentimes the Lamb reminds us of defenseless suffering. The change in perspective from Lion to Lamb indicates that Jesus’ life and ministry did not end in defeat. Throughout the Apocalypse the victory of Jesus is affirmed. Jesus was victorious, however, not by the use of physical power and violence but through his substitutionary death.\textsuperscript{17} His victory was a lamblike victory. Although the Gospel of John describes Jesus’ death with different vocabulary, it arrives at a similar conclusion: Jesus’ death is not his defeat and shame but his being lifted up and his glorification. What looks like absolute defeat from a human perspective was in reality the greatest victory of all times.\textsuperscript{18} And in spite of the plan to kill him, Jesus remained in charge. Jesus did not only suffer his death passively. In the end, it was he himself who gave up his life and took hold of his resurrection. Rossing points out that in the Book of Revelation Jesus as well as the evil powers claim the victory. Therefore, the book contrasts different

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Bredin, 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Johns, 159. He also stresses that “the lamb has triumphed in his death and resurrection, not that the lamb will triumph in the future, subsequent to his death and resurrection” (161).
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Cf. Rossing, 16-22; Witherington, 120. Lee Griffith, \textit{The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God} (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 23, asks the question whether victory is won by those using violence or those suffering violence. “On the face of it, the question seems absurd. The answer of the Roman Empire (and of many before and since) was clear: Victoria and Pax require Mars. But through a remarkable period of Jewish and early Christian history, the response of some was quite different: Victory is won and violence is transformed, not by those who inflict it, but by those who suffer it. Such was the witness of the faithful woman of 4 Maccabees. And such was also part of the witness of another Jew, Jesus of Nazareth.”
  \item \textsuperscript{18} See, e.g., John 7:39; 12:16,23.
\end{itemize}
models of how to gain the victory: the model of violence versus the non-violent model. This is crucial for the theology and ethics of the Apocalypse. John confronts the doctrine of victory through violence with the counter-theology of the victory over evil through suffering love, and he hopes to be able to convince his audience to believe that the model of the Lamb is more powerful than a physical or military victory.¹⁹

(2) **Absolute Power (Rev 5:6).** The seven horns which the Lamb has are signs of his absolute power and authority.²⁰ In Revelation horns are found on various animals. However, apart from those of the Lamb, they are not seven but either ten, as with the dragon, the sea beast, and the scarlet beast of Rev 17, four as with the golden altar (Rev 9:13), or two as with the beast from the earth in Rev 13. While the ten horns are explained as ten kings (Rev 17:12), such a connection is not made with the other numbers. In Lam 2:3 and Ps 132:17 the horn is compared to strength or power. Therefore, the horn, understood symbolically according to its context, signifies political power or power in the general sense of the word.²¹ In Rev 5:6 power in the general sense is the preferred understanding. Jesus uses his power for the sake of humanity and especially for the sake of those who belong to him. Even in suffering and dying Jesus was powerful and remained in charge of the situation. Bredin talks about the horns of the Lamb as the power of salvation.²²

(3) **Omniscience (Rev 5:6).** The Lamb does not only possess seven horns but also has seven eyes.²³ In addition to his absolute power the

---

¹⁹ Rossing, 18, 20. Johns, 168, notes: “At the heart of this switch is the author’s conviction that Jesus’ death and resurrection represents not only the key to the redemption of God’s people, but also the key to God’s victory over evil within history.”


²² Bredin, 184.

²³ The four living beings or cherubim of Rev 4:5-6 are full of eyes. The image’s background is Eze 1:5 and the wheels full of eyes connected to the four living beings (Eze 1:8).
Lamb is omniscient and has complete wisdom and intelligence. Nothing escapes him. He sees the thoughts and intentions as well as the activity of the seven churches and tests hearts and minds. At the same time the seven eyes represent the seven spirits of God, namely the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not only a man of the Spirit, he is also active in all lands through the Spirit. The sending out of the Holy Spirit was predicted by Jesus in his farewell speeches. According to John 16:7-8 Jesus has sent out the Holy Spirit as his representative after his ascension. It is the Spirit who “will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” Jesus and the Holy Spirit are concerned with the salvation of humanity. Power and omniscience would not be enough, were they not found in the context of Jesus’ absolute self-sacrifice.

(4) Worthy of Worship (Rev 5:8-13; 7:10). The Apocalypse stresses the worthiness of Jesus which allows him to open the seals (Rev 5:9). Jesus is also worthy of a sevenfold praise (Rev 5:12). Because of his wonderful character and especially because of achieving the salvation of humanity from sin and death Jesus is worthy of being worshiped.

Power and weakness are connected with the image of the Lion-Lamb. Jesus’ death, which made him look helpless in the eyes of many, has changed the history of humanity fundamentally. With Jesus a new era has come. With him—according to the NT—the time of the end began. His self-sacrifice impresses humans profoundly. His divine attributes cause them to worship him. The term “Lamb” does not exhaust all of Christ’s

---

24 Cf. Morris, 95.
25 Cf. Simon J. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids Baker Book House, 2001), 207 and 82. However, Witherington, 121, sees them as the angels or spirits of the churches.
26 Morris, 97, notes: “It [the term worthy] certainly ascribes excellence to the Lamb. His worthiness is now not reckoned in terms of his power or of the majesty of his Person, but of his death for us.” Johns, 202: “In the Apocalypse, the author draws from a multi-faceted mine of associations to the lamb in order to create a powerful new Christological statement pregnant with ethical implications. Specifically, the power and authority, or worthiness, to unfold God’s will for humanity are located in the readiness to die a witness’s death. At the heart of this reversal lies an ethical intent; at the surface lies a Lamb Christology.” Therefore Revelation presents a theology of peace, an ethics of non-violent resistance against evil.
qualities. Other designations emphasize his love, faithfulness, truthfulness, and holiness. We now move from an ontology to the functions of the Lamb while still commenting on its nature where appropriate.

2. Jesus’ Actions and His Ministry

a. Gaining the Victory

It is part of the ministry of the Lamb to remain steadfast and victorious in conflict. The victory of the Lamb is mentioned in various places. This victory has two dimensions. The original and most crucial victory was won at the cross (Rev 5:5-12). Apart from that victory and yet dependent on it is the eschatological victory as mentioned in Rev 17:14. From our present perspective this victory is still future. As soon as the scarlet beast and the kings of the earth will attack Jesus and his people, their doom has come. The Lamb is simultaneously the King of kings and Lord of Lords. He is victorious even though the victory is not won through the force of arms but through witness and faithfulness and voluntary death. Rev 17:14 is a preview of the battle of Armageddon described in more detail in Rev 19. The victory of Jesus directly influences the destiny and well-being of the believers.

b. The Theology of the Cross

Victory and the cross are related. In Revelation a remarkable theology of the cross is found, although the concept is expressed in other ways than it is in Paul’s writings and although the term “cross” does not appear at all. However, the verb “to crucify” is used once in the Apocalypse. According to Rev 11:8 the Lord was crucified. According to Rev 1:7 he was pierced.
The Lamb is not mentioned directly in these texts. However, there are other texts which together with the Lamb point to the theology of the cross. They include statements about slaughtering and about the blood of the Lamb, which obviously was shed and is efficacious. Other statements, made in connection with the ones just mentioned, also refer to the theology of the cross, for instance, those using the concept of purchasing. “John’s is a theologia crucis as profound and as worthy of Christian theology as any in the New Testament . . . .”

(1) The Blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb occurs in Rev 7:14 and 12:11. Rev 5:9 does not employ the phrase “blood of the Lamb” but uses the phrase “with your blood.” The context indicates that this is the blood of the Lamb. In addition John in Rev 1:5 talks about the blood of Jesus. What is debated is the blood stained garment of the rider on the white horse (Rev 19:13). It is possible to understand the blood on his garment as the blood of the enemies who were defeated. This view may be supported by verse 15 and its image of the wine press. The other possibility is to understand the blood as the blood of the Lamb. It is pointed out that the robe of the rider on the white horse was already dipped in blood before he even went to battle. Therefore, it is concluded that it must be Jesus’ own blood. In addition, in the other texts of Revelation in which Jesus and blood are directly connected it is his own blood. However it may be, the blood of the wickedness of Jesus’ execution.”

31 Johns, 204.

32 As the blood of the Lamb was shed so the blood of his followers will also be shed (Rev 6:10; 16:6; 17:6,6; 18:24; 19:2). Therefore, judgment is connected to blood (Rev 8:7-8; 11:6; 14:20; 16:3,4,6). The verdict corresponds to the crime: “For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink” (Rev 16:6). In Rev 6:12 blood is connected to the signs of the times.

Lamb points to his violent death on the cross through which salvation has become possible for humanity. People can now wash their stained clothes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14), which is one of the paradoxical images found in Revelation. Obviously this image attempts to express that humans are affected and stained by sin and are in need of cleansing. Cleansing has become an option because of the shedding of Christ’s blood. That is, people are able to experience forgiveness of sins and redemption through Jesus’ death on the cross.

Cleansing of the people and washing of their clothes was necessary before Israel was able to meet God at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19:10,14). However, in contrast to Revelation atonement is not directly mentioned in this case. In Isa 64:5 and Zech 3:3 symbolical filthy garments occur. According to Isa 1:18 God offers to make scarlet sins as white as snow. Heb 9:22 teaches that divine forgiveness is dependent on the shedding of blood. In 1John 1:7 John underlines the concept that the blood of Jesus cleanses humans from all sin. When in Revelation he uses the paradoxical image of washing robes in the blood of the Lamb, he may have in mind this OT and NT background. Although washing of the robes may express some kind of activity on the part of the believers, nevertheless, it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses. Mounce correctly notes that washing the robes is not a meritorious action but represents

---

faith. Beale talks about persistent faith. Even the present tense in Rev 22:14 pointing to a repeated washing does not change this observation. Mounce compares the repeated washing with the foot washing (John 13:10), which in spite of the complete bath of baptism is necessary and must be repeated again and again and yet is not a meritorious work on the part of humans. Jesus’ substitutionary death brings about forgiveness. In Rev 6:11 a similar and yet different picture is used. The martyrs receive white clothes. In any case, forgiveness and reconciliation is a gift of God/the Lamb.

(2) Slaughtered. The Lamb looks like it is being slaughtered. According to Rev 5:6 the Lamb was not just killed some time ago in the past. It still looks as if slaughtered. The effect still continues. John uses a perfect tense to describe this continuous effect. Similar to Johns, J. M. Ford argues that it was not a sacrificial death but the death of a martyr that the Lamb suffered. She also holds that the term sphazô is not being used with the connotation sacrifice, although this would be possible. However, according to Gen 22:10 Isaac was to be “slaughtered” (sphazô) by Abraham, which points to a sacrificial death. Bredin observes that although sin is not mentioned in Rev 5:6, nevertheless Jesus, raised from the dead, has saved us from our sins.

---

35 Beale, 438, states: “. . . the metaphor of washing white robes in blood primarily connotes the objective reality that the saints have been cleansed from their sin by their persevering faith in Christ’s death for them . . .” “. . . since ‘the blood of the Lamb’ refers to Christ’s own blood and not that of the saints, the focus is on the cleansing effects of his death on their behalf.” Similarly Kistemaker, 258.
36 Mounce, 407.
37 Aune, Revelation 6-16, 475, writes: “The metaphorical character of the white robes is evident in this passage, where they are washed white by the blood of the Lamb, i.e., the sin of those who wear them has been atoned for by the sacrificial death of Christ.” Mounce, 164, states: “Their robes are white by virtue of the redemptive death of the Lamb.” Morris, 115, talks about “the complete efficacy of Christ’s atoning death . . .” This is supported by Osborne, 325-326, mentioning “. . . the completeness of the effects of Christ’s blood in its salvific effects.”
through his blood (Rev 1:5). This statement of the prologue provides the background for the entire Book of Revelation. The same concept is found in Rev 5:9, when it is said that through his blood Jesus has purchased people for God. The perfect tense mentioned above also makes better sense if slaughtering is understood as a sacrifice. In addition, it is difficult to come to grips with Rev 7:14 without the concept of a sacrifice. Furthermore, sacrificial death and death as a martyr do not necessarily exclude each other. The Lamb is not a warrior or a military leader but a sacrificial animal. The issue is the cross, not an earthly-political power struggle. The Lamb stands out by voluntarily laying down his life. Laws observes that although the Lamb looks as if slaughtered, it is standing. Therefore, the Lamb was raised from death and lives.

(3) Salvation. In Rev 7:10 salvation is attributed to the Lamb and to God the Father. The book of life of the Lamb guarantees eternal life and citizenship in the New Jerusalem to those who are written therein (Rev 13:8; 21:27). Although they are not saved by works, their conduct differs from that exhibited by those who dwell on earth and worship the beast. The book of life appears six times and in two forms in Revelation: ho biblos tès zōēs (Rev 3:5; 20:15) and to biblion tès zōēs (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27). The expressions should be understood interchangeably. Only twice is this book explicitly called the book of the life of the Lamb. However, it can be assumed that the Lamb is

---

39 Cf. Bredin, 182. He points out that thuò does not always refer to a sacrificial death (John 10,10).
40 Bredin, 183, states also: “The placing, also, of the martyrs under the altar of burnt offering (6.9) suggests a correlation between sacrifice and martyrdom.”
41 Harrington, “Worthy Is the Lamb,” 57, summarizes in the following way: “In his vision John looked for the emergence of a Lion—and saw a slaughtered Lamb! What he learned, and he tells his readers, is that the Lion is the Lamb: the ultimate power of God (‘lion’) is manifest in the cross (‘lamb’). This is why ‘Lamb’ is John’s definitive name for Christ.” See also the discussion on the Lamb as a sacrificial animal above.
42 Laws, 30.
43 Cf. Morris, 164.
44 Aune, Revelation 1-5, 223-225, extensively discusses the book of life and understands it as a heavenly citizen registry.
implied in the other instances. Morris understands it in such a way that the Lamb has brought about salvation. Finally, the song of the Lamb is mentioned (Rev 15:3). It is sung by the overcomers that are standing on the sea of glass. These are the 144,000 who in Rev 14:1 together with the Lamb are positioned on Mt. Zion and who were purchased by the Lamb (Rev 14:3). The song of the Lamb again points to the themes of salvation and liberation.

(4) Purchased. Salvation brought about by Jesus is not only expressed with the picture of the washing of robes in the blood of the Lamb and the vocabulary of salvation. The picture of purchasing the redeemed is found repeatedly (Rev 5:9; 14:3-4) and stresses that the Lamb has paid the price for saving humanity though his death. Those who belong to him are free. Revelation points out a contrast: At a certain time in the future the believers will no longer be able to buy (Rev 13:17), but they have been bought by the blood of the Lamb. They may suffer economical boycotts, but they are redeemed. On the other hand, God will reverse the fate of the oppressors so that they cannot sell their goods. Nobody will buy anything from them anymore (Rev 18:11).

c. Effects on His People

The Lamb’s sacrifice to redeem humanity affects them, especially those who accept salvation. Witherington states that through his death the Lamb has paid the price for the redemption of the believers and has created a universal people of God. In the seal vision the effect is twofold: (1) The believers form a kingdom and priesthood (Rev 5:10). (2) The Lamb functions as a shepherd and supplies his people with all that is necessary (Rev 7:16-17; 22:1). The picture of the good shepherd known from Ps 23 and John 10 is employed. Hoffmann notes that the role of the shepherd “is

---

45 Morris, 165, 248.
46 Cf. Smalley, 384-385.
47 Cf. U. B. Müller, 274; Osborne, 563-564.
49 Witherington, 121.
50 Harrington, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 59, writes: “… in startling and beautiful paradox, the Lamb has become a shepherd. In the Fourth Gospel the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29,36) is also the Good Shepherd (10:14-16).”
normally performed by God himself” and together with other phenomena in the book indicate equality between Father and Son.\(^{51}\)

The people of God as a kingdom and priesthood is mentioned three times in Revelation (Rev 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6). It is always found in connection with Jesus. However, only in Rev 5:10 is Jesus called the Lamb. According to Rev 1:6 and 5:10 the kingly rule and the priestly ministry of the people of God are dependent on Jesus’ death on the cross. While the first two texts describe kingly reign and priesthood as a present reality with Rev 5:10 also containing a future component,\(^{52}\) Rev 20 applies these roles completely to the future. While the texts in Rev 1 and 5 may include all believers, Rev 20 may limit royal reign and priestly ministry to the end time believers who have not worshiped the beast or his image and have not accepted the mark of the beast (Rev 20:4).

d. The Lamb and Salvation History

At the beginning of Rev 5 God the Father is found on the throne of the universe. In his hand he holds a scroll sealed with seven seals which nobody can open, because nobody is worthy to do that. When John notices what is going on, he begins to weep (Rev 5:4). Obviously John is not weeping because of disappointed curiosity, but he weeps because the destiny of humanity and his own destiny are dependent on the opening of the seals. Only when the seals are open is it possible for the plan of

---

\(^{51}\) Hoffmann, 167.

\(^{52}\) Beale, 363, discusses whether or not the rule of the believers should be understood as a present or a future activity. On one hand he writes that “both 1:5-6 and 5:9-10 make explicit that the creating of saints as a kingdom is a direct result of Christ’s redemptive death, so that it is probable that this kingdom began immediately after this death.” On the other hand, he points to the adjective “new” in connection with the song, namely the “new” song (Rev 5:9) and states that in other places in Revelation the adjective “new” refers to the new heaven and new earth. This would imply a future reign. “Alternatively, if the reign is understood as present, then the kingdom of the new creation has broken into the present, fallen world through the death and resurrection of Christ” (363). “Alternatively, the future tense could well be ‘a future immediately consequent on the act of ransom and appointment as kings and priests,’ which occurs throughout the age preceding Christ’s final coming” (364). Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 469, suggests: “While not excluding the present reign of believers, the reference to ‘the earth’ is best taken to refer to the future eschatological kingdom reign of Christ.” See also Aune, Revelation 1-5, 32.
salvation to further unfold and reach its consummation. Fortunately, the Lamb is able to open the seals.

Related to the opening of the seven seals (Rev 5:6; 6:1-8:1) are events which take place on earth leading to the heavenly signs just prior to Jesus’ second coming and to the Second Coming itself. Christ’s return is described as Day of the Lord. The seven seals seem to reflect the events delineated in the synoptic apocalypse (Matt 24 and its parallels). However, most of them have to be understood metaphorically and spiritually. For instance, the wars in Rev 6 are not literal wars, but rather symbolic wars which affect the message of God and his sanctuary.

Stefanovic understands the book or scroll of Rev 5 as the scroll or book of the covenant. It is found in the hand of the Davidic king who because of it is the lawful king of the entire universe. The destiny of humankind is in his hand. That is, Jesus allows salvation history to take place and be completed.

e. The Lamb and Judgment

In the Apocalypse judgment is normally attributed to God the Father. He is the judge, and his judgments are just. Only once in Revelation–Rev 19:11–is Jesus directly mentioned as one who executes judgment. He is the rider on the white horse who–according to the context and possibly due to the mention of the blood stained robe–may be linked to the image of the Lamb.

---

54 Cf. ibid., 207.
55 Roloff, 76, states: “This book must have something to do with the world dominion; its acceptance signifies its rightful transfer to the ‘Lamb,’ and the opening of its seals is a sign for the active execution of the function of lordship. Jesus Christ is seen here as the end-time ruler, who, on the basis of the saving work completed by him, is called to discharge with authority God’s plan for the end of history.”
56 Judgment in verbal form (krinō) as well as in the form of a noun (krisis and krima) is associated with God the Father in almost all cases (Rev 6:10; 11:18; 14:17; 16:5, 7; 17:1; 18:8, 10, 20; 19:2, 2; and 20:12, 13). During the Millennium believers will participate in the judgment (Rev 20:4).
In Rev 6:16-17 the wrath of the Lamb is mentioned. Normally, wrath is associated with God the Father, but here is one text in Revelation in which the wrath of the Lamb is pointed out. In addition, Jesus “treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God” (Rev 19:15), and the Lamb is a witness of the torment of those who are lost (Rev 14:10). How should these texts be understood?

The opinions of interpreters differ. Some suggest that the image of the Lamb changes judicial language to such an extent that Jesus is indeed involved in judgment, but this judgment is in a way a non-violent judgment. They remind their audience that Jesus is the Lion as well as the Lamb. So wrath and being the Lamb are juxtaposed. They explain that in the Apocalypse Jesus has one weapon only, and this weapon is the sword out of his mouth. However, the sword out of his mouth is the Word of God (Heb 4:12). The Word of God will cause the destruction of the wicked. According to Rev 12 the satanic powers are not defeated through the terror of the force of arms but through the blood of the Lamb. It is noticeable that in Revelation God’s permissive will is referred to frequently. So God allows the apocalyptic horsemen to come, and he allows for the seven

\[57\] Orgē (wrath) is attributed to God the Father in Rev 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; and 19:15. Thumos is God’s wrath in Rev 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; and 19:15. Apart from God’s wrath there is the wrath of Babylon (Rev 14:8; 18:13) and the wrath of Satan (Rev 12:12).

\[58\] Bredin, 19, states: “John reinterprets ‘wrath’ by placing it alongside the most non-militaristic image, Lamb. Wrath no longer depicts a military, conquering God on the battlefield; God is not one who slays with the sword. Suffering love is the essence of wrath, and therefore suffering love is that which brings about God’s judgment and kingdom.”

\[59\] It is used in different formulations in Rev 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21.

\[60\] Cf. Ian Boxall, “Violence in the Apocalypse,” Scripture Bulletin 35/2 (2005):78-79. Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 140, suggest: “Throughout Revelation, it is made clear that Jesus’ power is the ‘sword of his mouth’ (1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). The Word of God is truly powerful, but it is a power that, unlike the sword of empire, operates without bloody violence.”

\[61\] Cf. Bredin, 208. He understands the blood associated with the wine press as the blood of the saints (213-216).

\[62\] Cf. Griffith, 211. He adds: "Bloodshed is the means by which mighty empires and terrorists of all stripes seek to claim their victories, but Revelation unveils that it is precisely their own shedding of blood that is the means by which the powers are defeated. The shed blood of the Lamb and of the martyrs becomes the instrument of God’s victory." On the other hand, the iron scepter of Rev 19:15 is mentioned. Bredin, 208, perceives it as a parallel to the sword out of his mouth. Therefore, it would also represent the Word of God.
plagues to happen. Following such a line of thought, it is held that essentially the unbelievers destroy themselves, and God allows for this type of judgment.

Other expositors talk about God’s justice that would include judgment and direct destruction of the ungodly. For instance, Kistemaker understands Rev 6:17 in the sense that the Lamb can become angry. At the end of earth’s history Jesus will confront the adversaries and will bring judgment upon them. However, Kistemaker asks the question whether this wrath should be understood as an emotion on Jesus’ part or as an announcement of punishment. The next verse (Rev 6:18) which repeats the term “wrath” and links it with the Day of the Lord and therefore with judgment points to the second option. The wrath of the Lamb has to do with the punishment of the enemies of the Lamb.\(^{64}\) However, this punishment is reserved to be carried out by the Godhead. Howard-Brook and Gwyther state that God has the exclusive authority to react with violence in the case where justice requires it.\(^{65}\) His people are not involved in such a judgment. At the same time, God’s judgment is an act of salvation.\(^{66}\) According to S. Moyise the Lamb is not “a gentle figure.”\(^{67}\)

Both groups do not deny the judgment of God and Jesus. One group of expositors understands it in a more active sense, while the others would probably suggest that the separation from God, who is the source of life, would bring along death more or less automatically.

f. The Lamb and the Consummation

However, the Lamb is not only involved in judgment. It also cooperates with God the Father in bringing about the final consummation. In Revelation this is described with different terms.

The end of earth’s history begins with Jesus’ second coming. The Second Coming is found in many places in Revelation. It occurs in a literal way in the letter frame of the book (e.g., Rev 1:7; 22:7, 12, 20) and

---

\(^{63}\) Cf. Boxall, 82.
\(^{64}\) Kistemaker, 238-239.
\(^{65}\) Howard-Brook, 155.
\(^{66}\) Cf. Laws, 33-34.
symbolically expressed in the apocalyptic part,\textsuperscript{68} for instance, as the harvest
of the earth.\textsuperscript{69} Jesus promises seven times his coming or his soon coming.\textsuperscript{70}
In the sixth seal the Lamb occurs in the context of the Second Coming. The
Day of the Lord is preceded by the cosmic signs of the times and a special
earthquake. When the Day of the Lord appears, the enemies of God will
attempt to hide, but the 144,000 will be able to stand (Rev 6:12-17) and will
experience final salvation. The Day of the Lord is already known from the
OT to be God’s day of judgment (Isa 13:9; Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph 1:14-15)\textsuperscript{71}
and here symbolizes Jesus’ second coming.\textsuperscript{72}

Rev 7 briefly summarizes the events prior to the second coming of
Christ, before it concentrates on describing the great multitude of followers
of Jesus in front of the throne and the Lamb (Rev 7:9-10). In this
connection we hear that these believers will serve God in his sanctuary and
are cared for by the Lamb as the shepherd. This event presupposes Christ’s
second coming. On the other hand, it describes a time after the second
coming which may be the period of the Millennium.

According to Rev 14:1 the Lamb together with the 144,000 is standing
on Mt. Zion. Kistemaker lists different options of interpretation.\textsuperscript{73} However,
the context explains that the 144,000 are found before God’s throne in
heaven. Therefore, the first part of Rev 14 is not only an encouragement
directed to suffering Christians calling them not to give up, but also a
preview of their victory which has become possible through the Lamb. Mt.
Zion was the temple mount in Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). It is the place of
complete and final salvation.\textsuperscript{74}

In Rev 19a the perspective changes. After God has been praised for
judging Babylon (verses 1-3), God’s rule is being praised and joy is being
expressed because the wedding of the Lamb has come (verses 6-7). The

\textsuperscript{68} Rev 4-22a.
\textsuperscript{70} This is true, if one investigates the term \textit{erchomai} (Rev 2:5, 16; 5:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12,
20). The first two texts may have in mind primarily a coming for judgment in historical time,
although the Second Coming might resonate, too. In addition to \textit{erchomai} the term \textit{haekō}
occurrrs in the Apocalypse which in Rev 2:25 and 3:3 refers to Jesus’ return.
\textsuperscript{71} Cf. Kistemaker, 239.
\textsuperscript{72} Cf. Stefanovic, 245-246.
\textsuperscript{73} Kistemaker, 400-401.
\textsuperscript{74} Cf. Mounce, 264-265.
wedding can take place only after the bridegroom has returned to his bride. The bride stands collectively for the church. The wedding guests are the individual believers. Jesus’ second coming unites him with his own.

Finally, the Lamb together with God the Father are called a temple and lamp (Rev 21:22-23). On the new earth the presence of the Lamb will permeate and sanctify the New Jerusalem with its inhabitants. Due to the labor and activity of the Lamb an unparalleled degree of intimacy between God and his people will be reached. The Lamb has brought about complete reconciliation. The Lamb has led his followers into the immediate presence of God. However, John does not assume that this absolute intimacy with God is completely possible prior to the first resurrection and therefore prior to Christ’s second coming. It requires the completion of the plan of salvation.

3. The People of the Lamb
   a. Designations of the People of the Lamb

Closely related to the Lamb is his people. If we talk about the Lamb, we must at least mention his people. His people are described with different terms. In some places it is the end time believers, while the other believers throughout the centuries are not included. In other places it comprises all true believers. Sometimes it is a specific group such as the Twelve. The people of God are (1) the great multitude before the Lamb (Rev 7:9), (2) those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14;
11:14), (3) those who have overcome through the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11), (4) the 144,000 who follow the Lamb (Rev 14:1, 4), (5) the called, chosen, and faithful who are with the Lamb (Rev 17:14), (6) the bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9), (7) the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:10), (8) those whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb (Rev 21:27) and (9) the servants of the Lamb (Rev 22:3).

b. Discipleship

According to Rev 14:4 the 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever he goes. To follow may mean to go behind someone or to accompany someone. The issue is discipleship, to accept the teachings of the master, to apply them, and to further his cause. Farmer suggests that it means to follow Jesus as a soldier or bride. According to the Gospels Jesus invited people to follow him and called them, while he as the good shepherd went ahead of them (John 10:4). Following Jesus is a continuous and not a one-time activity. It means taking Jesus as an example, accepting him as teacher and master, imitating his example, and being completely dedicated and obedient. Followers refrain from lies and exemplify truthfulness (Rev 14:5). They are blameless (Rev 14:4-5). Discipleship may lead to martyrdom and this may be indicated in Rev 14:4 in a specific and yet indirect way. Disciples are faithful until death. Witherington writes: “The soldiers of the cross are expected to follow Christ unto death.”

By calling the 144,000 “the army of the Lamb” or his “soldiers” a false impression can be readily created. Rossing tries to prevent that by stating that the Book of Revelation does not advocate violence and shedding of blood. The people of God suffer violence. They are persecuted and killed,

---

80 Harrington, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 61, notes: “The 144,000 are the ‘army’ of the Lamb, his faithful earthly followers, now ‘redeemed from humankind’ . . .”

81 Cf. Aune, Revelation 6-16, 813.

82 Farmer, 100.

83 Cf. Kistemaker, 405.

84 Cf. Aune, Revelation 6-16, 813-814.

85 Witherington, 186.

86 Rossing, 19-20, explains: “Revelation does not advocate the use of violence or bloodshed. Revelation is more a book about terror defeated than terror inflicted . . . War is something done against God’s people . . ., not something that God’s saints or the Lamb practice in this book. The Lamb never ‘makes war.’ Two verses of Revelation do indeed refer to Jesus as ‘making war’—Rev 2:16 and 19:11—but even here, the way he makes war is
not only according to the letters to the seven churches, but, for instance, 
also in Rev 12-14. They do not react to violence with violence. They win 
the victory through lamblike suffering. Howard-Brook and Gwyther support 
this concept by stating that Revelation does not approve of or glorify 
human violence. Griffith describes a talk by W. Stringfellow in which he 
reminded graduates of a theological seminary that in this world believers 
are not “raptured out of terror and into victory” and that the cause of God 
is not served through the righteous who triumph but through the faithful 
who are defeated (Rev 13:7). Harrington proposes that the only weapon 
of the oppressed is patience and endurance. In the end this weapon disarms 
evil. And Johns reminds us that Revelation does not only support passive 
suffering but “that Christology will lead to an ethic that embraces a 
committed, nonviolent resistance to evil.” Witherington demonstrates this 
crucial. Jesus makes war not with a sword of battle but ‘by the sword of my mouth’—that is, 
his word.”

87 Johns talks about a “victimization” of Christ’s disciples due to “the dark reality of 
evil.” However, this victimization will be relativized because of the hope of resurrection and 
a final judgment” (176).

88 Howard-Brook/Gwyther, 155, state: “Nowhere does Revelation authorize or glorify 
human violence. To the contrary, its ceding to God of the exclusive authority to act with 
vioence when required by justice marks off this behavior as forbidden to humanity. Human 
vioence is a sign of the ‘mark of the Beast’ (e.g., 16:2).” Boxall, 79, adds: “For all the 
vioence of its imagery, Revelation never once advocates humans taking up arms or using 
vioence against their fellow humans. What is called for instead is faithful witness to the One 
who was slain, a continuation of his testimony, and ‘endurance’ or ‘consistent resistance’.”

89 Griffith, 216.

90 Harrington, Revelation, 195, observes: “There must be a response to injustice, 
oppression. That courageous response, which may and can demand the ultimate sacrifice, 
is always non-violent. That word speaks, paradoxically, through the violent imagery of 
Revelation. The only weapon of the oppressed is hypomone. It is the weapon that, in the end, 
disarms evil. It seems that we have hardly begun to learn the lesson of Jesus. Have we, 
Christians, really learned any lesson of Jesus? Our record is not spectacular, perhaps least 
of all in our flaccid condoning of the evil of war—not to mention our complicity in ‘religious’ 
wars.”

91 Johns, 203. On page 205 he writes: “The ethics of the Apocalypse is thus not one that 
eschews responsibility in the world, but one that embraces the cross as the key to how that 
responsibility is expressed. . . It is not a vision designed to make the community passive or 
to disempower it or to encourage it to withdraw in a cloistered existence. It is a vision 
designed to empower the community, to enter the fray with a courageous nonviolent 
resistance that may well lead to martyrdom. This sort of resistance is as active as any 
physical warfare.” Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation, New
approach by pointing to the resistance against Hitler. Dietrich Bonhoeffer must be commended for not supporting Hitler directly or indirectly as many Christians and churches did. But he came to the conviction Hitler had to be stopped by assassination. On the other hand, Martin Niemöller believed that protest and martyrdom are the last means a Christian has to resist Hitler. When a prison chaplain asked him why he was imprisoned, Niemöller responded by asking the question why he, the chaplain, was not imprisoned. Revelation calls for a renunciation and turning away from evil, but does not endorse attempts to assassinate others and commit acts of human violence.\textsuperscript{92}

c. Service

The people of the Lamb stand out because of their service. While in other NT writings believers are called to serve one another and fellow humans, Revelation even more strongly emphasizes service to God/the Lamb. Undoubtedly, Christians are responsible for others (Rev 3:2), and their service (\textit{diakonia})\textsuperscript{93} is important (Rev 2:19). Yet in a special way service to God and the Lamb is stressed. As in other writings of John love is also mentioned in Revelation (Rev 2:4,9) and seems to be connected to the concept of service.

Two texts in Revelation point to the people of the Lamb and the service of Christ’s followers. These are Rev 7:15 and 22:3. In both of them the verb \textit{latreuō} is employed. This word is translated as “to serve” but normally has a cultic and sacral meaning.\textsuperscript{94} One serves God in the public worship service

\textsuperscript{92} Witherington, 187-188. He also points to the Jewish physician Boris Kornfeld who had become a Christian and who refused to be responsible for the death of prisoners in Soviet camps. Before being brutally murdered he had the chance to witness to one prisoner only. This prisoner was Alexander Solzhenitsyn whose literary work lead many to turn away from inhuman politics.

\textsuperscript{93} The term \textit{diakonia} is found in Rev 2:19 only and may refer to service for fellow humans. Cf. Kistemaker, 137.

or in the inner worship of one’s heart. In the LXX of Dan 3:28 the verb “to serve” is used in connection with the verb “to worship.” However, the term is also associated with love and obedience (Deut 10:12-13). According to Acts 24:14 serving God is not necessarily limited to the worship service. Both Revelation texts describe a time after Christ’s second coming in which the redeemed will serve either before the throne of God or in the New Jerusalem. They serve as priests, and indeed they are priests (Rev 1:5; 5:10; 20:6) and will reign with God the Father and Christ. Osborne suggests that here a parallel with the sanctuary in Paradise is formed where Adam “worked”/“served” to keep it (Gen 2:15). The Hebrew term 'ābad is normally translated latreuō in the LXX, although not in Gen 2:15. Nevertheless, a connection between these concepts may exist. The New Jerusalem is the restored Paradise in which God’s plan is being realized and his servants will serve him.

In Rev 22:3 the group of those who serve him are called “his servants”/“servants”/“slaves” (douloi). The possessive pronoun “his” may refer to God or the Lamb in the preceding sentence. The servants are the servants of God and of the Lamb—emphasizing the Godhead of Jesus. They appear as servants of the Son of God and especially as God’s servants in other places in Revelation. There their ministry is not limited to the future. Obviously, they are also actively involved during human history.

Summary and Conclusion

Although the Apocalypse of John is populated by strange beasts, evil powers, and confusing numbers, it is a book from Jesus and also about Jesus. The audience meets Jesus at every turn. He appears in every vision, in some quite frequently, in others less often, but he is always present. Many names, titles, and images are applied to him emphasizing his importance and his multifaceted work. John sees him on the same level as

---

96 This then is Dan 3:95 in the LXX.
97 Cf. Smalley, 510.
98 Osborne, 774.
99 Cf. Kistemaker, 582; Beale, 1113; Smalley, 564.
God the Father. This is quite clear when reading through the hymns in Rev 4 and 5. Whoever encounters Jesus in the Apocalypse, encounters a person of the Godhead. In addition to this emphasis on the divinity of Jesus, the Lamb Christology of the book is unique and is a much needed perspective for Christians today.

In Revelation, Jesus is mentioned as the Creator. The audience hears also about his incarnation and is informed that in spite of living in an evil world, he remained the Holy One and became the Savior. He died, was raised, ascended to heaven, was seated with God the Father on his throne, and has promised to come again. Salvation through his substitutionary death is strongly emphasized. There is no designation for Jesus used more frequently in the Apocalypse than a “Lamb.” However, Lamb is not used in the letter-frame of the book. Instead non-symbolic designations such as “Jesus Christ,” “Jesus,” and “the Lord Jesus” are employed there more often. When the audience is confronted with the Lamb’s defenseless suffering it is not understood as defeat. Throughout the Apocalypse the theme of victory is found. Jesus has gained the victory though not through military power or physical violence, but through his vicarious death. The people of the Messiah take part in Jesus’ victory by suffering and possibly dying rather than through violence, terror, and armed combat.

In the struggle between life and death, a struggle between the people of the Messiah and the satanic trinity and their followers, the issue is God’s truth as opposed to the idolatrous lies of the beast which even becomes an imitation of the Lamb. However, Jesus appears as a revealer sharing with humanity the deep insights found in the Apocalypse. He reveals elements of the plan of salvation. He reveals the nature and work of God the Father, and he reveals insights about himself. In this struggle he also supports his people by being a priest and mediator. Therefore, false compromises are not an option for true Christians. Even if the followers of the Lamb have to die, they are the true victors. The heavenly perspective surpasses the earthly, and this heavenly perspective must shatter all deceptions of the beast.

The suffering and death of the followers of the Lamb is only half of the picture. The Lamb is not only the sacrifice. As such he died on Calvary. This is the historical dimension. The risen Lamb will also return as King of kings and Lord of lords and with the sword of his Word will defeat the oppressors of his people and redeem them from all threats in a new exodus. The Lamb will care for his people on a new earth in which all traces of evil
will be done away with. He will enlighten them and live with them face to face. In other words, because Jesus loves his people he did not only die for them on the cross. He will also guide them home, back into the closest possible relationship with God the Father.

Therefore, when we read the Book of Revelation we need to read it primarily as a book of Jesus, for he is our future. “To him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood and has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

Ekkehardt Mueller (Müller) is deputy director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists where he has served for the last 14 years. He holds a Th.D. in exegesis and theology and a D.Min. from Andrews University. Before coming to Silver Spring, MD, he has served as the director of the education department and as ministerial secretary of the South German Union and as ministerial secretary of the Euro-Africa Division, being heavily involved in continuing education for pastors.