Covenant, Holy War, and Glory: Motifs in Adventist Identity

by Roy Branson

Therefore are they before the throne of God;
and serve him day and night within his temple;
and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;
the sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat,
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

—*Revelation 7:15–17*

The Revelation to John is the climax to a symphony, a weaving together of themes sounded throughout the Bible. In a single passage divinity is a sacrificed lamb who shepherds the faithful, a triumphant lord who wipes away tears, a presence who shelters. Revelation resounds to the meanings evoked by the central events of Scripture. For example, Israel's encounter with God at Sinai leads Exodus to find different meanings of its significance than does Deuteronomy. In the New Testament Christ comes to us through the theologies of not one, but four gospels. Adventists, who have assumed the special vocation of responding to apocalyptic literature such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, should particularly appreciate the diverse motifs that reverberate through scripture.

Adventists can be grateful for the myriad types, symbols and metaphors which appear in the Bible. Not only has Adventism persisted for well over 100 years, but it ministers to widely diverse cultures. We must remain open to new messages, fresh articulations of our mission and identity.

Symbols and metaphors form themselves into fundamental patterns of meaning that have been described as motifs.[1] Such motifs have the power to capture not only our reason, but our imagination. Symbols and metaphors set within new horizons can gain fresh power.

So far, Adventists have understood themselves in terms of two motifs central to Scripture and Christian thought: covenant and holy war. Both are necessary, but appreciation of a third—glory—provides an additional context within which Adventists' self-understanding can be enriched. All three motifs are necessary. Glory is stressed in this essay because until now it has received little attention within Adventism, and because the motif of glory allows Adventists to respond in distinctive yet fresh ways to a fundamental problem of 20th

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century culture: the sense that God is absent, disengaged from our lives and the tragedies of our times.[2]

Covenant

Gerhard Hasel has reminded Adventists through his recent Sabbath School lessons and accompanying book, *Covenant of Blood,* that many biblical scholars agree that "the central idea of the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New, is the covenant." The dean of the SDA Theological Seminary identifies covenant with law. "A covenantal relationship between the redeeming God and His redeemed people can only function on the basis of established norms, obligations, or stipulations—in short—the law."[3]

Although the covenant at Sinai was more than a contract of "Ten Words," it did establish a standard of acceptable behavior for relating to God and to other human beings. When Israel violated the prohibitions of the covenant, its prophets demanded that the community confess its faithlessness. The sacrificial system was a way of reminding Israel that it must recognize its guilt; that restitution, payment, sacrifice, and atonement must be made if Israel were to be restored to a covenant relationship.

Both evangelical and traditional Adventists agree that the sanctuary is a heavenly assize. They only differ as to whether such a judicial proceeding is necessary.

The mainstream of Western Christianity accepted the motif of covenant or law. Paul's discussion in Romans and Galations of law, transgression, guilt, grace, justification, and righteousness provided the terms for debates among Augustinians and Pelagians, Lutherans and Arminians, Old-Side Calvinists and American frontier revivalists. All agreed that the issue above all is humanity violating God's law, and Christ's death provides the one necessary way for human beings to be pardoned and restored to a right relationship with God. Certainly Luther, with his preoccupation with guilt and forgiveness, ensured that Protestant Christianity would think and live within a forensic paradigm. For Western Christianity the church's mission was to extend Christ's work of salvation. The church offered individuals the promise and assurance of freedom from guilt through administering the sacraments, preaching the word, and in some cases, teaching an entire way of life.

Both evangelical and traditional Adventists agree that the sanctuary is a heavenly assize, where individual guilt or innocence is being finally declared. Both sides clash over the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but both groups have their divergent views in the language of covenant and law. They only differ as to whether such a judicial proceeding is necessary. Evangelical Adventists believe that at the cross Christ made the all-sufficient payment for sin for all who have faith in him. These Adventists object to the idea of further investigation in a heavenly courtroom because they think it transforms the Christian's pardon into a suspended sentence, with assurance of forgiveness awaiting the close of probation. Traditional Adventists believe that the activity in the heavenly sanctuary is a necessary extension of the saving work of Christ. The risen Christ remains a justifier of the guilty from the penalties of the law. But both groups of Adventists view the sanctuary within a legal motif—what Gerhard Hasel repeatedly describes as the "judicial-redemptive-cleansing activity in the heavenly sanctuary."[4]

Within the covenant motif the Sabbath becomes the symbol of the entire decalogue. Some evangelical Adventists think traditionalists observe the Sabbath in order to ensure salvation through obedience to the law. Since evangelicals consider Christ's

death as the only payment necessary and sufficient to provide salvation, many have stopped observing the Sabbath, which they regard as the epitome of law. Even Adventists careful not to describe observance of the Sabbath as a means to salvation see its observance as a necessary expression of the forgiven person's gratitude for escaping condemnation for violation of the covenant.

Ellen White's writings are cited by both those who wish to stress the law as standard and those who see it as also outlining the way to attain perfection. Graham Maxwell and Herbert Douglass take almost as a credo a passage from *Christ's Object Lessons:* "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."[5] On the other hand, Edward Heppenstall, for many years the chairman of the theology department at the SDA Theological Seminary and a proponent of righteousness by faith many years before Desmond Ford and Robert Brinsmead made a similar emphasis, cites passage after passage in Ellen White to support his assertion that "sinless perfection is God's ideal . . . this will be realized with the return of Christ, but not before."[6] Brinsmead sadly concludes that "Mrs. White's great emphasis was sanctification," and that she was "unsurpassed as a disciplinary agent."[7]

Those concerned with law—either conforming to it or being freed from its condemnation—consider more than Ellen White's explicit comments on sin, grace, and perfection. They respond with pleasure or irritation to the casuist of the *Testimonies to the Church* and the compilations, full of admonitions as to how law-abiding members should order their lives in a variety of practical spheres. In a larger sense they are grateful or resentful of an Ellen White whose writings have acted as a standard for all Adventist belief and behavior.

Perhaps the clearest conflict regarding the identity of Adventism comes over the Second Coming. Even here, a convenantal, legal paradigm lies behind the protagonists. Maxwell, a professor of New Testament at Loma Linda University, in his latest book, says God is waiting to return until he has a people whose faith makes them "perfectly safe to save," because "the plan of salvation offers more than just forgiveness. Heaven is not to be peopled with pardoned criminals but transformed saints." He thinks "it is the mission of the Christian church to help produce such people."[8]

Herbert Douglass, the book editor of Pacific Press, provides the strongest claims for the moral condition of Adventism being the key to concluding salvation history. He insists that Christ's Second Coming is delayed until "for the first time in this world's history God will be able to point to his church and say without embarrassment: 'Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,'" (Rev. 14:12, KJV).[9] He is confident that "God does expect perfection of character in his people—a demonstration that some generation of latter-day Christians will reveal before Jesus returns.'"[10]

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Robert Brinsmead, the editor of *Verdict* magazine, regards the position articulated by Maxwell and Douglass as the position of the entire denomination, saying flatly that "Adventists have taught that the end of the world depends on their achieving perfect piety," and that the denomination is guilty of "ecclesiolatry."[11] His demand that assurance of salvation from the condemnation of the law rests on the completed, past act of Christ empties the future of much of its meaning and the church of any eschatological mission. "In Jesus Christ

the end of the world has already arrived. The end-time events, such as judgment, resurrection, the manifestation of God's wrath, the new creation and the destruction of sin and death, have already taken place in Christ."[12] A disturbing number of Adventists have accepted the idea that the Adventist church either finds its identity by guaranteeing a redemptive end to human history (through its members' perfect observance of the standards of the covenant), or that it has no identity. They have subsequently become convinced that Christ, not the Seventh-day Adventist Church, insures his Second Coming, and have concluded with Brinsmead (even though many keep their names on Adventist church rolls) that a "powerful confrontation of the gospel with Adventism is really 'the end of Adventism.'"[13]

The covenant motif has deservedly been a central way for the Bible to understand the relationship of God to man. It conveys the importance of persons-in-relation. It helps us to know that human actions are significant—ultimately so, and yet it also is realistic about the gap between standard and actual behavior. Evil is always a tangible reality within this motif, but so also is the divine response. One source of its power, particularly in the Lutheran Reformation version, is the fact that the one essential event necessary for salvation has already taken place.

Practically that means that Adventists must first spend considerable time convincing others that they are sinful so they can then be grateful for the grace that Christianity provides.

This motif is undoubtedly necessary, but is not sufficient. Particularly Lutheran interpretations stressing covenant as law too easily limit the work of God to salvation of individuals. In certain forms, at least, the covenant motif can drain the future of significance. Not only is it true that within the Adventist community disagreements concerning this motif are so profound that the motif has limited usefulness in bringing healing, but the motif also has limited potency in the present culture. The covenant and law can be significant to those who feel their greatest need is relief from a sense of personal guilt. But many in our culture, while acknowledging the existence of evil, do not feel personal guilt for its persistence. Practically, that means that Adventists must first spend considerable time convincing others that they are sinful so they can then be grateful for the grace that Christianity provides.

Holy War

An Annual Council of the General Conference a few years ago adopted a document called "Evangelism and Finishing God's Work." It was widely distributed and helped form the context for the denomination's emphasis on the church growth movement, the adoption of the faith-action-advance program in North America, and the launching by the world church of the One Thousand Days of Reaping. Very martial language is used in the statement:

> Our mission and message are to be the decisive factors in God's eternal judgment of earth's millions before the final disposal of Satan and sin. . . . We are the one remaining challenge to antichirst, and in earth's last generation this church will be forced to stand against hell's legions, yet, in spite of all opposition, come through victoriously. When Jesus declared that all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, He meant that no enemy could possibly stand in the way of God's conquering church.[14]

Rather than a group persistently reforming its behavior, or a community grateful for having their sins forgiven, the church is described as an army vanquishing powerful enemies, such as Satan and the "sinful order of things." This statement thrusts Adventists into the midst of the "Conflict of the Ages," "The Great Controversy Between God and Satan."

Some biblical students believe that the motif of holy war is as ancient as that of covenant. The holy war *par excellence* is the exodus from Egypt. In some Deuteronomic references to the exodus as a war, the covenant is not even mentioned. In these passages, God's authority is not expressed in His establishing a covenant, but in reaching out with "a strong hand and outstretched arm" to free Israel from bondage and oppression. (Deut. 7:16–26; cf. Deut. 9:1–6; 31:3–6, 7–8).[15] Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, triumph in this ongoing holy war does not come from the power of the chosen people, but the authority of Yahweh over Israel's tribal enemies or the hosts of demonic powers described in the apocalyptic literature (Numbers 21:21–35; 31:1–12; Joshua 6:1–2; 8:1–29; 10).[15]

The New Testament understands Christ's activity not only within the motif of covenant and law, but also that of cosmic conflict. The cross is not only perceived as Christ meeting the demand of justice on our behalf, but in the Gospel of John the cross is a triumph (John 12:31–32). Paul says that at the cross Christ "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them triumphing over them in him" (Col. 2:15).

More than almost any other text in the New Testament, the early Christian Fathers quoted Hebrews 2:14, 15, depicting Christ as a mighty warrior vanquishing bondage, death, and the devil.

> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subjected to lifelong bondage.

For Irenaus and other Church Fathers, the greatest evil was not sin—violation of the covenant—but death. For them, the greatness of God in Christ was not primarily Christ's reassurance that because of his accepting the penalty for sin, humans can be freed from a sense of guilt; for the Eastern Church, the good news of the Gospel is that death has been defeated.[16]

Among Christians who regard Christ as *Christus Victor*, as the savior of life, the cross is a victory because it can be perceived through the triumph of the resurrection.[17]

Others, who think that the church should confront the still-rebellious powers and institutions, stress the Ellen White who acted and wrote on behalf of the urban poor, rural blacks and the exploited.

When the greatest gift of God is not a declaration of innocence, but life, Christ's incarnation and resurrection are at least as important as the cross. Indeed, the entire plan of salvation is not depicted so much as the passage from innocence to guilt to innocence restored, as the movement from life to death to life. Christians who understand themselves to be in a cosmic conflict are confronted with the question of what role the church plays in the struggle. Some Christians have been so conscious that "the rulers of this age are doomed to pass away" (I Cor. 2:6), that they have withdrawn from the theater of combat into havens of worship and piety.[18] Like some of the early Mennonites and the Amish, they have concluded that they should rely on the Lord of Hosts to determine history, and retreated from public life. Other Christians have entered the world to extend Christ's decisive victory. They have actively engaged the thrones, principalities, and authorities that the New Testament period thought were both visible and invisible, natural and supernatural. They have enlisted in that enduring war which the Revelator says "arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon" (Rev. 13:7).

There were, of course, the crusades. Other smaller, radical movements during the Middle Ages, the Reformation and later, filled with the apocalyptic imagery of holy war, actively pursued the millenium. Some

even attempted to establish the kingdom of God by force; for example, the followers of Thomas Muntzer in 16th century Germany and the Ranters during the 17th century English Civil War.[19]

At first, Adventists did not participate in the affairs of society. There was no time. Even after 1844, they continued to think and act like Millerites, expecting the Lord to come so soon that even marriage was an act of faithlessness.[20] Then, like the early Christian Church, the Adventists had to decide how they would understand their mission in the days that stretched before them.[21] The continued delay of the *parousia* has created tensions as to how to understand some of the distinctive affirmations of Adventism within an apocalyptic holy war motif.

Adventists have traditionally placed the Sabbath within an apocalyptic framework by expecting it to mark the imminence of the Second Coming. If civil freedom to observe the Sabbath is lost, time is very short. More recently, Adventist theologians like Neils-Erik Andreasen, Samuele Bacchiocci and others have seen the Sabbath and its sister institutions of the Sabbatical year and Year of Jubilee, as symbols of not only religious freedom for Adventists, but civil and economic freedom and justice in society.[22]

Either understanding of the Sabbath within the holy war motif directs attention away from personal morality to the sweep of God's actions in the world and history. But the more recent, expanded understanding enlarges the Sabbath, making it a symbol of God's activity in bringing freedom and justice to all humanity. As Neils-Erik Andreasen says, "The Sabbath, then, faithfully protects man from totalitarianism of all kinds, whatever the source."[23]

Within the holy war motif, the sanctuary is not so much a law court as the place to which the Christ, the victorious Lord, ascended "when God raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph. 1:20–21). As Ellen White puts it, "The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men."[24] Indeed it is from the sanctuary-temple-palace that the warfare against the legions of evil, human and superhuman, proceeds. From his place in heaven, the risen Christ is a triumphant Lord actively extending his rulership of creation, not pouring over the moral condition of each person. As throughout the conflict motif, the emphasis remains on God's action, not humanity's subjective condition.

The great contribution of the holy war motif is to expand the sphere of God's activity: God saves the entire world and creation is included in redemption.

Ellen White, within this motif, is not sought so much for her practical advice on daily living as for her perspectives on the Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. Some seek her outlines of the future as reassurance that God's final consummation is certain and imminent. The fact that the Spirit of Prophecy is in our midst is assurance that Adventists are part of the victorious remnant in the conflict of the ages.

Others, who think that the church should do more than chart the progress of the cosmic battle, that the church should confront the still-rebellious powers and institutions, stress the Ellen White who acted and wrote on behalf of the urban poor, rural blacks and the exploited.[25]

As for the mission of the church, Adventists have not been certain whether the publishing, educational, and medical institutions which they came to develop should be designed for retreat from this conflict between good and evil or training grounds to

prepare agents to penetrate and change organizations guilty of institutional evil.[26]

In the "Evangelism and Finishing God's Work" document, the church is not described as preoccupied with its relationship to law but portrayed as aggressively involved in the Great Controversy: "Today's Adventist generation that will arise and finish God's work and put an end to the tragedy of our Lord's delay." But the involvement is quite specific—proclamation. "'Finishing the Work' means one thing: communicating God's message through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit to all of earth's population so that God can proclaim his work finished. When this happens, Jesus will come."[27]

A more expansive view of the role of the Adventist church in the Great Controversy has been increasingly articulated. Jack Provonsha, a professor of Christian ethics at Loma Linda University, thinks that the cosmic conflict demands that the Adventist church be a part of a prophetic minority that, like the prophets, is deeply disturbed by hypocrisy and injustice. "A prophetic movement, insofar as it is true to its divine calling, may function as a catalyst for bringing about that final polarization which constitutes the climax of the Great Controversy."[28]

Rather than a casuist or a seer predicting details of future battles in the Great Controversy, Ellen White could be Adventism's pillar of fire.

In terms that are reminiscent of liberation theology, which itself draws on the imagery of conflict, Walter Douglas, a professor of church history and missions at the SDA Theological Seminary, challenged the Seventh-day Adventist Church in an address at the 1980 General Conference to become involved "in the struggle for freedom and justice, in the alleviation of hunger and the conquest of disease."[29] Since the Adventist denomination is not better than its Lord, it should work, "if necessary, in revolutionary ways for the promotion of peace, justice, freedom and righteousness. Was not Christ's action scandalous because of his attacks on the structures of his society which were the instruments of oppression and dehumanization?"[30]

The great contribution of the holy war motif is to expand the sphere of God's activity. He is active not only in rescuing individuals or even particular communities. God saves the entire world. Creation is included in redemption. Life itself is saved from that powerful enemy death. The triumph of Christ is so encompassing it even affects the institutional shape life takes in the world.

No matter how engrossed people are in urban, technological society, they sense the church is responding to a universal anxiety when the church offers an answer to death. Many who are puzzled by frenzies over guilt, fear death.

Furthermore, a motif like holy war, that conveys a basic optimism about the future, addresses a concern felt particularly acutely in our time—the threat to survival of the race from science and technology. If that optimism about ultimate human destiny were to motivate altruistic efforts to engage powers exploiting the weak, the church would appeal to some now cynical about religion.

Although this motif is necessary, it too is not sufficient. Any attempt to draw Adventist identity solely from the future, from a culmination of a holy war or great controversy, increasingly loses its plausibility and effectiveness.

Glory

If one asks a cross-section of Adventist friends what in either Adventist belief or practice means most to them, a large num-

ber will say the experience of the Sabbath. Even those angry at administrative actions or disturbed by recent theological debates still warm to the Sabbath. During the last four or five years, several books on Adventist theology of the Sabbath have appeared. That material, together with a barely emerging literature of creative theology of the sanctuary,[31] suggests that Adventists have overlooked a motif central to biblical faith. While not sufficient, it both highlights elements distinctive to Adventists and appeals to persons in modern culture typically beyond the reach of Adventism.

The Sabbath can be regarded as a provision in the covenant entered into at Sinai. It can also be a memorial of the redeeming action of God in the holy war of the Exodus.

The sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen White's visions are means by which we can participate now in the reality to which they point—God's presence. They are not means to make men holy, but paths to the holy.

Or, as in many of the recent Adventist writings on the Sabbath, it can be a time to feel God's presence, to encounter his glory; "the glory of Yahweh" that settled on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:16, 17). Fritz Guy, at the SDA Theological Seminary, describes the Sabbath as the "Presence of Ultimacy," the time when human beings encounter the transcendent and gain confidence that it is real; that it is totally reliable.[37]

That was the experience of Moses when he descended from the mountain and God's presence. His face reflected God's glory or *kabod,* that he had glimpsed on the mountain (Exodus 34:29–30). "The glory of the Lord" was what "filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34–35) at the foot of the mountain and accompanied Israel throughout its desert wanderings. When the ark was brought into the temple of Solomon "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (I Kings 8:11). As Israel recalled its history, it understood that God's Sinai presence had forever remained with the people of God.

The prophets called Israel back to the covenant, demanding moral seriousness or becoming agents of social reform, sometimes even calling for a holy war. But the prophets could also be "poets of a divine, electing presence," sharing with the people "visions alive with shattering memories of glimpses of infinity," as Samuel Terrien puts it.[33] Both Isaiah and Ezekiel were taken up into visions of temples that were also throne rooms, where Isaiah reports one seraphim "called to another and said 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6: 3–4).

While the covenant motif interprets Christ as a sacrifice meeting the demands of the law, and the holy war motif sees a conquering Lord in the resurrected Christ, the motif of glory settles on the incarnation of Christ. In the early chapters of Luke, those who first hear that Emmanuel is coming—Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, the Wise Men—are all bathed in the divine light that came also to the shepherds, "when the Glory of the Lord shone round about them." These early hymns of the Christian community preserved by Luke—*Nunc dimitus, Magnificat, Gloria in excelsis*—describe the coming of Christ as the approach of divine radiance.

The more theological gospel of John refers explicitly to Christ's incarnation as the appearance of God's sanctuary *kabod.* "And the Word became flesh, and he pitched his tent among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of an only son from his father" (John 1:14). Christ is the embodiment of divine sanctuary presence.[34] Throughout the fourth gospel Christ is the glory of the

father, whose radiance encompasses his disciples. Through Christ they are drawn into God's glory, his presence.

Just as the mainstream of Western Christianity worked within the motif of covenant and law, and radical sectarians (whether withdrawing or aggressive) were drawn to the apocalyptic motif of holy war, Eastern Orthodox churches found their meaning in divine glory and worship. For them, what was important was not the crucified, but living Christ. Their liturgy and theology is shot through with reflections on the glory of the transfiguration.[35] Just as at the appearance of God to Moses at Sinai, the scene is suffused with light and glory. Just as it descended on Sinai, the tabernacle, and the temple, a cloud settles on the mountain of transfiguration. As the Sermon on the Mount provides, within the motif of covenant, a continuity between Old and New Testaments, and Christ's miracles and exorcisms of demons demonstrate that he is carrying on the holy war against rebellious powers, so also the transfiguration suffuses Christ with the glory of the sanctuary and the temple. "The *mysterium tremendum* of the temple was transferred into human flesh."[36]

For Eastern Orthodox Christianity the transfiguration is a model for a spirituality that overflows with God's presence rather than achieves sinlessness through denial. In this tradition, Paul is important not so much for discussions of the old and new covenants or sin and grace, but because of his encounter with the blinding light of Christ on the road to Damascus. Proximity to God is not found in right relationship to law or revolutionary social action, but in the experience of the holy.

Within the motif of glory, holiness is not a category of morality, but of worship. The church finds its identity in providing members with occasions "when the Spirit of God descends on a man, and envelops Him in the fulness of His presence, the soul overflowing with unspeakable joy."[38]

Not surprisingly, the Holy Spirit is central to an Eastern Orthodox Christianity that yearns for the entire being to radiate with God's glory. According to Macarius of Egypt, "The fire of grace kindled in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Spirit makes them shine like tapers before the Son of God."[37] In America, rather than within the elaborate *ordo* or order of Orthodox liturgy, experiences of being filled with the Spirit have typically taken place in Methodist or Baptist revival meetings. And it is out of this tradition that Adventists came.

Alden Thompson, of the Walla Walla College School of Theology, suggested in the *Adventist Review* that the most reliable Ellen White is the mature messenger of the later years.[39] However, the motif of glory would value her earliest visions, before she was a standard of behavior and thought for the church, when she was aflame with vision of heaven, exclaiming, "glory, glory, glory." The Holy City of her first vision includes a temple and the ark, all suffused with clouds of light. Surrounded by the "eternal weight of glory," she remembered that "God poured on us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God as Moses did when he came down from Mount Sinai."[40] It was for her visionary spirituality that Ellen White first received notice and on which her authority was founded. An Adventism that valued a present experience of glory would not be upset if Ellen White made errors in history or science or even biblical exegesis. Instead, Adventism would be grateful for her visions as vistas into the holy. Rather than a casuist or a seer predicting details of future battles in the Great Controversy, Ellen White would be Adventism's pillar of fire.

An Adventism of glory would find the heavenly sanctuary central to its self-understanding. The sanctuary would not be avoided by criminals dreading a courtroom. It would be regarded with awe because it is the heart of holiness. Rather than repelling,

its mystery would fascinate and attract. Because in Christ humanity has entered the holiest place, God continues to be a dynamic presence accessible to humanity, and the sanctuary a powerful lure to experience the glory of God.

The recurring movement of the book of Revelation is from the sanctuary to the world. When "the temple of God in heaven was opened; in his temple the ark of his covenant appeared; lightnings came—voices—thunderings—huge hail stones—earthquake" (Revelation 11:19). An Adventism of glory would embrace God's creation, expecting that any bush might burst into flame, any voice might be his voice. God's creatures would not be regarded as merely damned violaters of the law, but reflectors of divine glory and therefore objects of wonder. Bearers of God's glory are to be respected, not used or abused. Since God's sanctuary presence streams throughout the creation, all of creation attracts us; all of creation has value. The arena of the church expands beyond the courtroom and the battlefield to enhance our appreciation of every glimmer of divine presence throughout human culture, and banish the darkness of pain, suffering, and injustice wherever we find it.

The experience of the sanctuary throughout Scriptures is a present experience of the holy. Within the motif of glory, Adventism would understand the book of Revelation as portraying present realms of glory penetrating the creation *now*. Rather than a scientific history of the future, the book of Revelation would be revered for its glimpses into God's present activity. Revelation would be a way into the heart of the holiness.

Of course, the physical location of the heavenly sanctuary remains transcendent to us. But we can experience now the glory of God—not in space, but in time. The Sabbath is our sanctuary in the present. As we pass the threshold of the Sabbath hours we enter into the experience of the holy. We are not morally purified of every evil tendency, but we are caught up into the sanctified presence of God. Like the sanctuary, the seventh day is sacralized, and while God is not consubstantial with us, he is contemporary. Because of the Sabbath, God does not remain in the outer courtyards of our existence.

Within the motif of glory, Seventh-day Adventists, rather than putting themselves in a law court or in a war, would discover they had entered a church. If the motif of glory became prominent, worship would become more central to the life of Adventism. The beginning and ending of the Sabbath would be marked by moments of reverence for the God who enters our time. More effort would be expended on the shape of the Sabbath morning service, for many the most holy place of their existence. The entire service would be approached as reverently as Israel approached the sanctuary. Scripture, sermon and song would not be chosen simply to bring criminals to admit their guilt or provide warriors courage for the battle, but to draw all the faculties of worshipers into God's presence. As a people committed to the sanctuary and Sabbath making God's presence alive in our present experience, Adventists would feel a special responsibility to recover the apocalyptic hymns and rhapsodies for Christian worship.[42]

If the motif of glory were emphasized, a premium would be placed on an education that aroused and cultivated the imagination. The arts and literature would be seen as not merely concessions to middle-class pretensions, but essential to enhance those capacities most likely to experience the glory of God.

Renewed and revitalized experiences of worship would attract the many unchurched who still have a hunger for experiencing the transcendent—people bored with the bureaucratic and merely technological. The Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the visions of Ellen White introduced as avenues to the experience of the holy might reach some now baffled by talk of imputed and imparted righteousness, or the book of Revelation

understood as a scientific prediction of the future.

The limitations of the motif of glory are clear. Religion can become reduced to the aesthetic, the emotive. It can lead to preciousness. Worship sometimes dissolves into rote litany or the smells and bells of ritualism. Ethical concern can be reduced to routines of preparation for the "peak experiences." The intractability of the human will to turn away from God and fellow human beings can be brushed over, and the necessity of divine power to counter institutionalized evil ignored. Glory can be rhapsodic escape.

But man cannot live by ethics alone. At some point, whether it is the personal morality of covenant or the social morality of holy war, one must ask the question, but why be moral? At that point, a horizon of ultimate meaning must be glimpsed, a sense that the empirical is not all, indeed a conviction that at the very core of our being there is a God who is beautiful, good and true. Without a vision of glory, the covenants and wars of liberation finally wither into senselessness and oblivion.

Adventists can be grateful for the two biblical motifs of covenant and holy war that have ordered its thought and action. But we can also welcome another biblical motif that highlights three of Adventism's most distinctive affirmations. And we must find fresh meaning for our distinctive symbols, or they will vanish and with them the Adventist church. Glory is not sufficient, but it is necessary.

The sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen White's visions are means by which we can participate now in the reality to which they point—God's presence. They are not means to make men holy, but paths to the holy; distinctive ways in which the whole being of persons—intellect, will, emotion—are inflamed with God's glory; when they cry out in joy that, yes, there is a God—they have been in his presence. Within the motif of glory the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be a present moment of incandescense.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. According to categories in John MacQuarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology,* Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1966, pp. 35–39, 161–174, this essay is an exercise in "symbolic theology." According to David Tracy's recent work, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism,* Crossroad, New York, 1981, pp. 54–79, the essay is an attempt at "systematic theology," following "fundamental theology" and preceding "practical theology." Incidentally, his three "trajectories" of theology in chapter nine have similarities to the three Biblical paradigms I use in this essay.

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6. Edward Heppenstall, "'Let Us Go On to Perfection,'" in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility,* by Herbert E. Douglass, Edward Heppenstall, Hans

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8. Graham Maxwell, *Can God be Trusted?* Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, Tennessee, 1977, pp. 46, 128, 157.

9. Douglass, in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, p. 46.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

11. Brinsmead, pp. 347, 30.

12. Brinsmead, p. 30.

13. Brinsmead, p. 20.

14. *The Ministry* (December, 1976), p. 3.

15. See Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, SCM Press, London, 1953, pp. 45–60.

16. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes.* Fordham University Press, New York, 1974, pp. 151–167.

17. Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement,* trans., A. G. Hebert, S.P.C.K., London, 1965. This work has been central in defining the first two paradigms used in this essay.

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28. Jack Provonsha, "The Church as a Prophetic Minority," *Spectrum*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (September, 1981), p. 23.

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35. See Meyendorff.

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42. See Charles Teel, "Revelation as Liturgy" in this issue of *Spectrum.*

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