teaching on the Holy Spirit works to prevent the error of spiritless religion on one hand (Clouzet pointed out that it’s easier to ignore an “it”) and spiritualism/emotionalism on the other (again, if it’s an “it,” then we use “it” whenever we want a “spirit-filled” experience).

I also saw a slightly more subtle point: Biblical teaching serves to shield Seventh-day Adventists from one compromise of our sanctuary doctrine that tends to discount the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest as He pleads our cases before the Father. Such a view makes Jesus’ primary “mediation” one of helping us “see God.” This is all well and good, but in the presentations I have heard, the Holy Spirit is mysteriously absent. Perhaps He is the one who opens our eyes, day by day, to the loving character of the Father. And while “He” reveals the Father’s character to us, Jesus pleads our case before God.

I want to hear more from Ron Clouzet. Responsible, biblical, articulate teaching doesn’t have to be boring. It can be just as passion-filled and emotion-stirring as the brain candy that is pouring out of the Christian market today. In fact, more so!

Jennifer Schwirzer
Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania

Ron Clouzet has written a comprehensive and insightful article on the personality of the Holy Spirit and of His place in the Godhead. Such an article is timely when some are tempted to depersonalize the Holy Spirit. When faced by the mystery of the triune God, it is at times easy to take a humanistic detour that leads us away from Scripture.

The author reminds us that early Adventism struggled with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Those who insist that our safety lies in getting back to historic Adventism should pause for reflection. Our ideas on the Holy Spirit, on Christ, and on the atonement have grown through the years. And Clouzet reminds us that someone responsible for this growth is none other than Ellen White herself. He refers to the appearance of The Desire of Ages in 1898, which was a watershed in our history.

Writing in 1892, Ellen White wrote, “Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed” (Review and Herald, July 26, 1892).

We worship one God manifested in a triune personality.

Eric Webster
Cape Town, South Africa

By Richard M. Davidson *

A confession of faith by one who was once troubled at the thought of his name coming up in judgment

How do you react when you read such solemn pronouncements of the coming judgment as these: “The judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Dan. 7:10); “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7); “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:14); “The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment” (Ps. 1:5).

Are these passages good news, or do they have an unsettling effect? I have not always considered the judgment as part of the assuring good news of the gospel. While growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I used to shudder at the mention of the investigative judgment. The prospect of my name coming up in the heavenly court, with all my sins brought before God and the onlooking universe, made me think, “I’ll never make it! I hope my name doesn’t come up today.”

Imagine my surprise when I first came across a number of prayers in the Book of Psalms in which the psalmist seemed actually to welcome and even long for the judgment. The plea for judgment appeared shocking enough: “Arise, O God, judge the earth” (82:8). Even more startling were the expressions of joyous exuberance at the coming judgment: “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; . . . Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is

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Scripture consistently upholds the seriousness of sin and the certainty of the judgment. But it also reveals that the Lamb of God, our Substitute, has been accepted in our place. As we receive Christ, we are covered with the robe of His righteousness. God says to the great accuser, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan” (Zech. 3:2). We are acquitted, pardoned, and cleansed.

coming to judge the earth” (96:11-13, NRSV). But simply beyond my comprehension were the passages in which David longed for his own case to come up in judgment. Numerous times he prayed, “Judge me, O Lord” (7:8; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1). He seemed to be saying, in effect, “Hurry up, Lord! Send the judgment. Let my name come up. I can’t wait!”

Is the judgment good news for you in the way it seems to have been for David? Perhaps a practical test of whether or not it is good news in your life is to ask yourself: Have I ever prayed David’s prayer? This morning, did I pray, “Judge me, O Lord; please let my name come up in judgment”?

How could David pray such a prayer? With his record of heinous sins—adultery, murder, lying, to name a few. Did he not understand the sinfulness of sin, the seriousness of the judgment?

He understood. Note his prayer of deepest repentance after the affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband: “I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment” (51:3, 4, NRSV).

David certainly comprehended the heinousness of his sin and the reality of the judgment. But he also understood the message of righteousness by faith. He recognized that, sinful though he was, his sins could be cleansed by the blood of the Substitute. He prayed: “Purge me with hyssop [the agent used to apply the blood of the sacrifice], and I shall be clean” (vs. 7). In joy he could cry out, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (32:1).

Scripture consistently upholds the seriousness of sin and the certainty of the judgment. But it also reveals that the Lamb of God, our Substitute, has been accepted in our place. As we receive Christ, we are covered with the robe of His righteousness. God says to the great accuser, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan” (Zech. 3:2). We are acquitted, pardoned, and cleansed. We no longer are “anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.”

Assurance of Vindication

When we belong to Christ, the tables are turned in the judgment. No longer do we stand there an accused defendant. As Christ has paid the full price for our acquittal, we become the plaintiff, calling for vindication against the false charges of Satan. Now, with David, we can long for and welcome the judgment. We can pray, “Judge [‘vindicate,” RSV] me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness” (Ps. 35:24).

The outcome of this judgment is certain. It is “in favor of the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:22, NIV). Not only is Christ our Substitute, but He also is our Advocate, our Lawyer, who never has lost a case that has been committed to Him. Eloquently and persuasively, He pleads our case in the heavenly assize. Note that the word plead here and in Ellen White’s descriptions of the investigative judgment, is a legal term and does not refer to “begging” the Father for mercy, as some have construed it. The Father does not need to be begged! He has placed Christ there to be our Representative. He is on our side. Those illustrations that picture the repentant sinner standing by himself in the midst of the heavenly tribunal miss the point. “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). For those in Christ, the heavenly courtroom is a friendly place.

Our Lawyer stands beside them with His arm around them, as it were; He “does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, He lifts His wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying, ‘I know them by name. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands.’”

Christ is both our Substitute and Advocate and the star witness in our behalf! As the Faithful and True Witness (Rev. 3:14), He brings evidence that vindicates us before the heavenly jury and silences the false accusations of the adversary.

To top it all off, as if that were not enough good news, consider that in this heavenly court, Christ also is our Judge. This Judge has never made a mistake, and He is on our side. He is not a stern, harsh magistrate seeking to damn all He can, but a loving, gracious God, seeking to save all He can. In order to exonerate us, He tenderly urges us to accept the provisions of the court.

“Therefore I will judge you, O
house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin.

“Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live” (Eze. 18:30-32, NRSV).

God’s multiple function in the judgment may seem strange to our modern Western legal system, but it is entirely in keeping with the biblical concept of administering justice. At the city gates, the same elders could convene the judicial proceedings, argue as advocate, give testimony, and render the verdict. At the Israelite sanctuary, the priest not only did all this (Deut. 17:8-13) but also bore the penalty of the sins (Lev. 10:17).

With Christ as our Substitute and Surety, our Advocate and Mediator, our Witness, Friend, and Judge, what better news can we ask?

This incredibly good news about assurance of vindication in the judgment will become increasingly precious to us as the fires of persecution are kindled, as false witnesses accuse God’s people of causing all the calamities in the land, and as the highest earthly tribunals render guilty verdicts against them. In the face of such a bleak outlook, we can have hope and confidence that in the investigative judgment the truth will come out. Like Job, who in a setting of investigative judgment was faced with false accusers, we can proclaim confidently: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!” (Job 19:25-27, NRSV).

“John in holy vision beholds the faithful souls that come up out of great tribulation, surrounding the throne of God, clad in white robes, and crowned with immortal glory. What though they have been counted the offscouring of the earth? In the investigative judgment their lives and characters are brought in review before God, and that solemn tribunal reverses the decision of their enemies. Their faithfulness to God and to His Word stands revealed, and Heaven’s high honors are awarded them as conquerors in the strife with sin and Satan.”

Thus the investigative judgment reveals to the universe the saints’ standing before God. It does not put the salvation of God’s people in jeopardy. While it is a fearful thing to those who have neglected and rejected the provisions made for their salvation, for those in Christ the investigative judgment is a reason for singing. Since 1844, God’s saints can proclaim, “Finally it’s here!” Since the death of Abel, the blood of the martyrs has been crying out, “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” (Rev. 6:10, NRSV).

At last the time has come. Yom Kippur is here. The final judgment has begun—the process of investigation, followed by the millennial review and the final execution of the sentence. At last, Satan is to be silenced. The truth will be seen that vindicates God’s people. Truly the first angel’s message, “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7, NRSV) is part of the “eternal gospel [good news]” (vs. 6, NRSV).

Vindications in the judgment and assurance in the judgment is good news—almost too good to be true. I hardly dared to believe it, even as a theology major in college, as a seminary student, and as a young pastor. Finally the sublime promises jumped out at me from Scripture: “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.”
The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a movement within the Christian world calling Christian communities to a return to the spirit of the Reformation, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world in an apocalyptic context at the close of the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, and pointing humankind to the return of the Lord. It is their main task throughout the world to lead people to Christ as Savior and Lord. In pursuing their mission, Adventists do not place themselves outside the brotherhood of the Christian communities but in the midst of them, encouraging them to remain loyal to their Lord.

Adventists believe that the Reformation of the 16th century came into being under the guidance of the Lord, as an attempt to reform His church. The reformers, particularly Martin Luther, were used by God to lift up the powerful banner of the gospel of justification by faith, which had been cast to the ground by Catholicism. At that time, many

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Seventh-day Adventists see their role as a unique and indispensable part of Christianity.

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other biblical truths were re-established under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The proclamation of **sola gratia** and **sola Scriptura** provided the Reformers with the indispensable tools needed to reform the church.

Like Luther, Adventists understand themselves to be instruments of God in the restoration of biblical truth, and therefore as perpetuators of the Reformation. They see themselves as “children of Luther” and with him in continuity with biblical apostolic truth. They are persuaded that the Reformation should not have come to an end but that it should have continued to the very end, until the return of our Lord.

From their very beginnings, Adventists believed that they were raised up to restore biblical truth. Very often the pioneers of the church used the experience of Elijah and the prophets of Baal to illustrate their own experience or mission. In a time of apostasy, Elijah called God’s people to reform his altar, and he himself restored the altar of the Lord (1 Kings 18). They also found a parallel to their own task in the description of God’s intentions for those who returned from Babylon after the exile in 539 B.C. The Lord said to the post-exilic community in Jerusalem: “Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in” (Isa. 58:12, NRSV).

In this work the Reformation principle of **sola Scriptura** was and continues to be taken very seriously in Adventist thinking and theology. Through the study of the Scriptures they found, particularly in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, a description of God’s intentions for His church at the end time and for the role of the Adventist movement within Christianity and the world at large.

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The End-Time People of God

In order to comprehend properly the role of the Adventist Church in the Christian world, it is necessary to understand their interpretation of Revelation 12–14. This is only a brief summary. Revelation 12 describes the conflict between Christ and Satan. Chapter 13 describes the historical instruments used by the dragon to persecute the people of God. It sums up the dragon’s attack against the church (vss. 1-10), paralleling 12:6, 13-16, and develops 12:17, the attack against the remnant (13:11-18). Revelation 14:1-5 is a description of the remnant gathered with the Lamb on Mount Zion, protected from the power of the dragon. In 14:6-12 John provides a description of the process followed by God to gather the remnant and to prepare them for the return of the Lord, which is described in the rest of the chapter (14:14-20).

*The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon.* In Adventist thinking, the woman clothed with the sun in 12:1 and 2 represents the people of God. The birth of the child is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament in the incarnation, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of our Lord. The dragon is Satan, who attempts to destroy the Savior who overcomes the dragon and is exalted to the throne of God.

The dragon turns against the Christian Church, God’s instrument on Earth for the proclamation of the gospel. The church is persecuted for 1260 days, and goes, so to speak, underground. At the end of the prophetic period, only a remnant of the church is left, and it becomes the focus of attack of the dragon. The historicist method of interpretation finds in that chapter a summary of the history of the Christian Church. Even in the use of this method of prophetic interpretation, Adventists are dependent on other Christian interpreters, including the Reformers.

The persecution of the Christian Church was first brought about by pagan Rome and later by the apostasy of the church. Adventists recognize that it is no longer popular to speak about the apostasy of the church, but they take seriously the fact that Paul predicted it. To the Ephesians he said: “I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29, 30, NKJV).

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul makes clear that the apostasy was not going to be limited to the church in Ephesus. In fact he provides a chronology for it. In verse 3, he clearly calls it “the rebellion” (NIV), “the apostasy” (NASB) and associates it with the “temple of God” (vs. 4), and...
indicates that it takes place before the return of the Lord. According to Paul, the manifestation of this phenomenon was not yet a reality in his days because of the presence of a restraining power (2:6). The post-apostolic Church Fathers commonly identified the restraining force as “the civil order of the Roman Empire.” The apostasy would develop after the fall of the Roman Empire.

During the Middle Ages, the church united itself with the civil government and used force to impose its dogma, persecuting those who rejected the traditions of the church. This age of persecution is described by Daniel as taking place “for a time and times and half a time” (7:25, NKJV), or 1260 days (360 + 720 + 180 = 1260). This is the same time period during which, according to Revelation 12, the church hid itself.

Together with many other Christian interpreters, Adventists have taken the 1260 days to be symbolic of years, employing the year-day principle, extending from 538 to 1798. This is a period characterized by apostasy and persecution. It is toward the end of this prophetic period that God raised up the Reformation to bring His church back to biblical truth.

The Reformation was in many ways a great success for the Lord. A process of restoration of truth was initiated, made necessary because of the many false teachings that had been introduced in the church. God raised up individuals like Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, and Martin Luther.

“The Reformation uncovered long-forgotten truths. Justification by faith, the great principle of the gospel, was rediscovered, as was a new appreciation for the once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and its all-sufficient mediatorial priesthood. Many unbiblical teachings, such as prayers for the dead, veneration of saints and relics, celebration of the mass, worship of Mary, purgatory, penance, holy water, celibacy of the priesthood, the rosary, the inquisition, transubstantiation, extreme unction, and dependence upon tradition, were repudiated and abandoned.”

Sad to say, the Reformation movement soon came to an end. More biblical truth needed to be restored, but the successors of the great Reformers felt comfortable with the truth their predecessors recovered and did not pursue a complete restoration. Religion slipped toward a formality. But God’s true people had not been destroyed by the dragon. At the end of the prophetic period of 1260 days, a “remnant” of the seed of the woman still remained (Rev. 12:17, KJV).

The Remnant in Scripture

In dialogue with non-Adventist scholars, Adventist scholars have conducted careful studies of the remnant concept in the Bible. In the Scriptures, the terminology as well as the concept of the remnant is applied to three types of people. First, it designates a historical remnant formed by those who survived crisis; second, a faithful remnant who are true to their faith relationship with the Lord; and third, the eschatological remnant formed by the faithful who go through the apocalyptic woes and inherit the kingdom.

The remnant concept “has a long history reaching from the fall to the eschatological return of Jesus.” In the Flood narrative, Noah and his family are the historical remnant who survived the disaster and are a faithful remnant to the Lord (Gen. 6:8, 9; 7:1, 23). One of the best examples of a faithful remnant in the historical books is found in the encounter between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Immediately after his victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah concluded that he was the only one who remained faithful to the Lord. God informed Him that 7,000 Israelites had remained loyal to Him (1 Kings 16:30–19:18). In Ezra 9:8 and 9, the historical remnant consists of those who return from the exile, while in Nehemiah 1:2 and 3, they are those who were not exiled.

The concept of the remnant is prominent in the prophetic books. Not all of Israel belonged to the remnant, only those who survived the Assyrian attack; this is a historical remnant. The faithful remnant are called “the remnant of Joseph” (5:15, KJV). Isaiah associates the concept with the ideas of judgment, salvation, and holiness. After judgment, only a small remnant is left (6:11-
In the New Testament, the concept of the remnant surfaces in the preaching of John the Baptist inviting the people to be part of a penitent remnant. The preaching of Jesus was an invitation to the people to join Him and the new community of faith He was establishing. Those who accepted the invitation could be designated a faithful remnant. But even that remnant would be sifted to become the eschatological remnant.

The remnant of faith seem to be represented by the prophet, his sons, and his disciples (8:16-18). In the second part of Isaiah, salvation is proclaimed to all the remnant of the house of Israel; that is to say, to the faithful remnant (46:3). They will be part of the eschatological remnant that will include the remnant of the nations (45:20).

Micah describes the remnant as dispersed among the nations, and the Lord as the one who will gather them (5:7; 2:12). Joel mentions a faithful remnant who are able to stand firm during the Day of the Lord (2:32), and Zephaniah describes a small remnant who find refuge in Yahweh (3:12, 13). Several times Jeremiah mentions a historical remnant (e.g., 6:9, 29, 30; 21:8-10). There are also references to God’s gracious work of gathering the remnant and giving them a new covenant and a new heart (31:7-9, 31-34; Eze. 11:16-21).

In the prophetic books, the eschatological remnant do not include every Israelite but only the faithful ones within Israel and the survivors or remnant from the nations (Zech. 14:16). The one who gathers the remnant is the Lord Himself. In Daniel the eschatological remnant receive the Messianic kingdom (7:21-27).

In the New Testament, the concept of the remnant surfaces in the preaching of John the Baptist inviting the people to be part of a penitent remnant (Matt. 3:1-12). The preaching of Jesus was an invitation to the people to join Him and the new community of faith He was establishing. Those who accepted the invitation could be designated a faithful remnant. But even that remnant would be sifted to become the eschatological remnant (13:24-30).

According to Paul, the Jews who accepted Christ are the true remnant of God, the faithful remnant of Israel (Rom. 11:5). But the new remnant are larger than that small group. They are “the new community of faith [the Church], made up of all who have faith in Christ (10:4, 9-13), and includes Gentiles as well as Jews (9:24; 10:12).” Finally, in the Book of Revelation, there are references to a faithful remnant in the churches of Thyatira and Sardis (2:19; 3:2, 4). The remnant mentioned in 12:17 are the faithful end-time people of God who retain their faith in the Lord in spite of the attacks of the dragon.

Marks of the End-Time Remnant
Who are the faithful remnant mentioned in Revelation 12:17? Based on the characteristics of this remnant, Adventists have claimed to be the remnant of God. They are described as keeping the commandments of God, having the testimony of Jesus, and having the faith of Jesus (14:12).

• Keep the Commandments of God. Adventists understand that the term commandments in 12:17; 14:12 refers to the Ten Commandments. In fact, the conflict that the church confronts in the Book of Revelation is directly associated with the first part of the Decalogue, which defines one’s responsibility to God. The fundamental issue seems to be related to the proper object of worship. Humans are confronted with the options of worshipping the dragon, the beast, and the image of the beast—or God the Creator and the Lamb as the Redeemer. Notice the following references or allusions in Revelation to the first four commandments of the Decalogue.

First Commandment: John is called to worship God (19:10). In the heavenly liturgy, God and the Lamb are the only and exclusive objects of worship (4:10; 19:4), and on Earth its inhabitants are invited to worship the Creator (14:7). There is only one God who deserves the loyalty of the nations of the Earth (15:4).

Second Commandment: Idolatry is condemned in Revelation together with the worship of the image of the beast. Humans receive God’s judgment for “worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk” (Rev. 9:20, NIV). Unfortunately, humans are willing to worship the dragon, the beast, and the image of the beast instead of the true God (13:4, 8, 12, 15); consequently they are also rejected by God (14:9, 10; 16:2).

Third Commandment: The forces of evil open their mouths “He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place” (13:6, NIV). Unrepentant sinners “cursed the name of God” (16:9, NIV). These actions are considered to be open acts of rebellion against God.

Fourth Commandment: There appears to be an allusion to the Sabbath commandment in 14:7, perhaps even a partial quote from Exo-
dus 20:11: “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (NKJV, italics supplied). This quote is significant because Revelation never quotes the Old Testament, although there are many allusions to it. In the Decalogue, the only commandment that identifies Yahweh with respect to the world is the Sabbath commandment. He is the Creator.

John appears to be describing the attack of the evil forces as a rejection of the first part of the Decalogue. Little emphasis is placed on the other commandments because in Revelation the fundamental issue is the one of the commitment of the individual to God and the Lamb or to the evil powers. It is an attack against the very foundation of God’s revealed will. The eschatological remnant are loyal to the will of God as revealed in a special way in the Ten Commandments.

• Have the Testimony of Jesus. The phrase “the testimony of Jesus” is a little more difficult to understand. In Revelation 19:10 it is in parallelism with the phrase “spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 21:9 associates it with the gift of prophecy. Based on that evidence, Adventists have historically taken the “testimony of Jesus” to mean that within the end-time remnant, there would be a manifestation of the gift of prophecy or of the spiritual gifts in general. This found expression in a special way in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White in the church.

Interestingly, Ellen G. White in her writings presents a much broader understanding of the phrase “the testimony of Jesus.” In fact, she never interprets the manifestation of the gift of prophecy in her life as a fulfillment of Revelation 12:17. For her, the “testimony of Jesus” is what He revealed to us through the prophets, through His teachings while on Earth, and through the apostles. Fundamentally, it is God’s revealed will in His Word. She puts the emphasis on the content of that testimony, the truths that are revealed there, on the gospel and on our witnessing to it. For her, the remnant is characterized by faithfulness to the message of the Scriptures.

• Keep the Faith of Jesus. “The faith of Jesus” is mentioned in Revelation 14:17 in conjunction with the phrase “keep the commandments of God.” Traditionally Adventists have interpreted this phrase as designating all the teachings of Jesus. In this case, one of the marks of the remnant would be that they proclaim and believe what Jesus taught and believed (the gospel). But with the emphasis on justification by faith during and after 1888, Adventists found in the “faith of Jesus” a reference to justification by faith (Rom. 3:22). It is the faith that we put in Christ’s saving power that justifies us. The clause “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” was interpreted, then, in terms of law and gospel, works of love and saving faith.

The combination of these important truths would be one of the marks of the remnant. Although Adventists believe that the marks of the remnant apply in a specific way to their experience, they hold that there are many other true Christians in the world. They believe that “the universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ.” It could be asked, “In what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith.”

The following statement is representative of their position: “Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In heathen Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law.”

Adventists recognize that the remnant are larger than their historical manifestation in the Adventist Church. For them to conclude that they are the only ones faithful to the Lord would be tantamount to repeating Elijah’s mistake, who thought that everybody else except he had apostatized.

“When Elijah complained that he stood alone in his service for God, the answer that came from heaven was, ‘I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ Men are at best poor judges of the advancement made by the Gospel, of the influence
The remnant are indeed larger than their historical manifestation in the Adventist church as God’s remnant. There is an invisible dimension to the remnant that transcends their historical and visible expression. But at the close of the history of sin, when the human race will be polarized, God’s full and faithful remnant will be clearly distinguished from the rest of humanity. They will remain loyal to Christ as Savior and Lord, to the law of God, and to the Scriptures.

that it has on souls who, perhaps, have never heard the preaching of an ordained minister. All through the world the Lord has His chosen ones.”

Such individuals can be and should be considered “a remnant” who trust in the Word of God; they can be further defined as those who in every place “hold communion with God.”

The remnant are indeed larger than their historical manifestation in the Adventist Church as God’s remnant. There is an invisible dimension to the remnant that transcends their historical and visible expression. But at the close of the history of sin, when the human race will be polarized, God’s full and faithful remnant will be clearly distinguished from the rest of humanity. They will remain loyal to Christ as Savior and Lord, to the law of God, and to the Scriptures. Adventists see themselves as instruments of God in gathering the faithful, eschatological remnant of God before the return of the Lord.

The Mission of the Remnant. The mission of the remnant is described in Revelation 14:6-12 under the symbol of three angels flying through the heavens, proclaiming three messages closely related to one another. The purpose is to gather God’s remnant scattered throughout the world. The proclamation of the three angels’ messages takes place before the second coming of Christ (14:13-20) and is universal in scope, i.e., it is addressed to both Christians and non-Christians. The basic issue in that proclamation is the one of a commitment to Christ that expresses itself in the exclusive worship of God.

- Message of the First Angel. This angel proclaims the “eternal gospel” in the context of end-time events. This is the good news of salvation through Christ on account of God’s grace. It is eternal because it is always relevant and unchangeable. In the apostolic church, acceptance of the gospel meant worshiping the true God and rejecting idolatry (Acts 14:15; 20:24). The call to fear God and give glory to Him takes place within the frame of reference of the gospel. When confronted by God, humans are to fear Him, to humble themselves, and to recognize His sovereignty and lordship over them. Interestingly, in the Bible, the fear of God and obedience to His law seem to go together (Lev. 19:14, 32; Deut. 13:11; 17:13). To glorify God is to exalt Him, to recognize Him as the most important person in the universe. The dragon and its instruments are not to be feared or glorified by humanity.

One of the motivations for this appeal of the gospel is that “the hour of God’s judgment has come.” The history of salvation is coming to an end, and God’s eschatological judgment is reaching its consummation; therefore the human race should not accept the authority of the dragon because the dragon itself and its instruments are going to experience God’s executive judgment. The proper response of those who accept the gospel is to worship only the Creator of heaven and earth. The Sabbath commandment is a weekly reminder of the important biblical truth that God is indeed our Creator.

- The Message of the Second Angel: The Fall of Babylon. This angel announces the fall of Babylon and the reasons for its fall. There is here a typological connection between ancient Babylon and the end-time Babylon. In the Old Testament, Babylon was the archenemy of God and His people, and in Revelation it represents God’s eschatological archenemy. It is represented under the symbol of a city in order to emphasize its political power. But it is also represented under the symbol of a woman who is a prostitute (Revelation 17). In Revelation one finds a faithful woman (12:1, 2) and an unfaithful woman (17:1-4).

In the Old Testament, the symbol of an unfaithful wife designates apostate Israel (Isa. 1:21; Jer. 3:1-3, 8, 9; Eze. 16:15-34; Hosea 2:2, 4). It would appear that in Jeremiah and Ezekiel the figure of Jezebel is used as a model to depict the unfaithful people of God (e.g., Jer. 4:30). This woman introduced a false system of worship in Israel and killed those who feared the Lord (1 Kings 18–19). The symbolism of Jezebel as an instrument of apostasy and persecution is used in the Book of Revelation. It is through the activities of Jezebel that a false system of worship was introduced in the church of Thyatira (Rev. 2:20).

It appears that the prostitute /Babylon mentioned in Revelation 17–19 has as its background the great Jezebel of the Old Testament.
who persecuted and killed the people of God (17:4, 6; 18:7). The apostasy predicted by Paul is described in Revelation under the symbolism of Babylon/the harlot. In the same way that a false religious system was established in Israel, so a false system entered the Christian Church.

Adventists believe that this apostasy, which began during the Middle Ages, will continue to the end when it reaches universal dimensions. Only God’s remnant will resist it. The application of the term Babylon to the Church of Rome is something Adventists have in common with the Reformers. According to Revelation 17:5, it is said that the harlot/Babylon is a “mother.” Because of this, Adventists believe that the title could be rightly applied to others.

Adventists watch with interest and great concern what is happening in the Protestant world with its tendency to reject the principle of sola Scriptura. Since the Reformation, many Protestants have come to reject some of the fundamental teachings of the Reformers and question others. Rejection of truth leads to apostasy.

Although the term Babylon symbolizes all apostate religious organizations and their leadership, it especially designates the culmination of an eschatological process of apostasy in the Christian world. Then the beast and its image will form an alliance that unites religious and civil powers, culminating in the crisis described in Revelation 13:15-17. It is at that future time that the fall of Babylon will be final. Adventists believe that it is their responsibility to call the attention of the Christian world to this coming tragedy and to restore the truth that was cast to the ground.

- The Message of the Third Angel: The Mark of the Beast. This message is a warning against worshiping the beast and the image of the beast, and against receiving the mark of the beast. In strong terms and vivid images, it announces the final defeat of the evil powers and of those loyal to them.

Adventists have historically identified the mark of the beast with the end-time universal enforcement of Sunday observance in the Christian world. They do not believe that Sunday observance today constitutes the mark of the beast or that those who are Sunday keepers have the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast and the fall of Babylon take place together, and it would be at that time that Sunday observance and the mark of the beast will be closely associated. This will take place when religious leaders begin to use civil authority to impose religious ideas and practices and to persecute those who do not submit to their beliefs and demands.

Adventists recognize, however, that the mark of the beast is obviously more than the observance of Sunday. In Revelation 13:17 it is further defined as the name of the beast. The name in the Bible is an expression of the character of its bearer; therefore to have the name/mark of the beast is to be totally identified with its purpose, intentions, and message.

The profession of faith in Christ, according to Revelation 14:1, defines this seal very narrowly in terms of Sabbath observance, recognizing at the same time, that it includes much more. Having the name of the Lamb and the Father “written on their foreheads” (14:1, NKJV). Adventists have identified the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev. 7:3), which is further defined as the name of the Lamb and the name of the Father “written on their foreheads” (14:1, NKJV). Adventists have identified the seal very narrowly in terms of Sabbath observance, recognizing at the same time, that it includes much more. Having the name of the Lamb and the Father does not mean simply that the remnant belong to God but also that they reflect in their lives the saving power of God and are firmly established in their loyalty to Him. “As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.”

The profession of faith in Christ would then express itself in complete loyalty and commitment to Christ in the midst of great opposition from evil powers.

One could conclude that, “The mark, then, centers in loyalty. It is the counterpart of the ‘seal of God’ in chapter 7. In the final events of planet earth, as the entire human race is divided into just two camps, one group will give allegiance to the sea monster and the other, despite all opposition, will remain loyal to God. The ‘mark’ and the ‘seal’ respectively identify all people.

“In that final crisis the commandments of God will emerge as a standard of loyalty (12:17; 14:6-12). The Sabbath in particular will be the litmus test; one’s relationship to it will disclose his/her basic relationship to God and His law. Thus, while the nonobservance of the Sabbath or...
One of the most widespread teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that the central issue in the final crisis of Earth’s history has to do with the Sabbath command of the Decalogue. Adventists believe that the inhabitants of the world will one day have to choose between worship of the true God on His Sabbath day and worship of a false god on another day. But this teaching is increasingly coming under attack, both inside and outside the church. For one thing, many Adventists have noticed that the term Sabbath nowhere occurs in the Book of Revelation. Many have, therefore, come to wonder whether Adventist teaching is based on the Bible or whether it is only sustainable on the basis of assertion and/or the writings of Ellen White.

Furthermore, the Sabbath-Sunday issue itself seems to have little relevance to people in today’s world. If you ask average people on the street whether Saturday or Sunday is the ‘mark’ per se just now, both are integral to its end-time enforcement. The Sabbath, anciently the ‘sign’ of the people of God (Exod 31:13; Ezek 20:20), will again come to the fore to show the world those who put God first.”

Adventists are persuaded that the history of salvation is approaching its consummation and that soon the human race will be fully incorporated into the harmony of the visible kingdom of God. The conflict between good and evil will be resolved once and for all, ushering the redeemed ones into eternity. It is this glorious hope that inspires the remnant to remain faithful to the Lord and to call the human race to accept Christ as Savior and Lord. Adventists’ insistence on a return to the spirit of the Reformation and the restoration of truth has the purpose of redressing the process of apostasy in order for the people of God to avoid being deceived by the dragon and its associates and be ready for the coming of the Lord by relying exclusively on His saving power.

Hence, the urgency of our mission to the world.

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4. Ibid., p. 134.
5. Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . , ibid., p. 12.
7. Prophets and Kings, pp. 188, 189.
9. Ibid.

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Sunday-observance is not the ‘mark’ per se just now, both are integral to its end-time enforcement. The Sabbath, anciently the ‘sign’ of the people of God (Exod 31:13; Ezek 20:20), will again come to the fore to show the world those who put God first.\textsuperscript{11}

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\textsuperscript{2} Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . . (Hagerstown, Md.: Ministerial Association, 1988), p. 160.


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\textsuperscript{5} Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . , ibid., p. 12.

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{The Great Controversy}, p. 383.

\textsuperscript{7} Prophets and Kings, pp. 188, 189.

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Signs of the Times} (Nov. 23, 1904), p. 1.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10} Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 970.

Those who seek to understand the Old Testament roots of Revelation quickly run into a major problem. The Book of Revelation never quotes the Old Testament; it only alludes to it with a word here, a phrase there, a name somewhere else. Although it is essential to notice the Old Testament references within the Book of Revelation, it can be quite difficult to know exactly when the author of Revelation intends to allude to the Old Testament.

The Language of Allusion

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to understand a basic characteristic of the Book of Revelation. This book is filled with the language, ideas, places, and people of the Old Testament. Although it is a New Testament book, the basic language structure of the Book of Revelation builds on the experiences of God’s people as recorded in the Old Testament. Many people, therefore, fail to grasp fully the message of Revelation because they do not take seriously the Old Testament nature of its language.

But those who seek to understand the Old Testament roots of Revelation quickly run into a major problem. The Book of Revelation never quotes the Old Testament; it only alludes to it with a word here, a phrase there, a name somewhere else. Although it is essential to notice the Old Testament references within the Book of Revelation, it can be quite difficult to know exactly when the author of Revelation intends to allude to the Old Testament. Careful strategies need to be employed to ensure that the interpreter of Revelation draws out the actual meaning of the text rather than imposing some external meaning onto the text.

I wrote my own doctoral dissertation on the seven trumpets of Revelation. Few subjects could possibly be more challenging. I quickly discovered that I would make little headway in the trumpets without a consistent and biblical strategy for determining the Old Testament roots of the passage.

A Strategy for Evaluating Allusions

First, use Bible margins, commentaries, concordances, and lists of allusions (such as the lists in the back of the standard Greek texts by Nestle-Aland) to develop a list of potential allusions to the Old Testament that these various sources believe occur in a given passage of Revelation. This list is not to be accepted uncritically, but must be carefully evaluated.

Second, place the selected passage of Revelation side-by-side with the various Old Testament passages you are evaluating. Identify verbal, thematic, and structural parallels between Revelation and each of the Old Testament passages you are evaluating.

Third, weigh the verbal, thematic, and structural evidence to determine whether there is an allusion to the Old Testament (an intentional reference by the author to a specific context in earlier literature) or merely an echo (a possibly unintentional reference based upon the author’s general knowledge of earlier literature and/or its influence on his environment).

Fourth, apply the appropriate insights to the text of Revelation. If the author is consciously alluding to the Old Testament, he may assume that the reader is familiar with that particular Old Testament text and its larger context. It would, in such a case, be essential for the interpreter to be aware of the allusion and of the impact of its context on the text of Revelation. If the author is merely echoing the Old Testament text without conscious intent, the interpreter must be careful not to import an Old Testament context that the author of Revelation did not have in mind. In other words, you can misread Revelation in two ways: by ignoring the role of the Old Testament in the author’s language and by overplaying its impact.

Here is an example of how the Old Testament affects the interpretation of a text in Revelation. Revelation 13:1 and 2 contains a fascinating allusion to the Old Testament: “I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.” Most scholars presume that Revelation 13 is based on Daniel 7, where four beasts come up out of the sea. Let’s evaluate that assumption.

Daniel 7 describes four animals that come up out of the sea: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a bizarre,
nondescript monster with iron teeth and 10 horns on its head. Since the leopard is depicted with four heads, this gang of four has a total of seven heads among them. They also have a total of 10 horns among them. Remember the beast of Revelation 13? Like the beasts of Daniel 7, it comes up out of the sea. It has characteristics of a lion, a bear, and a leopard. It has seven heads and 10 horns, a clear parallel to the total number of heads and horns on the four beasts of Daniel 7. It seems clear, then, that Revelation 13:1 and 2 builds on the vision of Daniel 7.

Verbal, Thematic, and Structural Parallels

But things are rarely this clear in Revelation. How do you make judgments about the Old Testament background of Revelation when the evidence is less clear than it is in Revelation 13? You place a text in Revelation side by side with a prospective source text in the Old Testament. Carefully comparing the two, you look for three types of evidence between the two texts: verbal parallels, thematic parallels, and structural parallels.

Verbal parallels occur whenever there are two or more major words in common between a passage in Revelation and the prospective source text in the Old Testament. Minor words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and definite articles do not usually count. The more major words the two passages have in common, the more likely the author intended the reader to see the parallel and apply the significance of the Old Testament text to his or her understanding of Revelation. In our example of Revelation 13 and Daniel 7, the verbal parallels are sea, lion, bear, leopard, heads, and horns; one of the stronger verbal parallels to the Old Testament in the entire Book of Revelation.

Thematic parallels can occur between passages even though there is only one word (or even no word) in common between them. Thematic parallels involve a parallel of theme or idea, not necessarily signaled by parallel words. By themselves, thematic parallels are the weakest of the three types of evidence for a direct allusion. In Revelation 13 there is a thematic parallel with Daniel 7 in terms of animals representing world powers and coming out of the sea.

Structural parallels occur in which a number of words and themes are parallel between a portion of Revelation and a particular context in the Old Testament. Structural parallels to the Old Testament on a larger scale in Revelation provide strong evidence for intentional allusions in the smaller details of the text of Revelation. Examples of well-recognized structural parallels in Revelation include the use of Ezekiel in Revelation 4, 7, and 17–22; the use of Daniel in Revelation 5, 13, and 17; the use of Genesis 3 in Revelation 12; the plagues of the Exodus in the trumpets and the bowls; and the fall of ancient Babylon in Revelation 16–19. In Revelation 13 there are numerous and striking parallels to Daniel 7, although they do not occur in exactly the same order. In both passages, beasts come up out of the sea, seven heads and 10 horns are involved, and reference is made to a lion, a bear, and a leopard.

Though the author’s use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation is often more ambiguous than we would like, careful attention to the words, themes, and structures within the Book of Revelation can make much clearer the author’s intentions in his use of the Old Testament and, therefore, offers a clearer window into his intentions for how the book should be interpreted.

The Context of Revelation 12–14

To return to the role of the Sabbath in the final crisis of Earth’s history, the foundation text on the subject of the final crisis in the Book of Revelation is Revelation 12:17. There we find described a war between the dragon and the remnant, a war that is fleshed out in more detail in Revelation 13 and 14. In a sense, Revelation 12:17 is a summary in advance of the whole end-time crisis, and chapters 13 and 14 serve as exegesis and elaboration of the basic statement of 12:17. Revelation 13 fleshes out the dragon’s war, while Revelation 14 expands on the character and message of the Remnant.

The dragon pursues his war against the remnant in chapter 13. He calls up two allies for the conflict: One comes up out of the sea, and the other comes up out of the earth. The three characters—dragon, beast from the sea, and beast from the earth—form an unholy trinity that seeks to counterfeit the work of the true Trinity. The dragon counterfeits the work of God the Father, the sea beast counterfeits the work of God the Son, and the land beast counter-
feits the work of the Holy Spirit. These three together attack the remnant in the final battle.

What is the basic issue in this attack? Revelation 13 and 14 do not leave any doubt (13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11). On seven occasions, the text of these chapters talks about worshiping the dragon, worshiping the sea beast, or worshiping the image of the beast. The issue in the final crisis of Earth’s history is clearly worship. In striking contrast to this seven-fold call to worship the unholy trinity or the image of the beast is the single call to worship God in these chapters.

The interesting thing is that the language of this central affirmation is based on the fourth commandment expressions in Exodus 20:11. There it states, “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” This language is reflected in Revelation 14:7: “Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” At the decisive center point of Revelation’s description of the final crisis is a direct allusion to Exodus 20. Attention to the Sabbath command is, therefore, the ideal response to God’s final call to worship, the ideal response to the beast’s seven-fold call to worship the unholy trinity.

Revelation 14:7 and the Old Testament

Verbal parallels. At this point, sharp readers may offer an objection. How do we know that the author of Revelation consciously intended the reader to pick up an allusion to the fourth commandment at exactly this point (Revelation 14:7) in his narrative? Doesn’t Psalm 146:6 contain exactly the same language as Exodus 20? How do we know that John was quoting Exodus 20 and not Psalm 146? Could he not be alluding to the psalm instead, in which case no allusion to the fourth commandment would apparently be intended?

The point is well taken. Psalm 146:6 says, “The Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.” This is very close, verbally, to “him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev. 14:7). In fact, in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament (a Greek translation from the Hebrew available in New Testament times) the wording of Psalm 146 (listed as Psalm 145 in the Septuagint) is virtually identical to that of Revelation 14:7. So there are strong verbal parallels in Revelation 14 to both Exodus 20 and Psalm 146, with a slight edge, perhaps, going to Psalm 146 rather than Exodus 20.

Thematic parallels. But verbal parallels are only one type of evidence for a conscious allusion to the Old Testament in Revelation. Thematic and structural parallels are also significant. Are there thematic parallels between Revelation 14:7 and Exodus 20? Yes.

The first four of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3-11) contain three motivations for obedience. First, there is the motivation of salvation. The preamble to the Ten Commandments (vss. 2, 3) says, “I . . . brought you out of Egypt, . . . [therefore] have no other gods before me.” Our obedience is to be a response to what God has done for us. Second, there is the motivation of judgment. The second commandment speaks of “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations” (vs. 5, NKJV). There are consequences for disobedience. Third, there is the motivation of creation. Worship “him who made” (vs. 11). I have made you; I know what is best for you. So there are three motivations to obedience in the first part of the law: salvation, judgment, and creation.

The same three motivations occur in the context of Revelation 14:7. Revelation 14:6 speaks of an angel who proclaims “the everlasting gospel” (KJV). Here we see the motive of salvation. In Revelation 14:7 we see the motive of judgment as well: “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.” And we have already seen the motivation of creation in Revelation 14:7: “Worship him who made.” So Revelation 14:6, 7, has the same three motivations for response as the first table of the Ten Commandments (the Godward side of the first four): salvation, judgment, and creation. And they even occur in the same order as they do in Exodus 20!
Do any of these themes occur also in Psalm 146? Yes. There is the theme of salvation: “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. . . . Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God” (vss. 3, 5). There is the theme of creation: “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth” (vs. 6). There is the theme of judgment: “He upholds the cause of the oppressed” (vs. 7).

The thematic parallels to Psalm 146, therefore, are as strong as those to Exodus 20, but not in exactly the same order. So in this case, there is strong evidence pointing to both Old Testament contexts, but there is a slight edge to Exodus 20 on the grounds that the themes occur in the same order in both Revelation 14 and Exodus 20.

Structural parallels. That brings us to the search for structural parallels. Let’s look at the evidence in Revelation 12-14. The Ten Commandments, of which Exodus 20:11 is a part, seems to be a major structure underlying this whole section of Revelation. The remnant are characterized, among other things, as those who “keep the commandments of God” (Rev. 12:17; 14:12, KJV). But the issue here is not just any commandments of God. The central issue is focused on “worship” (13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:7, 9, 11). Worship in particular focuses attention on the first table of the commandments (the first four), those that have to do with our relationship with God.

Given this reality, it is not surprising that in Revelation 13, the beasts not only counterfeit the persons of the godhead, but also counterfeit each of the first four commandments of the Decalogue as well. The first commandment says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3), but the sea beast takes the place of God by receiving worship of itself (Rev. 13:4, 8). The second commandment warns against the worship of images, yet the land beast raises up an image to be worshiped (vss. 14, 15). The third commandment says, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God” (Ex. 20:7), but the sea beast has the names of blasphemy written all over it (Rev. 13:1, 5, 6).

The fourth commandment says, “Remember the Sabbath day” (Ex. 20:8). Ancient covenant tablets were stamped in the center with a seal of ownership and authority. Since the Ten Commandments follow the form of ancient covenant tablets, they too have a seal of ownership and authority in the center: the Sabbath command. “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (vs. 11).

The above statement is the only place in the Ten Commandments where the basis of God’s authority over all creation is stated: He is the Creator. This concept of a seal is important in Revelation as well: The 144,000 are sealed on their foreheads (14:1; 7:3, 4; Ex. 31:13, 17). The unholy trinity offers a counterfeit to the seal as well: the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16, 17). Thus, all four commandments in the first table of the law come under attack by the unholy trinity of Revelation 13. The first table of the law is at the center of the battle between the dragon and the remnant.

This series of verbal and thematic connections between the material in this part of Revelation and passages related to the Ten Commandments indicates that a major structural parallel to this part of Revelation is the Ten Commandments, particularly the first portion relating to humanity’s relationship with God. This structural evidence offers overwhelming support for the likelihood that the significant verbal parallel between Revelation 14:7 and Exodus 20:11 was intentional on the part of the author of Revelation. There is absolutely no similar relationship between Revelation and Psalm 146.

The cumulative evidence is so strong that an interpreter could conclude that there is no direct allusion to the Old Testament in Revelation that is more certain than the allusion to the fourth commandment in Revelation 14:7. When the author of Revelation describes God’s final appeal to the human race in the context of the end-time deception, he does so in terms of a call to worship the Creator in the context of the fourth commandment.

The Issue of Relevance

Even if it is biblical, however, does it make any sense to see the Sabbath
as some kind of defining issue in the final crisis of Earth’s history? Why would God pick such an issue as the central focus of the end-time crisis?

At the heart of the matter is the fact that the Sabbath is an ideal way to test whether people are truly loyal to God. The Sabbath command is different from the other nine. All the others have a certain basis in reason and self-interest. After all, the principles of the second table of the law (how we are to relate to others) are the foundation of government in most countries. “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13, KJV) is logical to anyone who does not wish to be killed. “Thou shalt not steal” (vs. 15, KJV) makes sense to anyone who wants to protect his or her hard-earned possessions. Commands like this are reasonable and even appeal to a certain amount of self-interest. The same goes for the first three commandments concerning our relationship with God. If God is who He claims to be, it makes no sense to worship someone else.

The one part of the Ten Commandments that is not logical is the command to worship on Saturday rather than on some other day. Such a command is so lacking in logic and self-interest that secular people find it hard to take seriously. After all, no one has been able to demonstrate any logical or scientific basis for seeing any one day as more special to God than any other. The sun shines and the rain falls in the usual amounts on both Saturday and Sunday.

To keep the Sabbath is to take God at His word in spite of the fact that the five senses can perceive no evidence that to do so is reasonable. The Sabbath at the end is like the tree at the beginning. The fruit of the tree of knowledge was probably both tasty and nutritious. The only reason not to eat was because God said so.

So it is with the Sabbath. The only reason to prefer Saturday over Sunday is because God said so; there is no other reason. We accept the Sabbath purely on the basis of God’s Word. It is, therefore, a good test of our trust in God and His Word. We accept the Sabbath on the basis of the Word of God. We believe that the Scriptures give a reliable account of the mind and will of God. They are a trustworthy record of God’s dealings in the past, and they are a reliable account of the true realities of the end time. Because we believe the Scriptures, we trust the account of the end time that we find there.

The Book of Revelation portrays the end of the world as a time of great, worldwide deception that will overwhelm the five senses, even in the people of God. However, those who believe, accept, and obey the Word of God will not lose their way in the end-time deception.

*Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references in this article are quoted from the New International Version.

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he sands of the Middle East often reveal secrets long lost through the passage of time. It is the alluring hope of discovery that brings back hundreds of archaeologists and volunteers to the lands of the Bible every year from colleges and universities around the world. The hope is that, underneath the layers of accumulation, hints will be found that will somehow illuminate and inspire. Such a discovery was made during the summer of 2005 when excavators at the site of Tel Zayit in Israel uncovered a wall with a stone protruding from it. That stone would challenge recent scholars and their skeptical assessment of early Israel.

Early one morning, a volunteer was brushing away the dirt from a stone wall when she noticed something different. A stone was strangely protruding from the face of the wall. As the volunteer glanced at it from different angles she wondered why it would be placed in such an awkward position. Then she noticed that something was scratched on the surface. She called over her supervisors, and it was not long before the elusive markings were recognized. They were the letters of an ancient script buried for more than 2,900 years. Someone in the ancient past had marked down the alphabet on that ancient stone. Today excavators believe that the abecedary, or alphabet, may be the most ancient precursor to the Hebrew alphabet, the basis for the language of the Old Testament.

Today when numerous postmodern scholars have challenged the validity of the biblical record, this is an important discovery. Some scholars have actually questioned the existence of David and Solomon as historical figures. These so-called revisionists are rewriting the Bible and presuming a much later date for its origin.

According to Philip Davies of the University of Sheffield, the Bible was not written until the Hellenistic period after Alexander the Great, some 600 years after the time of David and Solomon. He asserts, further, that biblical Hebrew was an invented language, a construct of this period. But he does not cite any supporting evidence for his assertion because there is none.

Inscriptions have been found from sites throughout Israel from the time of the 10th century B.C. onward. Most of these inscriptions have not been found in a clear archaeological context. That is, they often have been found in a dump after excavation and thus, a secure date based on pottery typology has not been possible. Nevertheless, they provide important details concerning the development of the Hebrew alphabet and language.

One such find was made at the site of Gezer, a city I had the privilege of excavating several years ago. In the early excavations of the site, R. A. S. Macalister found a small tablet of soft limestone with the following inscription on it:

Two months of harvest
Two months of planting
Two months of late planting
One month of hoeing
One month of barley-harvest
One month of harvest and festival
Two months of grape harvesting
One month of summer fruit.

Scholars who have studied the Gezer calendar have thought that perhaps it was a schoolboy’s exercise or a popular folk song. It certainly gives us insight on the agricultural calendar of the Israelites, who lived as an agrarian society. Professor Joseph Naveh of the Hebrew University writes that this is thought to be the earliest Hebrew inscription known to date.

The discovery of the Tel Zayit abecedary adds significantly to this understanding. The inscription is dated by the ceramic and archaeological evidence to the 10th century, the time of Solomon or shortly thereafter. The building was destroyed in a massive fire, leaving debris nearly one meter thick over the area. Excavators have dated this destruction to Shishak, Zerah the Ethiopian (who may have acted as an agent of Shishak), or possibly someone else. If the destruction dates to Shishak, whose campaign is mentioned in 1 Kings 14:25-28 (2 Chron. 12:1-12), then the inscription would need to be dated before 925 B.C., when this campaign took place, according to Egyptian records. The clear archaeological context of this inscription cannot be overstated. The Tel Zayit inscription helps to provide a chronological anchor to many of the studies conducted on the development of the Hebrew script.

The Tel Zayit abecedary is one of the oldest attestations of the alphabet known. Since it was found in a clear archaeological context that dates it to the 10th century B.C., the abecedary also provides a clear connection between the development of language in ancient Israel and the growing archaeological evidence of cities and buildings.

We can be certain that Hebrew was not an invented language of the third century B.C. Hellenistic period to be written only by the priests and elite citizens of Jerusalem. The writing of the Hebrew language was even practiced in the smaller cities of Judah hundreds of years earlier.

It also means that the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles, which provide the political history of Israel, could indeed have been based on earlier sources and writings that documented the events of the ancient Hebrew kings. The Bible was written in the ancient past and is not the creation of scribes and priests inventing their history hundreds of years after the event.

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I'll just come out and say it: What makes a person a Christian is that he or she lives by faith. This faith is not self-confidence, nor is it faith in anything other than in the God of the Bible. And that's it.

Increasing evidence today, from Barna Research and other groups, points to a clear disconnect between what Christians theoretically believe in and what they actually do with their lives. Many believe the Bible is God's Word but don't read it, they believe they love God but hardly spend time with Him, or they are less interested in the God of the Bible. And that's it.

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In my travels, as well as in my hometown, I find sincere, honest Adventists who attend church, return tithe, and honor the Sabbath but whose many daily decisions are not based on real trust in God but on common sense. The use of common sense is, hands down, to be preferred over the lack of it, but it is still not necessarily a Christian distinctive. Though it's true that God can and does work through common sense, Buddhists and atheists make decisions based on common sense all the time, and faith in God is not part of their equation. Even most of our church committee work, at every level, is dominated by decisions made based on common sense.

This is not the rationale Jesus used to make decisions.

Take, for instance, the resurrection of Lazarus. When Martha and Mary sent the word to Christ about their brother, they did so in the most compelling way: "'He whom You love is sick'" (John 11:3, NASB, italics added). This is no regular request for healing by some unknown person by the side of the road. This is your beloved friend! If Jesus "turned away none" who came to Him for healing, then surely Lazarus' need would be immediately met.

But shocking as it was to His disciples, He chose not to do what sense dictated. Instead, the Bible says He stayed an additional two days before He went to Lazarus. And He went only after He knew He was dead! (vs. 11). What would you have done in Christ's place? The genuine expectation of the sisters, the friendship with Lazarus, the request made in public, the typical responsiveness of Jesus in those cases—all pointed to Him going immediately to the sick.

But Jesus walked by faith and not by sight. Everything about His ministry aimed at the glory of God and not the fulfillment of common sense. It was the serious time spent each day in communion with His Father that allowed Him to know what to do and when to do it. He trusted the voice of the One who woke Him "morning by morning" (Isa. 50:4, KJV). He listened to God's voice as an eager disciple would his wise master. Thus, though He was wholly human, He lived additionally in a dimension wholly different from that of humanity. He lived by faith and not by sight.

How Jesus lived, curiously enough, is how Christians ought to live. The greatest problem with Christians today—and Adventists, in particular—is that we are no longer Christians. The Christian is the person saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). But we hardly live by faith anymore. We often live by feeling or by consensus or by expectations placed by others or by common sense.

Some, to be sure, have given "living by faith" a bad name. I remember years ago, a minister who convinced many in his congregation that it was time to move to the hills in view of the upcoming final persecution. That is seeing what is not there, and it's called presumption.

To live by faith is to live by what is written—and what is meant by what is written—not by what is imagined. To live by faith calls for faithful exegesis of the biblical text, that is, for careful understanding of inspired writings. And when we study is still not clear, we should move forward with what is, not with what isn't. Often the Lord may hold back more light from us simply because the light He has given us is still ignored.

Another example from our Lord: Remember when the Greeks sought to see Jesus? (John 12:21, KJV). When you look at the context, you realize this was the day Christ had pronounced the "woes" against the Pharisees because they chose to live by their convictions rather than by what God had said. At the end of this sad discourse, Christ, heartbroken for His unbelieving leaders, declared that He would leave the temple desolate, never to return until His second coming (Matt. 23:37-39). The Greeks no doubt heard all this while in the temple's Court of the Gentiles. It is at this point that they were encouraged to
seek Jesus. If His own people would reject Him, perhaps Christ would be willing to minister to them, for they certainly were ready to receive Him!

Going to Greece or Macedonia instead of Calvary was not as easy an opportunity for Christ to turn down as it may appear. He was already under the shadow of the cross. This is why “a mysterious cloud seemed to enshroud the Son of God” and He “sat rapt in thought.” Though He recognized it would take death on the Cross to redeem Greeks as well as Jews, “His humanity shrank from the hour of abandonment.” He sighed, “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, “Father, save Me from this hour?” (John 12:27, NASB).

Jesus was troubled because His feelings did battle with His faith. He honestly would forgo the humiliation of the Cross. He would rather minister to the Greeks who appeared open to God now than put them on hold while He took up His cross. What made sense was to go where people really wanted Him, not to die misunderstood.

Nevertheless, what the Father had made clear was the cross for Him to bear, not the Greeks for Him to witness to. So, He followed the light He had, and not the one He didn’t. He woke Himself, as it were, to such reality, by continuing His thinking aloud: “‘But for this purpose [the cross] I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name’” (vss. 27, 28, NKJV). And His mind was made up. That is living by faith and not by sight.

I have said to my friends that I am too busy to be an officer in the Adventist Theological Society (ATS). But I see how it builds faith in God and that is what God longs to see happen with His own. Faith is our victory. Faith is the one way we make God’s day (Heb. 11:6). When an ATS team of scholars presents papers in Bible symposia or ministerial councils, people leave with renewed confidence in God and His Word. They are more willing to trust in Him than to doubt Him. When I read articles in The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society or in Perspective Digest, my own faith in God is renewed. I believe in these publications because they are God-centered and Bible-driven, and when these two things are in place, everything is in place.

My hope is that ATS will be a tool used by our Lord to engender faith in Him—real, abiding, even long-suffering faith in the “Lover of our souls.” I say this not because I am a great man of faith, but because I am in great need of faith. And so are we as God’s last-day people, remembering what is written, that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17, NASB).

REFERENCES

1 The Desire of Ages, p. 823.
2 Ibid., p. 625.
3 Ibid.

In January 25, 1990, Avianca Airlines Flight 52 ran out of fuel and crashed to the earth, causing the loss of many lives. In its report of the incident, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) disclosed that the whole tragic accident might have been prevented if the flight crew had used the correct specific terms to describe its critical problem to those in the control tower.

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Reportedly the pilots had radioed the following message to air traffic controllers at the nearest airport: “We’re running out of fuel.” In fact they used the wrong terms. If they had described their situation as having “minimum fuel” or “emergency fuel,” as they were supposed to under the circumstances, the air traffic controllers would have known to respond decisively and immediately. Those were the terms controllers were trained to be listening for, but because they didn’t hear them, they did not realize the gravity of the situation.

In order to anticipate every possible eventuality, the Federal Aviation Administration has designated a standard form of
terminology for communication between aircraft and control tower. In this case, it was the personnel in the aircraft whose failure to use the official vocabulary led to miscommunication—and a great loss of human life.

In a sense, God has also established a standard for communication whose importance has life-or-death consequences. In point of fact, it has cosmic implications. He chose to reveal His will through Scripture so that those who love Him may navigate a flight plan through life in safety and security.

Given that, one might conclude that humankind would be universally intent on learning what God has to say to us, parsing everything as if our lives depended on it. As it happens, our everlasting lives, indeed, do depend on it.

Some have been moved to recognize this. Through the ages God’s people—spiritual Israel—have maintained a vital reliance on Scripture as the guiding light of their lives. In responding to God’s grace, they have considered it a privilege to follow its leading. “In every age there were witnesses for God—who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and who hallowed the true Sabbath.”

But there has also been a broad mix of reactions to God’s Word that do not acknowledge its full authority. Some reject it outright. They say it is nothing more than ancient superstition from which humankind has been liberated by the Enlightenment. Others, recognizing that Scripture undeniably contains at least some germ of truth, seek to glean from it a measure of general spiritual guidance. Both of these depend primarily on human reason. Both subject Scripture to a scientific process that usually precludes anything that would be classified as supernatural.

As it happens, the very earliest pages of Scripture recount a cautionary tale about this very issue. The experience of Cain, Adam and Eve’s eldest son, their firstborn, is a good example of what happens when you measure the Word of God by human standards or measurements—by human reason alone. From a human perspective, Cain’s offering as a sacrifice the very best of his produce—his fruit basket—made perfect sense. Hadn’t God originally put humankind in “the garden of Eden to cultivate it”? (Gen. 2:15, NASB). It doesn’t say anything about tending sheep there. Younger brother Abel was the shepherd; Cain was not. But Cain was surely following God’s command to cultivate the garden. Couldn’t the elder brother’s gesture have been construed as a sincere effort to do the right thing?

Intentionally or not, Cain missed the point of God’s mandate regarding the submission of sacrificial offerings. He had misinterpreted it. At the centrality of this command was the emphasis on blood. As the old saying goes, you don’t get blood from a turnip—or any other fruit or vegetable, for that matter. Cain may have thought that God was expecting him to use the brain that God had given him to apply his human reason to this requirement, to turn his best skills of hermeneutics in his preparation to bring an offering to God.

Cain was dead wrong. His attempt to substitute something else for blood in the sacrifice was a rejection of the principle that blood—God’s blood—was the only way that humankind can be saved from sin.

It should be acknowledged that Cain did not get his instructions regarding appropriate offerings from his close reading of the Holy Word. There was, of course, no Scripture in his time. How could he be reading Scripture when the account of his own life is contained in its initial chapters? He didn’t have a leather-bound, onion-skin, cross-referenced study Bible—in any version—to go to for the necessary information about God’s expectations for a sacrifice. In his time, he didn’t even have the crudest form of parchment.

But Cain did have the benefit of the direct and specific Word of God, delivered in person to Adam, his father. How, we wonder, could Cain have missed the point? How could he have had the temerity to question the authority of God’s Word? The answer is this: he “permitted his mind to run in the same channel that led to Satan’s fall—indulging the desire for self-exaltation and questioning the divine justice and authority.”

The decision to base interpretation of God’s Word on anything other than a recognition of His authority is willful. It isn’t a matter of inadvertence. It isn’t “Oops!”

Any rejection of the authority of God’s Word today is just as much an act of will as was that of Cain. It is an audacious decision to rely primarily on personal, human reason in evaluating the authenticity of God’s attempt to reveal His will to humankind.

As has been said, “Christianity is different from all other religions. They are the story of man’s search for God. The Gospel is the story of God’s search for man.”

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1 The Great Controversy, p. 61. Italics supplied.

2 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71.